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SOME CHAPTERS IN A LITERARY BIOGRAPHY.**

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SHERWOOD ANDERSON, BISEXUAL BARD:
SOME CHAPTERS IN A LITERARY BIOGRAPHY

by

ROBERT GEORGE KRAFT

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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We have carefully read the dissertation entitled "Sherwood Anderson, Bisexual Bard: Some Chapters in a Literary Biography."

Robert G. Kraft submitted by
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
and recommend its acceptance. In support of this recommendation we present the following joint statement of evaluation to be filed with the dissertation.

This study is a fresh attempt to understand the sources of Sherwood Anderson's development as a literary artist from his earliest attempts at fiction through the early 1920's. It locates the origins of his strength as a writer in his growing conception of the role of the artist as bard, singing the primitive and the transcendent in the lives of his people, and in his diffused sexuality which found fulfillment in the identification of the artist with his subjects.

It treats Anderson's relationships with the writers and critics who provided him an esthetic and intellectual framework for his artistic impulses, but, more importantly, it provides new evidence of the importance of Tennessee Mitchell, Anderson's second wife, to his developing conception of himself as an artist. The decline of Anderson's work after the Chicago years is seen as the result of the deterioration of his view of himself as a folk-bard and of his art as religion, and by the deterioration of his relationship with Tennessee Mitchell which had sustained that view. The study offers ample clarification of the relationships between Anderson's life and his work, during his most productive period, and provides an original concept of Anderson as an artist which will be valuable to future biographers and critics.

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Date 27 May, 1969

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To Roni,
who made it possible.

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Chapter One

Two Strains of Character

I

By far the most conspicuous aspect of Sherwood Anderson's personality, both to his readers and to people who knew him, was his propensity for playing roles. In his imaginative life he cast himself into every one of his characters, and if they lived it was for this reason. He himself said repeatedly that he wrote for this very reason, to escape self and take on an imagined role in which he could work out his problems more to his liking. In his actual life he found role-playing just as useful. He commented often in his personal and autobiographical writings about what a slick, foxy man he was in any role before any audience. He ascribed this tendency in himself to his imaginative nature. "Every story teller worth his salt, as I have said, is also an actor and . . . I am essentially just that, a story teller."¹ No doubt he was correct in this judgment but the roots of this tendency go deeper. His roles were not only assumed poses which he adopted for various purposes, but a sense of role was a fundamental part of his makeup.

In reminiscing about Anderson, Lewis Galantiere, a Chicago writer and friend of Anderson, remarks:

Sherwood wasn't backward about calling himself an artist, and it used to worry me a little, because the word was so heavy for a man so sunlit and so lacking in egocentricity, I imagine that one reason why he would use the word seriously was that he had broken his life in two at the age

of forty in order to write; and if he wanted to distinguish sharply between the old life and the new, "artist" was the only word he could find to describe the new life, the new self.²

When Anderson made that notorious escape from the paint factory, he did in fact take on a new self. The work he did in Chicago was not new; he simply returned to his old advertising job. But he had taken on a new view of himself; he was now an "artist." To most of us identifying the artist is as difficult and subject to the same intangibles as identifying art, but to Anderson it appears there were no ambiguities. To him art meant not only an activity, a recreation, or even an occupation a sensitive person takes on to himself as he takes on any other activity. He had a strong and well-defined sense that the sensitive person takes on a role which, while functioning only intermittently, is a permanent state of being. "Artist" describes not what a man does--he may do many things, as Anderson did--but what he is.

It is not enough to ascribe this attitude only to his imaginative nature. When he was playing out a role in a tale, for an advertising audience, for people on the street or for a group gathered in a room, he knew he was doing so, at least usually. But, as is true with most people who like to play roles, he was always in danger of losing his own identity in his roles. He tells us that his secretary once told him, "You are always playing the innocent. You put on an air. You make yourself appear naive. Please, Mr. Anderson, don't keep it up until you believe it yourself" (Mem. p. 5). He did in fact for the most part believe that he was innocent and unlettered, and tried to

convince others of the fact. For in fact Anderson's notion of himself was defined not by traits or tendencies, background, occupation, or personality, but by role. His overactive imagination immediately translated all his vague desires and ambitions into roles, both as a child playing games, as we see in A Story Teller's Story, and as an adult in the business world. Achieving the ambition meant playing out the role. The trouble he had with this tendency is borne out in A Story Teller's Story. The young Anderson, under the gaze of a young woman, came to believe himself a pugilistic hero, one gifted with "the feint and the cross, the powerful left to the jaw, the golden smile, the shifting movements of the shoulders that confuse and disconcert the opponent."³ He lost his identity in the role, daringly provoked a fight, and was beaten bloody. As an adult when he dreamed of being rich, he thought not of what he would have or do with money; he thought of the role he would play. As a factory owner he said, "I had been able to make myself feel somewhat as I fancied a prince might have felt."⁴

My fancy played with the matter of factories as a child would play with a toy. There would be a great factory with walls going up and up and a little open place for a lawn at the front, shower baths for the workers with perhaps a fountain playing on a lawn, and up before the door of this place I would drive in a large automobile.

Oh, how I would be respected by all, how I would be looked up to by all! I walked in a little dark street, throwing back my shoulders. How grand and glorious I felt!

. . . Well, in fancy, I had a thousand workmen under me. They were children and I was their father and would look out for them. Perhaps I would build them model houses to live in, a town of model houses built about my great factory, eh? The workmen would be my children and I would look out for my children.⁵

Anderson ascribes this tendency in himself to his father. "My father, like myself, could never be singly himself but must always be playing some role, everlastingly strutting on the stage of life in some part not his own."⁶ In fact, the most poignant part of Windy MacPherson's Son is Windy MacPherson acting out a role and bringing shame to the family. But Anderson's tendency in this direction has some deeper roots. As a boy Anderson was very ambitious. He often tells us how thoroughly imbued he was with the American success story, with "getting on." Undoubtedly he was asked, as young boys are still asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up." He was a product of the era of industrialization which produced not only the American success story, but a complete success mythology. The lives of the Morgans and Rockefellers were sketched out for the admiring readers of newspapers and magazines. It was not enough to be rich; it was to live in a certain way. There are richer men today than J. Paul Getty, but few who play the role of eccentric rich man quite so well. To succeed meant to Anderson not only to do but to be. His sense of the need to become something was probably heightened by his observations of and his attitude toward his father. Irving Anderson did harness-making, he did house and sign painting, he did boasting and story-telling, but he was nothing, therefore to young Sherwood a failure.

The role of business man was the most likely one for him when Anderson first went off to Chicago, but he was aware early that it was possible with certain talents to be something else, although each role was sustained by the same means. "I dare say what I had

thought of the art of writing, when I had thought of it at all, was that at bottom it was very much like paint-making, or like running an advertising agency. You did it to make money" (Mem. p. 81).

Karl Anderson had gone off to study at the Art Institute in Chicago when Sherwood was only sixteen, and later when Sherwood came out of the army he went to visit his brother in Springfield, Ohio, who by then was a successful cover illustrator for the Women's Home Companion. No doubt to Sherwood "artist" was a highly respectable role. This notion was undoubtedly fortified in his year at Wittenberg Academy. He lived with Karl in a boarding house, the Oaks, which housed a number of teachers, writers, and artists. His notion of artist might have been refined somewhat here, for, as Irving Howe puts it, ". . . for the first time he met people who talked stimulatingly about books, who hoped to leave commercial jobs and devote themselves to creative work, and who gave him a glimpse, although a very restricted one, of a new and attractive world of culture."⁷

When Anderson left the Academy and went into advertising, he found not only the success he sought, but the role. He could, for the first time in his life, define and act out an identity for himself.

And so, of a sudden I am lifted up into a new world of well-dressed young men. . . .

I now advance rapidly. I have twenty five dollars a week, then thirty five, forty, fifty, seventy five. I buy new clothes, hats, shoes, socks, shirts. I walk freely on Michigan Boulevard in Chicago, go to drinking parties, meet bigger and bigger business men.

I create nothing. I boast, boast. Words of glowing praise for this or that product of some factory flow from under my pen.

I am a new man. Now, in the advertising agency the word is out that I am something of a genius. I play up to it.

I strut, carry a cane. I let my hair grow long, aim to be a bit original in my dress. I do not wear neckties. I get brightly colored strips of cloth, from remnant counters in department stores, shove the two ends through an antique finger ring that I have bought. I begin to wear spats. I even buy a dinner coat.

What a boy. (Mem. p. 138)

Anderson's consciousness of role was profound and extended to every detail of his character. He had an outer pose for others and an inner pose for himself. His role was his identity. Success meant to play the complete role to the extent that he could define that role at any given moment. As a businessman he looked and talked like a businessman and sought to be accepted in that role. As an artist he could be and do no less.

This study is about Anderson's role-playing, especially as he switches roles from paint entrepreneur to writer. It is about his passion not just to write tales, but to be an "artist." It is also about how, with the help of many people, especially his second wife, he found his own special artistic identity, that of folk-bard. And that special identity produced his best work.

II

There is so much of sex and sexuality in Anderson's work that it is surprising that so few Anderson commentators have inquired into his sexuality. There are a number of sexual encounters, both heterosexual and homosexual in his work. But there are no successfully sustained sexual relationships. In his later life he thought much about sexuality and his own relationships with women and with men and was quite confident that he understood his own sexual nature and that of other "artists." He had married four wives, had encountered homosexuality and had what he felt was considerable insight into this subject which he was not reluctant to pass on to his son and others. There is no evidence that anyone ever seriously questioned his ideas. His Perhaps Women was given scant attention. But an examination of his ideas reveals an attitude which severely limits human femininity. More important, such an examination suggests that he was bisexual. His feeling about his artistic needs muddy considerably his understanding of sex and his own sexual nature, but the conclusion of a pronounced bisexuality is hard to avoid. His statements on the subject require some untangling but are very much worth study.

Anderson had a confident and fairly uncomplicated notion of what constituted the role of the sexes in the order of nature. Most of his ideas are contained in one extended statement in his Memoirs.

Women to me are related always to the world of nature, the male to the spirit. To me they have been, when not trying also to be male, the good earth. I am very male and do not believe in women artists--and these men feminists, how they bore me. . . . To me women are as a flowing stream in which I bathe and clothe myself. They are

rich wine drunk, fruit eaten. They have washed me as summer rains wash me. It is because I am so very male that I can be a real lover of women. But although I am essentially male I am not particularly lustful. There has been too much of the male energy in me gone into the effort to produce a beautiful art, to permit that. . . .

The male desires not to be beautiful but to create beauty and no woman can be beautiful without the help of the male. We create their beauty, fertilize it, feed it. In reality women have no desire to do. Doing is for them a substitute. Their desire is to be. There was never a real woman lived who did not hunger to be beautiful. Woman is not man: I have had to write a book about this [Perhaps Women] and it went unnoticed. If we were a strong race our women would be more beautiful, our lands and our cities more beautiful. Because Americans have not understanding of women America has become a matriarchy. (Mem. p. 504)

A number of Anderson's attitudes are contained here and require some clarifying and explaining. One might say that Anderson saw women as objects which men take from and act upon. They are functionaries of nature, provide men with comfort, pleasure, and inspiration, a certain kind of natural sustenance. But they cannot fulfill him because they cannot sustain his spirit. Spiritual sustenance comes from art and the community of artists, which must necessarily be made up of men. The spiritually healthy artist approaches women as he approaches nature, to take inspiration from it and to fertilize it and thus make it fulfilled and beautiful, but he must return to the communion of the spirit, of art, for regeneration. Anderson felt that in order to make women beautiful, to fertilize and ennoble them, one had to approach them in the great spiritual strength provided only by the community of males. He could not accept the possibility of women in this community, for they were not "of the spirit." Consequently, he could enjoy no complete intimacy with a woman and, because a complete spiritual communion was impossible, no complete sexual fulfillment.

The results of this attitude are scattered throughout his work and his personal writings. The effects in his life and in his art are profound and I hope to make them apparent later on. Most of his expressions on this subject are from later on in his life, but its beginnings date back to his business life in Elyria, as I will demonstrate later. First I would like to define the attitude I've expressed here more closely in Anderson's own words.

In the introduction to Perhaps Women Anderson announces that the book is written out of "a growing conviction that modern man is losing his ability to retain his manhood in the face of the modern way of utilizing the machine and that what hope there is for him lies in women.⁸ The thesis of the book is that the machine has deprived man of the opportunity to create with his hands. Denied the opportunity and necessity to create, he is forced out of his own male world, the world of fancy, of imagination. He is thus deprived of his spiritual sustenance. He is therefore losing his maleness, his potency.

. . . men will have to go back to nature more. They will have to go to the fields and the rivers. There will have to be a new religion, more pagan, something more closely connected with fields and rivers.

There will have to be built up a new and stronger sympathy as between man and man. We may find the new mystery there. . . . We will have to rediscover the wonder of our maleness or the women will have no lovers, no mates. . . . There will only be husbands. If something of the sort isn't done, if money and the machine continue to rule men's lives, then we shall have to surrender maleness. We will have to live like the bees in a feminine world, with a few drones flying about in the air, with perhaps just enough maleness loose in the world to keep up the show.⁹

Modern America's industrialism has castrated men; the country is becoming ugly.

All evil, all ugliness is a sign of weakness. The men in America who build ugly cities, ugly factory towns, who make fields and forests ugly, who make wars, cry out constantly the word progress, progress, to cover the fact of their ugly work--these are all weak men.

Strong men are always gentle. To them a field is as a woman loved. (Mem. pp. 504-505)

The answer to the machine is, perhaps, women.

. . . the woman, at her best, is and will remain a being untouched by the machine. It may, if she becomes a machine operator, tire her physically but it cannot paralyze her spirit. She remains, as she will remain, a being with a hidden inner life. The machine can never bring children into the world.¹⁰

Anderson explained his idea more explicitly in one of his letters:

I do not think that men and women are alike or that they react to life in the same way. I know that saying this often annoys some women, but still I stand my ground. I do not believe that women employees have been hurt by the factory as men have. It is possible for women to create in her own person in the flesh, and it is not possible for men. . . . Basically, I do believe that the robbing of man of his craft, his touch with tools and materials by modern industry does tend to make him spiritually impotent. I believe that spiritual impotence eventually leads to physical impotence. This belief is basic in me."¹¹

The notion that man creates in the spiritual, in the world of art and imagination, and women cannot be artists but can only create in the physical places the two sexes in rather different worlds. Contact can only be a brief, physical refreshment. "To me women are as a flowing stream in which I bathe and clothe myself. They are rich wine drunk, fruit eaten. They have washed me as summer rains wash me." While courting the woman with whom he made his fourth and most successful marriage he said, "I've never been able to work without a woman to love. Perhaps I'm cruel. They are earth and sky and warmth and light to me. I'm like an Irish peasant, taking potatoes

out of the ground. I live by the woman loved. I take from her"
(Letters, p. 245).

Refreshment can be taken from a woman, but a man cannot live spiritually by her. If the machine deprives a man of his spiritual sustenance, he must find it elsewhere. "There will have to be built up a new and stronger sympathy as between man and man." The man is revived in the male communion of the spirit where art is.

Another letter tells of the extent to which this idea moved Anderson:

My son John, the young painter, and I played together a kind of game a year ago on the farm. I hardly know how it began. We fixed up a little place in a field with boards and with canvas walls and a cot, to which we could both go, during different hours each day, and there lie, naked, nothing to see but the white walls and the sky. . . .

Man's playing place? No, man's receiving place, aside from all women, even aside from nature, in the form of growing things--all was alive with women to all men.

A common spirit added--the sum, and what? Illimitable space perhaps.

The feeling that men must learn to renew themselves in other men, as perhaps they did in old days, in battles--hate that became almost love--or--

I grant it might be done in work. (Letters, p. 320-321)

The communion of men, the spiritual sustenance out of which art comes, was for Anderson the most vital need of his life. His voluminous correspondence is a testimony to this need, and it was a subject he discussed fervently and often. He repeatedly counseled his son John and his son's young artist friend, "Above all, Charles,¹² I think you and John must keep alive your comradeship. Don't let it get away. Write often to each other. Don't be afraid to love each other" (Letters, p. 297). Anderson felt very strongly that this comradeship

very directly stimulated and fortified the artistic impulses and that men must not only feed on nature but on one another to grow in art.

The silence of the wood--the sky to the west--the low hills--just watching the growth on the ground--a sudden quick recognition of something.

What? Words can be such damn things. . . .

You want simply, suddenly, a comrade who feels as you do, sees what you see. There is a town below, to the north, lying in a blue haze.

We try, it's true, in words, to paint. That helps. It never did quite suffice. (Letters, p. 323)

.....

And that is natural too, companionship, even love, as between man and man, is a thing most of all wanted now. (Letters, p. 322)

Anderson sought this kind of comradeship repeatedly and sometimes desperately from fellow artists. While it was this kind of spiritual communion he most looked for, the need and the attraction was not entirely spiritual.

Now you see, this is something men do not yet understand, or perhaps do not dare quite understand concerning their relationships. A man, to be my friend, must attract me physically, not as a woman does, in a special way. We modern men are afraid of facing that fact.

I must like something about my friend's eyes, the way he carries himself as he walks along, something in the temper of the man that fits into my own temper. It is a thing distinct from the tenderness a man feels for his woman. (Letters, p. 325)

But the sustaining force of the friendship is spiritual. "Although comradeship has the flesh in it faintly, it is predominantly in the mind, the spirit. It needs for food common experiences--books, feeling for nature, feeling for what we call heart" (Letters, p. 327).

It is clear that Anderson felt he was talking not only about himself, but about the nature of the male. Of the practical day-to-

day difficulties of this nature, and its darker side, he had a lifetime of experience. For the man who gives himself so completely to that male, spiritual world of art, the difficulties are compounded.

He wrote to his son's friend Charles Bockler:

I won't say anything about the woman struggle. You know it. . . . In me the struggle is intense. . . . I have to have a woman like I have to breathe. I can't stand aside. I have to kiss, hold, get close to the mystery. At any price in struggle and hurt I have to.

There is that thing in modern women--my own failures have all been that--a kind of jealousy springs up. There is something dearer than any women, dearer than self,

That comes at times like a wall between.

Lately I have thought that our struggle just now in this civilization is beyond that. Plainly, Charles, it is that I must learn to love you and John . . . and other men who I know are lovers, devoted to a thing outside self. I must learn to love them and their drive at the mystery. (Letters, p. 296)

Of course, all of these lovers, these artists, have the same problem.

Almost all of my own friends, men of the theater, painters, musicians, have, in this matter of marriage, had the same experience I have had. They have tried and failed, tried and failed. . . . They grow bitter and ugly about it all.

How absurd. When one of us makes a failure of marriage it is, almost inevitably, his own fault. He is what he is. He should not blame the woman.

The modern woman will not be kicked aside so. She wants children, she wants a certain security for herself, for herself and for her children, but we artist fellows do not understand the impulse toward security. When we are secure we are dead. There is nothing secure in our world out there, and, as for the matter of children, we are always having children of our own [works of art]. (Mem. p. 380)

The depth and the extent of the commitment of the artist to the male world of art was something about which Anderson, in his great pride in the role of artist, was always candid. For example, he wrote to the mother of his fourth wife two years after their marriage.

I have felt that women did not and could not understand the problem of present-day men. . . . Apart from Eleanor and you and a few, a very few, other women, women in general bore me. It is, I think, due to this other thing, the idea that we are in a curiously difficult position and that women do not understand what it is and often, often take advantage of it.

.
I am trying to say that one deeply feels, as one matures, a wanting of relationships that have as bases mutual principles held to, something not personal.

Oh, it's too hard to say. But it means something very vital to me. Put it bluntly, just between us: sometimes I feel I would go further to help, or stand by, some man of talent than I ever would any woman, as woman. I think we have been caught and partly destroyed by not feeling so, I mean as men. (Letters, p. 330)

Here as in other of his statements, Anderson--always, he felt, the typical American--submerges his own sexuality in the unique problem of the American male fighting off castration by the machine. And he was vain enough to be entirely convinced by his own ideas, except perhaps in moments when he cannot keep from his consciousness darker possibilities. Once in a while the private self emerges, apart from the typical American artist role. In the Memoirs he recounts a revealing episode in his early life in Chicago. There were many kinds of people new to the young ad writer from the provinces among the artists and bohemians he associated with at that time. Later the wife he took from that group talks about the homosexuals among them. Freud and psychoanalysis had just been discovered and the group was, as Anderson says, "hot at it." Anderson was here introduced to the subject of homosexuality and recounts an advance a worker had made to him in his youth.

What did it all mean? I felt a strange unhealth within myself. I was not angry, and am quite sure, that, when this happened, I felt even a kind of pity. . . .

It is difficult now, as I write after the years, to remember just all I did feel on that occasion when first I came face to face with a fact in many other human lives, but in years since, several such men have come to me and have talked to me of their terrible problem; some few stories of my own, the story "Hands" in the volume Winesburg, and the story I called "The Man Who Became a Woman" . . . have led them to think that I could sympathize with them in their fight. But at the time, during the summer when I first found comrades in the little places in Fifty-seventh Street in Chicago I was, on the whole, only puzzled.

So I asked the question.

"What makes men like that?"

I went further. Perhaps I expressed a kind of fear of something in life I couldn't understand and the fear in me was pounced upon.

Why, I was myself unconsciously one of them. The thing was in me too and the fear I had expressed was a sure sign of its presence. On another occasion when I had been walking in the Park on a Sunday afternoon with one of my new acquaintances we sat on a bench, and as we talked of books and life, I leaned over and picked up a twig from the path before us and began to break it between my fingers. "Oh!" he exclaimed.

It seemed he had found me out. I was breaking the twig between my fingers, and obviously, he explained to me, the twig was a phallic symbol. I was wanting to destroy the phallic in myself. I had secretly a desire to be a woman. (Mem. pp. 244-245)

Anderson never again takes up this subject in regard to himself, but the need for comradeship is ever present. It is also apparent that he had sexual encounters with a number of different women, but he did not seem to have found these encounters completely satisfactory. Often in his writings and private correspondence he uses the phrase, "the confusions of sex." Early in his writing career he tells Waldo Frank of the breakup of his first marriage.

You perhaps do not know that I was married and the father of three children, that I had to undertake the delicate and difficult task of breaking up that marriage and of trying to win the real love of that woman out of marriage and outside the difficulties and complications of sex. (Letters, p. 8)

Finally, there is considerable evidence to suggest that a complete sexually and spiritually harmonious intimacy with a woman was something unknown to Anderson. Later he came to believe that this was impossible to men of his era, especially to artists. One final item is revealing. In an unpublished, undated (probably written in the thirties) sketch entitled "The Artist and his Children" Anderson writes:

The parents of a child get married. They are a man and a woman. Of course they go into a bedroom.

There, at the very beginning, is a terrible fact. There is the test of the intimacy of love. How many people pull that off? Not many, I'll tell you that.

They do something in the bedroom of course. It is not difficult to do something. Almost any man and woman together can do something.

What they do very likely destroys the life in the bedroom, what modern architects call, "the master bedroom," forever. They patch it up later, of course, after a fashion.

I think that, in America at least, men are largely to blame. How many men are lovers. Why they are rare as artists.

They just function, that's all. Everyone knows that. You ask any woman.

.....
If you think that sex alone settles anything you are foolish. Women want to respect their men. In most cases how can they?

.....
By my notion, you see, it starts when the parents go into a bedroom for the first time. Two people are going toward each other in this intense personal way. Everything is at stake.

What is at stake?

Their whole future with each other and with their children.

Back of them their parents and grandparents, what they have done to each other. It spreads out. The challenge is big, big. You can see that.¹³

Implicit in this sketch is Anderson's notion of the problem of the male in the machine age, but at its root is Anderson's own unusual sexual make-up. The difficulty of a successful sexual relationship was something strongly impressed on Anderson's mind. For he had never

approached a woman with the completely and continuously open soul which makes sex a part of a total intimacy and therefore easy and natural. There were things, he was convinced, that she could simply not participate in.

One must gather up all these elements of Anderson before confronting the very blunt statement he makes in an unpublished sketch.

. . . I have seldom been a wholehearted lover of women. I could never really believe in women artists and cannot to this day. Perhaps in some essential part of me-- never in the flesh--I have, all of my life, loved men more than I have ever loved women.¹⁴

The bisexuality that he admits to here and that there is so much evidence of in his life has to be seen in some larger perspective. First, there is no evidence to believe that he ever indulged in any physical homosexual activity. Second, every normal person is to some extent bisexual in that he needs and craves the company of his own sex. In using the term "bisexual" to describe Anderson I am saying that he appears to have had both a homosexual and a heterosexual self.¹⁵ In this he was unusual in that he had a pronounced urge to seek out men and enter into more intimate relationships with them than he ever could with women. His most complete, most meaningful intimacies excluded women and therefore prevented sexual harmony and fulfillment. To this extent his sexuality was distorted. His heterosexuality was mostly physical and his homosexuality was largely spiritual and closely bound up with his notion of art and the artist. That sex should be confused and difficult for him was inevitable. In Anderson bisexuality describes only his unusual attraction for both sexes. I am not equipped to deal with the more subtle psychological aspects of this phenomenon.

III

It is already clear--and it will become more so--how the two strains of character described come together and work upon one another. Anderson could not be content to write successful tales; he had to be an artist. He was convinced that the art world was exclusively the man's world. Whether his bisexuality caused or was a result of this conviction would be difficult to say. The sources of this conviction are unclear. There is no evidence that he ever read or heard from anyone that women cannot be artists. He knew that there were women artists in literary history and he personally knew a number of talented women artists. His own second wife became an accomplished sculptor. And some of these women he very much admired. It does not seem sufficient to ascribe his exclusion of women from art to his great vanity. It is more likely that there was something in the women about him which he never discovered. He never really knew them in their complete physical, emotional, and intellectual selves. He encountered them in one aspect or the other, but a distorted sexuality prevented him from giving his total self and therefore from ever receiving theirs. He reserved too much for men, for art.

So in conjunction with what may have been an already present sexual ambivalence, Anderson's passion to play a role took on sexual dimensions. His great drive to succeed as an artist, to play the complete role, brought him closest to men, or to women he considered "man-like," who could feed him knowledge of the artist role and add

to his sense of himself in that role. This study is about how that passion, in all its dimensions, affected his life and influenced his development as an artist. The later chapters of this study will suggest how Anderson's bisexuality affected his choice of the role of folk-bard and how that bisexuality colored the portraits he created in Winesburg, Ohio and other stories.

Notes

¹Sherwood Anderson's Memoirs (New York, 1942), p. 138. Hereafter cited in the text using abbreviation Mem. and page numbers.

²"French Reminiscence," Story, XIX (September-October, 1941), 65.

³Sherwood Anderson, A Story Teller's Story (New York, 1924), p. 207.

⁴Ibid., p. 303.

⁵Ibid., pp. 303-304.

⁶Ibid., p. 21.

⁷Sherwood Anderson (Stanford, 1951), p. 32.

⁸Perhaps Women (New York, 1931), p. 7.

⁹Ibid., pp. 57-58.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 140.

¹¹Letters of Sherwood Anderson, ed. Howard Mumford Jones and Walter B. Rideout (Boston, 1953), p. 377. Hereafter cited in the text as Letters followed by page numbers.

¹²Charles Bockler, a friend of Anderson's son John who was a New York bookkeeper. His paintings caught the eye of the elder Anderson.

¹³Unpublished manuscript in the Newberry Library, Chicago.

¹⁴"Brother Earl," unpublished, undated sketch manuscript in the Newberry Library. Not to be confused with Chapter 9, Book II of Memoirs, which is also titled "Brother Earl." It could be that this sketch was meant to be included in Memoirs. If so it was written late in Anderson's life. The unfinished Memoirs was begun in 1938.

¹⁵There are no conclusive studies of bisexuality. However, Sexual Behavior in the Human Male (Philadelphia, 1948), by Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin has information useful for this study. The Kinsey work is only a report and contains little on the causes and effects of various types of sexual behavior. On bisexuality Kinsey says, "Since only 50 percent of the population is exclusively heterosexual throughout its adult life, and since only 4 percent of the population is exclusively homosexual throughout its life, it appears that nearly half (46%) of the population engages in both heterosexual and homosexual activities, or reacts to persons of both sexes, in the course of their adult life" (p. 656). Kinsey goes on to point out that a three point scale (heterosexual, bisexual, and homosexual) "does not adequately describe the continuum which is the

reality in nature." Kinsey suggests a seven point scale (p. 638) with "0" as "Exclusively heterosexual with no homosexual" and "6" as "Exclusively homosexual." The other categories are predominantly one but more or less incidentally the other.

I personally believe that Anderson was "3" on the scale: "Equally heterosexual and homosexual" or "4": "Predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual." However, the main points I wish to make are that, as Kinsey says "the heterosexuality or homosexuality of many individuals is not an all-or-none proposition" (emphasis mine) and that the many in between (which I describe as "bisexual") do not necessarily engage in both types of sexual activity, but may only have what Kinsey calls a "psychic response" to members of either sex.

Chapter Two

Discovery in Elyria

In his Memoirs Anderson looked back at his business years as a series of roles and an evolving discontent. At first his part was the fulfillment of his dreams.

Now I would be a business man. I would have a desk in an office building in a city. I would ride about in trains, travel up and down. I would go into manufacturers' offices. I would wear good clothes. I would become a rising young man. (Mem. p. 136)

He defined for himself and pursued the part with relish.

. . . I bought a long black morning coat, such as congressmen wore, got striped trousers, patent leather shoes, a silk hat.

I had a leather case for the silk hat. I bought long evening clothes. I had one of the sort of tall hats that fold up flat.

You snap it and there you are. You can go to the theater. People will think you are rich, a rich young blade. (Mem. p. 140)

The Memoirs attempt to complete the piece by a story of Anderson's courting a rich manufacturer's daughter.¹ He did in fact at this time court and eventually marry a rich girl in 1904. Cornelia Lane was the daughter of a well-to-do wholesaler in footwear from Toledo. She was a college graduate, well-dressed and cultivated, attractive and intelligent. She fitted the part admirably.

I had gotten into the position described, the money beginning to roll in, my house on a good enough street. I was married and already had children. If I went on, doing over and over the tricks I had learned, I told myself, there was no special reason why I should not establish a family of my own.

.
. . . When the time came, I'd send my children off to some fashionable Eastern university. . . . Oh gorgeous future. My wife in swell gowns all day long with a cloud of servants

about to wait on her. --You see that it was all to be in the end a kind of decoration of self, the woman who happened to be my wife not at all considered, my children never considered.

.
 To play the game was the thing, and men who did play the game were looked up to with respect. (Mem. pp. 152-153)

Anderson played the game well in Elyria. There were the children, the big house, the entertainment, the discussion groups, and the golf. But he found that he could not continue to live with it.

My point is . . . the picture I am trying to give here is of a man not easy flowing, in fact terribly self-conscious. I was that and hated it in myself.

I was doing the thing millions of Americans do, trying to make my life and my work at that time, which was of no importance, seem important. Having been a slow moving dreamy boy I had made myself into this crisp thing that hurried to an office, sat at a big desk, rang bells, got suddenly and sometimes nastily executive. Do this and do that, I cried to others . . . (Mem. p. 153).

Later on he identified the problem.

I had continually hurried from place to place--walked rapidly, even I think set my jaw in a certain way. There must have been in my head some notion of a part I was to play in life as a successful young man. Perhaps it had been built up in me by my reading of popular literature. I talked rapidly, rushed through the streets to my office, slammed doors, gave orders to my subordinates in sharp tones. I was merely trying to enact the part of the pushing, bright successful young American business man.

It was all absurd and I began to realize it. (Mem. pp. 192-193)

We do not know exactly when Anderson first began to find himself unsettled. The research done by Mr. William Sutton on Anderson's early life corresponds well with the picture given in the Memoirs. In addition, his research reveals that opinions about him were quite varied; and that very probably the tendency to play many minor and varied supporting roles had pretty well taken hold by then. Some found him

charming, pleasant, sociable, hospitable, and even happy-to-lucky, while another saw him as "very moody, might hardly answer questions. . . . very deliberate, not excitable, not a mixer."² There were equally conflicting notions about him among the people who worked for him. Some of them found him impersonal and a rather hard driver. Others thought he was very considerate, pleasant, and a "grand man" to work for. Irving Howe gives what I believe is the most credible explanation of these many personalities.

These recollections of Elyria citizens may be partly distorted by a common assumption that for a paint manufacturer to become a "highbrow" writer he must originally have been "something of a nut." But unquestionably there is a particle of truth in each of them, and to put them side by side is merely to show that the Elyria Sherwood Anderson was a badly splintered personality. To his secretary he seemed fractious; to his friend daring, as by the standards of Elyria in 1908 he no doubt was; and to his banker impractical. Which is to say that he had no core or self controlling all his relationships, but could only play a variety of conflicting and ultimately paralyzing roles.³

With the crumbling of his role, Anderson's identity also crumbled. The pain of the Elyria experience for Anderson was not just a conflict between the desire to write and the pressure to maintain the business. If he had immediately recognized such a conflict, psychoanalyzed himself, so to speak, the final collapse would probably not have happened. He might have made the switch in a more conventional and orderly way, much as any man changes jobs. But he did not have the vantage point of "artist" at the time. He was not an artist and didn't believe that he was, despite efforts to convince himself. He didn't know who or what he was. All he knew for sure was that his business was failing and he didn't much care. He walked away not only to escape, but to find

something about which to care. He had to find a new role in order to find a new identity.

Later on Anderson tried to create the impression that he had staged that whole notorious amnesia episode, that it was just one of his best and most effective performances. But he was at that time much too unsure of himself to bring it off. In the old role he was not only questioning but failing. In the new role of artist he was hopelessly insecure and generally not being accepted. In writing his Memoirs Anderson, if he doesn't always give us the literal truth, does give us what is probably a fairly accurate picture of his state of mind.

When he first found himself suddenly disgusted with the rising young bourgeois role, he began to take stock. With the role gone he began to push off all the trappings of the role. He stopped the golf and the chasing. He began to see his family as baggage from the old role. "The wife I had got--I never knew her. She was, I dare say, absorbed in her children" (Mem. p. 157). He began to hole himself up in an upstairs room and dream about new roles. "I had got a passion for history and spent long evenings reading the story of man's efforts. 'Why was I not a soldier?' I asked myself" (Mem. p. 157). But he found himself with no real part to play.

In the room I could be what I pleased. I had already read Sartor Resartus, and at home, when I was a lad, my father in his rare gay moments had often sung a ballad . . .

Fair words can make fair songs, me lad,

But it's the clothes that make the man.

That might be. The room into which I had come to was then but another suit of clothes to cover my nakedness. "Uncover not thy father's nakedness." There was my own nakedness, the naked fact of myself, my own figure in the little world of men and women about me, a subtle kind of cheating I was always practicing. I couldn't face it yet. "I will not be

myself. I will not admit to myself that what I am I am,"
I cried in my closed room. (Mem. 159)

Without a role Anderson was nothing, no one. So he says he began to try to escape out of himself. He would play little roles in his imagination, Napoleon, others. "Outbreaks of this sort couldn't last long, although the tendency in me to pretend, to be always trying to make myself out something I wasn't, went on and on" (Mem. p. 160). No doubt at this time the idea of artist first occurred to Anderson. "In our family there had been from the beginning a kind of instinctive feeling for the arts" (Mem. p. 189). Cornelia, who had played her part so well, found herself alone. Her husband had become a character in search of a part, the old role entirely abandoned.

. . . I have probably been a bit too pretentious in thinking of myself, at this stage of my life, as a more or less thwarted artist and thus a little set aside from the others.

I have an idea that my wife spent a good deal of time crying that winter. . . . "Well, never mind her now," I said to myself, "never mind anyone." It must be that I am a genius as it is only the genius who can be as cruel as I was then. You see I take the genius to be no more than a man who has something to settle with himself, and I presume that I did at that time feel that there was something in me trying to arm itself against the enemy, society, and I remember often thinking thoughts like these . . . "Hell," I thought, "there is this woman I have happened to take as wife. It must be an accident that I have taken her rather than some other woman. It is quite sure I do not love. How can such a man as myself love?" (Mem. pp. 161-162)

In order to get at how Anderson came to writing tales we must go back to his bisexuality. Sutton's research reveals some provocative attitudes, again from Elyria people. "His [Anderson's] golf partner has commented, 'As a person, I would say that Anderson was a man's man and spent most of his time with them.' His caddy at the country

club did not consider him a good player but thought he played for the associations the game gave him."⁴ Anderson himself writes of his first impulse to give up the role of bright young business man. It hit him, he says, in the middle of a golf game.

I went on my way that day, walking across the field, looking back at the others, at the men of that foursome, men who were my friends in that town. . . .

There must have been something, perhaps a kind of warm male comradeship in life sought. I had already read Whitman. (Mem. p. 157)

How the impulse toward writing came out of his very strong attraction for men is revealed in the chapter of the Memoirs called "A Man of Ideas."

I got in with a certain man of the town. He had a small business in the town, a little print shop on a side street and occasionally he did printing of form letters and circulars for me. . . . He was a small man of perhaps thirty with a dry leathery skin and unmarried.

.
At any rate the man interested me and I am not sure but that he became the first friend I ever had in this town. We began going about together. . . . going into little saloons and drinking together. The man always drank sloe gin, saying that he thought the drink increased his vitality. "It puts me on edge," he said, "makes me want women. And women," he said, "are among the few things in life it is worth a man's while to desire."

It was this man, whose name was Luther Pawsey . . . with whom I began spending a good many hours and going off with on secret trips. (Mem., pp. 175-176)

William Sutton has determined that Luther Pawsey was very likely Perry S. Williams, a newspaper editor who was by all accounts Anderson's best friend in Elyria. Williams and Anderson were supposed to have walked and talked a great deal, and Cornelia remembers that Sherwood liked Williams and was always quoting him. Sutton does not believe that it was Williams who is "the man of ideas" in Anderson's Memoirs, but insists that Pawsey "is a character conceived especially to serve

as a foil [and only modelled after Williams] for the delineations of Anderson's announced spiritual mutations." His reason is that Williams is said to have remarked to someone, "Do you know this man Anderson has an ambition to be a writer? He told me he spends most of his nights writing."⁵ Why this remark should exclude Williams is unclear to me. The Luther Pawsey of the Memoirs and the relationship between the two men seem to me to be too sharply and richly drawn to be just a character conceived as a foil. Luther is almost certainly a real person, probably Williams.

There is much about Luther's ideas on the subject of women. Anderson seems to have remembered this aspect of him, so it must have been conspicuous. Later Anderson speculates about Luther's sexuality, but it never occurs to him that perhaps when he came to the matter of women Luther "doth protest too much."

In any case, it was Luther Pawsey who first argued Anderson into seeing that he should be a writer. Luther printed Anderson's advertising circulars and often remarked about them, typically, "It is so eloquent, and so full of bunk" (Mem., p. 175). Anderson says he was flattered by Luther's interest and allowed him to pursue the topic.

He began then to talk of words as no one had ever spoken of them before.

"The truth is," he went on, "that, as you wrote, you were thinking of someone else. I know how it was. You imagined some man getting the paint circular in the mail. He is a man you never saw and never will see. Now you tell me this. At bottom you are not so proud of the business you are in. You are a word man. I can tell from reading these circulars you give me to print that you are not interested really in making paint.

"And you are not interested in getting rich. If you were, you would not be wasting your time with me. Suppose you should begin to respect words," he said, "You can't continue

to use them really to deceive people, as you are doing here." He pointed again to my paint circular. There was something he was trying to say and that I was trying to understand.

I was confused, he thought, and did not know what I wanted. In reality, according to the fellow, as I sat writing, I thought nothing at all of my paint or of my money getting but rather thought of some mysterious man, away off somewhere in the distance, to whom I wanted to get close.

"I was attracted to you," said Luther, "because one day in setting up one of your circulars I suddenly realized the truth about you." (Mem., p. 180)

The "truth" subsequently hit Anderson.

It is to be borne in mind that I had been at this thing . . . this advertising writing, for several years. An accident had led me into being an advertising man.

But was it an accident?

.
Walking at night through the night streets of an Ohio town, after one of my talks with Luther, he having put his finger on something in me . . . love of words . . . "you have a kind of talent in the use of simple words. . . . occasionally, when you try, you can make a sentence. . . . it's rather a shame, really, Sherwood for you to be in the bunko game you are in."

These little knives stuck into me by Luther, left sticking in me. (Mem., p. 184)

It is easy to envision how Anderson's imagination, taken by the possibility of a special talent within him, filled out for him a new role, a costume for his nakedness, just as it had long ago provided him with a business suit. He already had a responsive audience of one, so undoubtedly his attraction for Luther was compounded.

To be sure, to do it [advertising] at all you had to have, born in you, perhaps a certain kind of talent.

For example, to be a real story teller. I rather think I always was one. You see this experience with the man Luther must be thought of also as a growing thing, my being more and more with the man, sensing things in him. Let us think of it as a kind of love making on his part. And I do not mean a physical love making.

But he had got hold of something in me. (Mem., p. 181)

In making this discovery about himself he made simultaneous discoveries.

The slow painful effort of a man to arise out of something. It is quite true that, at that time, I had no connection at all with arts or letters.⁶ Is it any wonder that all of my reactions to those immediately about me at that time were so brutal?

I was walking home from Luther's shop on a night in the fall. . . . "It is curious," I said to myself, "but this man is doing something to me." There were moments of doubt. I have never been a man to whom homosexual men are attracted . . . the sort of thing that happens to men . . . leg grabbing, sudden caresses bestowed . . . the sort of thing that other men are always telling me of having had to go through . . . but already I knew of such things.

"Is it something of that sort he is after?" I asked myself. The idea that love could grow as between man and man, a thing outside sex, a feeling perhaps founded upon brotherhood . . . realization of self in another man . . . your own curious loneliness in life in him too . . . understanding of self a little got at perhaps through understanding of another . . . all of this was, at the time of which I am now speaking, new to me. (Mem., p. 23)

Whatever the literal accuracy of this chapter of the Memoirs, I am convinced that it is something more than what it is credited to be by Sutton. He says, "The account is apparently fictional, but one may assume the spirit of it is accurate. . . . "The Man of Ideas" who is presented under the pseudonym of Luther Pawsey, . . . represents artistic consciousness, the appreciation of the true beauties in life and art, the ethical realization of his responsibility to the words he was misusing as a slick advertiser."⁷ While I would credit Anderson's ability to create such an episode, it is something more than a representation of his "artistic consciousness." Luther Pawsey was a real person. We know from Anderson's correspondence that there were in his life a number of such relationships with men as the one he describes

here with Luther. We can say with some certainty that there was a man in Elyria, probably the newspaper editor Williams, who saw a talent in Anderson and pointed it out to him. That is, he found Anderson more or less lost and without identity, pointed out a new role to him and accepted him in it. In this experience Anderson also found for the first time that close companionship that he speaks of so often in his later life. He saw how such a brotherhood can reach to the deepest inner life and touch the sources of what became Anderson's art. This became the brotherhood of art which was so vital to the later Anderson.

What he also discovered was that there may have been in such attachments something sexual in nature. Of course, he could not have understood this factor entirely and never did, but whenever he talks about such relationships he finds it necessary to warn his correspondents or readers away from concluding that these were homosexual relationships. He defined homosexuality exclusively by its physical manifestations, "leg grabbing," "sudden caresses." He felt confident that these brotherhoods were "a thing outside sex." But the very need to raise the issue of sex indicates that he himself was not entirely sure of how to characterize the close bond he felt with so many men in his lifetime.

The sexual relationship in his marriage with Cornelia was also very much out of order at this time in his life. He admitted to having been unfaithful to his wife. "Most of the bright young businessmen I knew were" (Mem., p. 154). In the period of his greatest trauma he says, "It must have been that now I wanted more than anything in the world to

draw close to someone. Even at this late hour there were furtive and often half desperate efforts of myself and my wife to draw close to each other. But the efforts to draw close never succeeded" (Mem., p. 187). Most convincing, however, is evidence from a letter written in 1917.

I shall never forget a quite childish thing in the life of [Cornelia] and myself. Just because I was married to her when I did not want to be I imagined terrible things about her. . . . I pictured her as my jailer and terrible hate woke in me. At night I even dreamed of killing her.⁸

There could not have been a harmonious sexual relationship with Anderson feeling this way. And we can only speculate to what extent the relationship with the man he calls Luther Pawsey affected him sexually. But in looking at the actual events of this period as they were uncovered by Mr. Sutton we can, I believe, get a notion about how his entertaining the idea of himself as artist might have affected him.

In his Memoirs and in A Story Teller's Story Anderson tries to create the impression that he was writing in secret. "When I had been doing my writing, unknown and unseen, there was a sort of freedom. One worked, more or less in secret, as one might indulge in some forbidden vice."⁹ In actual fact the whole community knew about his writing. His secretary had typed his first two books and corrected his spelling. He had already made known his determination to her to "get out of business into writing." His business associates and stockholders all knew he was writing. The newspapers even identified him as "manufacturer and author."¹⁰ In fact, the evidence is that he worked to encourage the notion of himself as author in Elyria. In a letter to Sutton, a Miss Florence Terry, who lived in Elyria at this time, reports:

I knew Sherwood Anderson when . . . he was just beginning to write. He, his wife, my mother and I were very good friends, and often visited in one another's homes. It was in his home that he started to read to us the manuscript of his first book, "Windy MacPherson's Son" and continued until we [Miss Terry and her mother] told him we could stand no more of it. We told him the better reading public would never accept it.

He was very confident of his ability as a possible creative artist in the realm of the novel. . . . He became absolutely absorbed in his ambition to write and disliked business and everything connected with it. He was sitting up most of the night writing."

Sutton says that Cornelia remembered that Miss Terry and her mother visited the Andersons, when Sherwood read aloud "to be able to get a better view of his work. Sherwood never lost an opportunity to read his work aloud."¹²

Anderson had by the last two years of his stay in Elyria adopted for himself the role of artist and was clearly trying to get others to accept him in this role, apparently with little success. In his Memoirs he tells how he switched over to the new role.

The man he calls Luther Pawsey was not the only one who appreciated Anderson as an artist. His brother Earl, who spent some time in Elyria with Sherwood, was thought to have an artistic bent by the other Andersons.

I think now that it was this brother as well as my friend Luther, who had a great deal to do with my becoming a writer and understanding a little the impulses and purposes of the artist man. I think I must have clung to him a good deal-- . . . My brother Earl was ordinarily no talker but on those nights walking across fields or standing by a fence, at some wood's edge, . . . he began to talk.

Why, here was talk such as I had never heard before. It was always of people. Of things in people felt and of the wonders and glories of nature. Sometimes he talked thus passionately for hours. (Mem., pp. 190-191)

In addition there was a woman.

She was an intellectual, a woman of a type I had never seen before. She knew the literature of many countries, told me many little stories of the lives of writers. She knew nature--the names of trees, flowers and grasses. . . . Being with her was a kind of wonder to me, and I walked with her every afternoon and often at night. There was a scandal in the town about us although our relationship was always quite innocent. . . . I found myself able to talk to her as I was unable to talk to my brother and she it was who suggested that I actually begin writing. (Mem., p. 192)

It was these three people who taught Anderson how to put on the new role and play the new part. The crisp and pushing businessman had to go.

It was all absurd and I began to realize it. The realization must have come partly from my brother and partly from the woman with whom I walked and talked. Both of them spoke slowly with soft voices--there were long times of quiet, of silence as we walked. Dimly I began to realize that in quiet and in silence there is also a growth of relationships. So I began trying for a quiet of my own, forced myself to stroll rather than to rush through streets. I practiced talking slowly and even developed a drawl which I still have.

It was very difficult. It was like a child learning to walk--the blind rush of so much of American life had got into my bones. I had to begin over and over. . . . I will walk slowly, will stroll, rather than rush, I told myself. In the same way I had to check my rush of words--I stopped at some farmhouse in the country or to talk to some farmer plowing in the field. "Be quiet. Do not try to impress him with your own personality. Let him talk. See if you cannot be quiet, lead him to tell you something of himself," I whispered to myself.

It worked. All people wanted to tell you their story. Innumerable people are being hurt and thwarted by life--they want to talk--they want affection.

More and more I found I could return to my desk and lose myself in the writing of others. I tried to put down little sketches of things seen--little glimpses out of life given me by others--my writing began to have a little form. I felt it. If I could not think clearly of what seemed to me the false position in life into which I had got I could take some imaginary figure, a tall man with red hair, let us say, and put him in the same position in life in which I found myself.

It was not myself. It was another. The imaginary figure perhaps created in my fancy began to live a little. . . . He became more and more real to me and in his growing reality I more and more lost self. I became happier, . . . began to be more and more absorbed in the life about me.

But it was all disastrous to my business. (Mem., p. 193)

He may have been happier in his escaping into imagination, but he was not happy. Merely practicing the new part was not enough. Not only was his business going to ruin, but the confusion of his identity was not being resolved. His friends and business associates indulged him, but he knew they could never accept him as an artist. And so he could not completely accept himself as such.

This problem found its head in his relationship to his wife Cornelia. He writes of her in his Memoirs:

. . . You see the woman I had married was educated. She had traveled in Europe while I . . . to tell the truth I could at that time just spell the simplest words --I was a man just out of the laboring class and to the American middleclass that was then, and is perhaps yet, a disgrace.

I do not believe the woman felt that, and in fact I am now sure she did not. But she did perhaps think, quite naturally, that a man as ignorant of the world of words as I was could never be a writer and she had already spoken to me of the matter. . . . She had said to me, intending only, I am very sure, to be kind, that I was not at all the sort of man that could ever become a man of letters . . . and perhaps, just because I may have been more than half afraid she was quite right in her pronouncement, I hated her for making it. (Mem., p. 189)

Despite Anderson's attempts to be fair in his judgment of Cornelia, his more and more desperate need to be accepted as an artist imposed on him only one way of regarding her. She was an obstacle, unwittingly and perhaps justifiably, but nevertheless, an obstacle.

In the first place, my first wife, the mother of my children had been unable to believe in me as an artist

and I could not blame her. She was a woman, who, having married one sort of man, had awakened to find she had got another. She had married a bright young business man, one who might, had he remained as he seemed to be when she had married him, a good father, a good provider. . . .

However, I was determined, would not be turned aside, and there had been a long struggle, ending in a divorce. (Mem., p. 347)

Again in a letter dated 1937 Anderson makes reference to "the old struggle between the children's mother and myself . . . she determined I was to stay in business and I determined I'd go my own road."¹³ In these instances and others Anderson continually implies that Cornelia opposed his writing, that she sternly kept the pressure on him to do "his duty." But Sutton's research has allowed us to define this struggle much more closely. Cornelia's attitude seems to have been more one of good natured indulgence. She was not only aware of his writings, she may have been somewhat pleased with them and maybe even a little proud of him. Sutton reports on an interview he had with Cornelia in 1946:

"Sherwood never went on a bus or anywhere that he didn't come home with the life story of some acquaintance. All these later came out in his stories. It was interesting to see them come out." According to her [Cornelia], he wrote when he wanted and wanted to a good deal. . . . The whole idea was satisfactory to her. "I am not practical. I guess I never have been practical. The spirit of adventure was strong in both of us."¹⁴

What Cornelia did do was remonstrate with Sherwood about working all day and staying up to write all night. She apparently enjoyed the stories. Friends of the Anderson's reported that "it is certainly untrue that she ever discouraged Sherwood's writing efforts, but, on the contrary, did all she could to help and encourage him."¹⁵

About what she thought of his stories she says little. But even if she did encourage him and enjoy his stories, Anderson was undoubtedly quite right in saying that she was "unable to believe in me as an artist." To do so would have been to contradict all the impressions she had no doubt taken about "men of letters" from her education and her reading. And, much more difficult than that, she would have had to accept with some equanimity the collapse of the business and the family security.

Clearly Cornelia accepted and perhaps enjoyed her husband's writing, but accepting him as an artist and allowing the business to go to ruin was another matter. This was not good enough for Anderson and it is easy to see why he would turn to those who could accept him, like Luther Pawsey. He must have felt like a child in her encouragement and help. It was much like a mother's teaching a five-year-old how an automobile operates, knowing full well that he cannot drive it until he is more mature by many years. She cannot encourage him to drive away. Anderson very poignantly captured this kind of indulgence and refusal to be taken seriously in a story published in Smart Set in 1916 called "The Story Writers." Albert Prindle, "a lawyer with a soul," aspires to be a story writer but complains about the uninspiring atmosphere of his surroundings. "Give me a few months," he says, "in an atmosphere of adventure and of free, full living and I will make them look up." The much over-stated point of the story is that events full of "adventure and life" are happening all around him while he is searching for romance. But one incident reflects on how his ambitions were received at home.

Seeking atmosphere Prindle had tried the experiment of arranging a room in the attic of his home for what he called a "workshop." He adorned the walls of the room with prints cut from magazines and had in it a writing desk he had made after a plan shown in an arts and crafts publication. For an hour or two after dinner Prindle wrote religiously all through one winter until one wet wet evening when he came home to find the family washing strung up in his workshop. After that he felt that the place had in some way lost a certain flavor he had been trying very hard to give it.¹⁶

It is easy to see Anderson in this situation, mildly amusing in a story but pathologically serious in life.

Such an attitude on the part of Cornelia, inevitable as it was, must have compounded Anderson's sexual disorientation and given rise to the later belief that women cannot be artists or really understand the artist. For understanding and acceptance he had to go to men just as Albert Prindle in "The Story Writers" had to go to the local druggist. It was Anderson's close business associate, Waldo E. Purcell, who, I believe, best understood the dilemma which caused Anderson's collapse and flight. Perhaps he knew more about Anderson than he was willing to say to Sutton, "He appeared to have suffered from a case of lost identity."¹⁷

The combination of impending business failure, rejection of and uncertainty in his role as an artist, and sexual disorientation made some kind of collapse inevitable. Orderly withdrawal or even a slick exit was not possible to Anderson in his condition. We have the simple truth in a letter published for the first time by Mr. Sutton.

. . . One morning my mind became a blank and I ran away from Elyria, scurrying across fields, sleeping in ditches, filling my pockets with corn from the fields that I nibbled like a beast. . . . I was afraid of everything in human form. When, after several days of wandering my mind

came into my body and I dragged himself weary and yet glad of my final defeat into a hospital in a strange town and slept.¹⁸

Mr. Sutton has now made available for the first time the record of what was happening psychologically to Anderson at this time. For Anderson himself wrote and mailed to Cornelia a series of notes which were totally subjective and apparently written unconsciously. Here is part of what he wrote:

Lenard--Saw Mrs
Lenard--Lenard
Elyria. Told her
I was g going to
Elsinore--T Pow-
ers Elsinore.--

[heavy, three-inch line]

Why do the children cry. They are everywhere underfoot. Among them run yellow dogs with brown dirt stuck on their backs. The dogs howl and the children cry. At night the dogs howl and the children cry and your head hurts. There are so many children and so many dogs and so many long streets filled with dirty houses. If one does ask he

could find Cornelia but if you ask the people they will hit you. Mrs. Leonard had a book in her hand and tried to hit me with it. There is a place near Bedford. A child that cried looked at a man with a pipe in his mouth who growled like a yellow dog. I tried to drink some beer but it was bitter and the room was full of men who would have hit me but I ran

[Page 2]

Why does a man stand in
 a field shooting a
 gun--I crawled in a
 big tile and he didn't
 see me. It was cold
 at night. Think of Elsinore
 Why are men so proud of
 a house--They walk
 around it and take
 pictures.
 Writing don't hurt your
 head. It's just being
 hit with things
 Ask Cornelia about men
 and the houses

[Page 3]

.....
 Elsinore--Elsinore
 Elsinore--Elsinore
 Get to Elsinore
 T Powers Elsinore
 River at Elsinore
 River at Elsinore
 Bridge at Elsinore
 Elsinore Water Works
 T Powers head hurt
 also. went to Elsinore
 They hit T Powers. One
 after another they hit
 him. Like you.

[Page 4]

.....
 They put his name
 on a wall--near
 Elsinore.
 They didn't mean to
 hurt anyone. They
 didn't mean to hit you.
 Keep thinking of
 that and walk Dont
 talk to anyone. Dont

Hit any one Give Robert
 Piece of corn--tell
 him how it grows
 Don't let them hit
 him. After while
 your head won't hurt
 Walk and keep still.
 Go to Elsinore.
 Hamlet--Elsinore--

[Page 5]

Cornelia--am hidden
 No one knows--dont
 tell
 I didn't want to fish
 in the river. Why
 did they hit me
 There were so many
 Negroes.¹⁹

Mr. Sutton has only recently made these notes available and has offered, with the help of a psychologist, an extensive interpretation which I would like to summarize here.

Sutton observed that the letter is full of ugliness and Elsinore is the escape valve. "The fantasy world of the fictional Elsinore, so closely identified with his kindred sufferer, Hamlet, is the doorway to escape, to the pleasant land where the head no longer hurts."²⁰ The letter reflects Anderson's rejection of his world and his feelings of ineffectuality against the brutal, unsatisfactory aspects of his life. Some elements of the letter suggest rejection of the female sex ("long streets filled with dirty houses") and others suggest the rejection of male sexuality ("I tried to drink some beer"). The frequent references to hitting relate "to the feeling of being attacked by arrogant, brutal forces, whether they are essentially sexual or not," but Anderson's response is passive. "The hurt is received in silence and worked off in walking." However, Anderson recognizes that these negative, ugly elements in his world are not focused specifically and antagonistically on him, but only that he finds himself in an unhappy situation not of his choosing and is made to suffer because of it. Cornelia, to whom the notes are addressed, is not a part of the antagonistic forces but a "benign confidante." The line "If one does

ask he could find Cornelia" represents "an unfulfilled approach to possible externalization of the problem, possibly sexual in basis, with her. . . . Perhaps he would like to discuss with his wife their own sexual bases but does not. At any rate, he does not seem to include her in the besetting forces, which might well be thought of as including sex." Sutton is unable to identify "T Powers" or Mrs. Leonard.

Sutton quite properly warns of pat if unprovable conclusions and the "temptation into useless insistence on specific symbolisms. The writer's effort has been to demonstrate that the main stream of the meaning which Anderson wrote into this compulsive letter was, unsurprisingly, directly related to the tremendous insecurity and unrest which he then felt."²¹

There is much of value in this interpretation but I would like to shift the emphasis slightly. I believe that clearly the central thrust of the letter is not rejection but being rejected. While I would not insist on these interpretations, I would like to suggest that the letter points not to a complete rejection but the rejection of a specific aspect of Anderson, namely the rejection of him as artist.

Sutton has interpreted Elsinore, Hamlet's castle, as "the fantasy world of the fictional Elsinore," "the realm of escape." I believe he is right about that, in light of the therapeutic purposes of Anderson's writing. But Elsinore is not only to be seen as a place of escape from the present condition but the object of the flight--"Get to Elsinore"--that is, the place of refuge and serenity.

Anderson leaves Elyria not just to get away but to go to Elsinore, the fictional world. The unconscious reason he leaves Elyria is to seek out the realm and the role of the artist. For in Elyria he is being rejected, being everywhere "hit" with things. Elyria citizens, the neighbors, the men in the bar, did not accept his writings as serious art, as Miss Terry has testified earlier, although they no doubt accepted him as a promising businessman and an asset to the community.

There is something especially provocative about "Mrs. Leonard had a book in her hand and tried to hit me with it." The basis for Cornelia's rejection of Anderson as "man of letters" was his lack of culture and education. He was acutely sensitive about this lack all his life. Surely his being hit with a book by a neighbor suggests his identity as artist is being assaulted by the world of culture and education. This interpretation seems irresistible because it is borne out by what we know of Anderson in his later years. The doubts created by this lack are not only in the local populace but in Anderson himself. He is also being hit from the inside, his own consciousness; thus the pain is primarily in the head. The only escape is in writing, because he can suspend or momentarily banish the fact of rejection and assert himself in the desired role. "Writing don't hurt your head. It's just being hit with things."

The assaults are not being directed at him as a person but as an artist. He is being hit unwittingly. His own doubts and those of his neighbors do not assail him frontally. They are in the form of skepticism and indifference toward him as artist; the assailants are not

to be blamed. "They didn't mean to hurt anyone. They didn't mean to hit you. Keep thinking of that and walk. Don't talk to anyone. Don't hit anyone."

Another provocative segment is "Give Robert/Piece of corn--tell him how it grows. Don't let them hit him." Corn was for Anderson the one overriding symbol of his own unique Midwestern artistry and appears throughout his letters and his works. Anderson may very well be here advising Cornelia to teach Robert about nature and art and protect him from the consequent suffering that Anderson himself is going through: "Don't let them hit him."

I agree with Sutton that there are strong sexual elements in this letter and what we have seen of Anderson's sexual ambivalence would confirm the possibility of rejection of both male and female sexuality. This confusion and ambivalence may have resulted in his rejection, not only of the business role, but of any sexual role in favor of the artistic role. There is some indication in his later life that he saw the artist as essentially bisexual, which is a rejection of any one exclusive sexual role.

Sutton's analysis of the role of Cornelia is good. She may not have been quite a "benign confidante," but she at least did not reject his writing and participated in his love of books and reading even if she could not accept him as a man of letters. But if he was uncertain and suspicious of her attitude toward his writing, that would complicate seriously what may have been an already present sexual confusion and difficulty. Such a compounded problem might have resulted in a rejection of her female sexuality and his own male role. "Why are

men so proud of a house [Sutton: "The house is a very common symbol for the female sex figure."]--They walk around it and take pictures."

I do not offer these interpretations in any doctrinaire way but as possibilities which could be confirmed in what we know of Anderson from other sources later in his life. There is evidence of sexual ambivalence throughout his life and even more evidence of his need to play a role to identify himself and then fill out that identity. These factors may very well have been at the root of his flight from Elyria. I do not believe that the collapse resulted simply from two counteracting inclinations and a failing business. These would cause suffering, of course, but I believe amnesia would result from more deeply rooted problems, such as the identity crisis I have described.

There is much that will always be unknown about the amnesia episode. But we can surmise that it was caused by some very basic difficulties in Anderson, more basic than just the problem of what he wanted to do with his life. Rather, it resulted from a suspension of identity. Anderson had only confusing hints of what he was and what he should do, and his years were getting on. Psychologically he couldn't continue this way. The amnesia attack forced the decision on him to at least undertake a search. He left Elyria and went to Chicago not to do something different--he went back to his old advertising job--but to find out whether he could be something different. He desperately hoped he could be an artist; but he had to find out for sure. In the meantime he could lose himself in writing.

The following chapter indicates Anderson's state of mind on arriving in Chicago and how acceptance of himself as artist came about in the acceptance of others who suggested the role of folk-bard.

Notes

- ¹"I Court a Rich Girl," pp. 136-149.
- ²William Sutton, Exit to Elsinore (Muncie, 1967), p. 2.
- ³Sherwood Anderson (Stanford, 1951), pp. 43-44.
- ⁴Sutton, p. 2.
- ⁵Sutton, p. 15.
- ⁶Except that Anderson was reading a lot.
- ⁷Sutton, p. 14.
- ⁸Letter to Marietta Finley, January 12, 1917. Marietta Finley was a long-time friend of Anderson who lived in Indianapolis. His relationship to her is not completely clear, but his many letters to her suggest that they were very close. These letters have only recently been deposited in the Newberry Library and are as yet unpublished.
- ⁹A Story Teller's Story, p. 316.
- ¹⁰Sutton, pp. 16-18.
- ¹¹Sutton, p. 20.
- ¹²Ibid.
- ¹³Letter to Mary Emmett, September 1, 1937.
- ¹⁴Sutton, p. 18.
- ¹⁵Sutton, pp. 20-21.
- ¹⁶"The Story Writers," Smart Set, XLVIII (January, 1916), 243.
- ¹⁷Sutton, p. 4.
- ¹⁸Letter to Marietta Finley, December 8, 1916.
- ¹⁹Sutton, pp. 37-39.
- ²⁰The quotes in this summary are taken at random from Sutton, pp. 28-30.
- ²¹Sutton, p. 30.

Chapter Three

A New Role and a New Wife

I

The new Anderson that came to Chicago in early 1913 was new only in that something had been added. The fractured identity that produced confusion and frustration was held together only by an affirmation of the will. A new self was going to be discovered. Each discovered witness to his artistic talent, the publication of a story in Harpers, the recognition of business associates, filled out the costume and helped to shape the hoped-for new role--artist. But the process was very slow and very painful.

Anderson gives a disproportionate part of his Memoirs over to those early months in Chicago. He tells of living with a street car conductor and his consumptive wife in cheap quarters on the south side. His old boss, Bayard Barton, takes him back tentatively on the strength of a recognized kinship in artistic aspirations and a respect for Anderson's flair for copy-writing. Whatever the truth of the conversation reported in the Memoirs between Anderson and his old boss, it points up all the instability that Anderson brought with him from Elyria.

And now he [Bayard Barton] was lecturing me. It was an old story. From my own wife I had got just such lectures.

"It is about this scribbling of yours. You cannot have such divided interests. Either you are an advertising man or you are a writer."

"Yes, I know," I said. "You are about to speak now of my lack of education. Such men as myself, who are not college men, whose minds have not been disciplined cannot become real writers."

"I have heard all of that, have heard it to weariness, but I do not see that what I do after hours, when I am not employed here in this office, can matter to you." (Mem., p. 203)

Part of Anderson's new affirmation was not to be in any way lured back to the old mercantile corruption. He was willing to write copy: "I will be corrupt but, God give me this grace, . . . let me in some way keep an honest mind. When I am being corrupt, perverting the speech of men, let me remain aware of what I am doing" (Mem., p. 202).

So in those first months Anderson had worked out an accomodation which let him live with his suspension of identity, and he was free to search. That freedom invigorated him, buoyed him up and gave him the wit to re-create all the old tricks, to take up the many minor and supporting roles while looking for the main part. In the advertising agency he became somewhat of a figure.

I had got into a certain position. I had become a little known as a writer. There had been a story of mine in Harpers published in July, 1914 . Word had been whispered about.

I had begun to let my hair grow a little long. Upon such a trifle as the necktie you wear a reputation may a little be built, and I did not wear such neckties as other men wore. I resumed wearing the strips of brightly colored cloth, passed through the ring. I was a little noticed. We, of the American business world, were . . . it was at least true at that time . . . in our dress, all of a pattern. Any little variation in any of our garb was, at once, noticed. I began, a little, to attract attention. When I was engaged, on these occasions, in one of those grim wrestling matches with advertising ideas, I continually passed my hand through my hair. (Mem., pp. 208-209)

To his boss Anderson's act, his attitudes and bearing, became annoying.

"Quit doing as you do, Sherwood."

"But what is it I do?"

"It's the way you come into the office, the way you walk. It is a certain expression on your face. It is as though you were always laughing at yourself and us."

"But I am laughing. It's the only thing I can do to save myself. I am caught in a trap. If I could not laugh I would be often on the point of suicide. (Mem., p. 207)

These minor roles sustained him, and if he could not yet play the major role of artist confidently, he was not above faking it for profit. In order to get his own advertising accounts he had to lure some businessmen who had a weakness for culture.

I had selected these men from among all those whose accounts I was sent to write. I made it my business to cultivate them. All of them were men who had a certain flair. They or perhaps their wives or daughters were after culture. It is an American passion. I got invited to their houses. I spoke of books. Some of my stories had begun to appear, for the most part, it is true, in the smaller literary magazines, of which they had never heard, but I saw to it that they did hear of them.

And then there was my older brother, a painter. I spoke of him. There was an exhibition of his work in one of the Chicago galleries and I saw that they got a catalog. (Mem., p. 209)

But this self-assured bit-part actor came in fear and trembling to the main role. One of the means for coping with this chronic insecurity--a problem he had even after he had won fame--was to deny that he sought the role of artist. Throughout his life he sang the joys of obscurity and cursed fame, but everything he did belied him. He often repeated in his later life what he said about those early years in Chicago, that he wrote primarily for some understanding and some escape.

How much I thought then of the matter of publication, of becoming a real author, I do not know. It seems to me now that I did not take that into consideration. I was hoping through writing to clear up the tangled mess of impulses within myself. For years I had been going about, observing, making notes in my mind. There was a notion that by transferring everything into an imaginary world I could get things straight. (Mem., p. 217)

In the role of artist Anderson may have thought this the proper attitude toward publication. However, in reality the matter of publication was always uppermost in his mind. Not only did he try to

get into print before leaving Elyria, as his secretary testified, but he was constantly "publicizing" his writings to anyone who would listen. Only public recognition could relieve a crushing self doubt. In those periods he used every device to get away from that doubt--running, drinking, dreaming, and writing:

. . . At such times I did not want to return to my rooms to sleep and sometimes went the length of going to some hotel for two or three nights. I was not quite clear whether it was my surroundings, the physical texture of the life about me, that I so hated, or myself for the reason that all the writing I had done with such fervor and hopefulness had suddenly seemed false. But the very sight of my pile of manuscripts made me ill. I avoided people, ceased going about in the evenings with the comrades I had found in business. When I drank, I was inclined to get into fights. . . . I threw a glass of beer into a man's face and got a black eye. I wanted to fight but was not a fighter. I wished I were one and this led to absurd dreams. I dreamed of becoming a champion prize fighter or a baseball player famous because he always hit home runs. Sometimes as I walked along the street I began sparring with some imaginary opponent and came out of the dream realizing I was being laughed at by a passerby. . . . I had other absurd dreams of becoming some kind of crook, perhaps a bank robber. I went to bed at night and dreamed of having become a bold and skillful robber. I crept into some bank, blew a safe, walked away with thousands. (Mem., p. 221)

This wild groping for roles, dreams which kept creeping into reality, was symptomatic of a continually splintered identity.

The security sufficient to produce Winesburg, Ohio came from the group of bohemians and rebellious aspirants to the arts whom Anderson eventually found in Chicago. Today many of the names of this group--who are today said to make up a Chicago Renaissance¹--are familiar to us; to Anderson they served the sustaining and encouraging function of Luther Pawsey in Elyria. But far beyond that, they were Anderson's literary academy. Out of this period in his life and this group came Anderson the artist.

He found them by luck and by chance. Anderson's brother Karl, the painter, had held an exhibition in Chicago and was acquainted with some of Chicago's journalists and artists. By Karl's efforts Anderson's Windy McPherson's Son came into the hands of Floyd Dell, editor of The Friday Review of Literature, a supplement of the Chicago Evening Post. Without mentioning Anderson's name, Dell, an enthusiast of Dreiser, hailed Windy as the work of "a great unpublished author." The impact of this on Anderson was considerable. In his Memoirs he attempts to re-create the meaning it had for him.

So there was Dell reading my novel, and presently, in the columns of the Friday Post, writing of me.

I was, it seemed, the great unknown.

Why, how exciting. There I was, as Dell was saying in print in a newspaper read as I presumed by thousands, an unknown man . . . doing, in obscurity, this wonderful thing.

And with what eagerness I read. If he had not printed my name at least he had given an outline of my novel. There could be no mistake.

"It's me. It's me."

I pranced excitedly up and down in my room.

"I must know this man."

It seemed to me that I had, of a sudden, been chosen, elected as it were, given a kind of passport into some strange new and exclusive world.

It was true that I had already published a story,² but I had not taken the story very seriously. So it was quite another thing to have Dell writing in a newspaper of an unpublished novel of mine. Shortly after I got a letter from Margy Currie [Dell's separated wife] asking me to her home.

I went, filled with excitement. Now I was to go into a new world, men and women whose interests would be my interest, the curious feeling of loneliness and uncertainty broken up.

(Mem., p. 235)

This invitation to Margery Currey's, to "Chicago's intellectual and artistic set," is the first time that Anderson is called forth to play the part of artist. His response to this incident, as he recalls his state of mind in his Memoirs, makes a drama which exposes all the

psychic turmoil that he had been living with. In a sense it is a milder replay of the Elyria amnesia episode. The fact that it was milder, and that he soon overcame his fear, indicates the progress he had already made toward becoming what he so desperately wanted to be. Many of the facts in the Memoirs are undoubtedly distorted in Anderson's characteristic way, but the state of mind presented here is clearly Anderson's at that time.

I went to the address, at the corner of Fifty-seventh and Stony Island Avenue and found there a row of low one story buildings. . . . There had been stores there but now they had become the homes of men and women of Chicago's intellectual and artistic set. On that first night I walked back and forth alone before the fronts. Curtains had been put up which were now drawn and behind the curtains in the rooms I could hear voices. Shouts of laughter went up and a voice began to sing.

There was a party going on in Margy Currie's quarters. . . . As it was a warm spring evening, the door leading into the street was open. There were a dozen young men and as many women sitting in the place.

They were seated on the floor, on couches, on chairs. Drinks were being passed about. A man I later knew to be Floyd Dell, was holding forth. I stopped near the door, stood against the front of the building, out of sight, and listened. What gaiety within. A discussion was in progress. "Here," I began to tell myself, "is the kind of talk for which I have been hungry." I began to idealize the life within the room, . . . and it seemed to me very wonderful. Here was a world of men and women, of my own age, absorbed in the thing in which I wanted to absorb myself. Could I ever enter that world?

I saw Margy Currie running about the room. She was serving drinks to the others. She had a shrill and laughing voice. In some way I sensed the fact that she was carrying the tone of the party, making it go. She was a small woman with a big mouth. I could not see her eyes. "She will have merry eyes," I told myself. What a contrast to the beauty I had been following. Now I did not want that beauty. I wanted this other beauty of relationship with people who I had begun whispering to myself were my own kind.

But I lost courage, went into the Park. "They will find me out," I thought. "They will sense the fakiness in me." I had been faking for so long a time both as a manufacturer

and as an advertising writer, working so long with my tongue in my cheek, that I had begun to fear that everything in my nature was poisoned by that fakiness. (Mem., p. 236)

At other times in his past and future Anderson was able to call forth one of his many supporting parts to play in a situation like this, but this audience, looking for a lead to come center stage, paralyzed him. Then all the uncertainty and fragmentation of Elyria reasserted itself, and he fled.

In seeking to divide my life I was fighting a losing battle. How indeed could I spend my days often being clever, being an actor, doing work in which I did not believe, and then come home and make a straight and honest approach to this other work? How could I be half crook and half a straight and honest individual? "A man's life shows up in himself," I thought. "My novel may have impressed them but they will immediately be on to me myself." So I hid myself that evening in the bushes.

But there was a movement in the room and presently all emerged into the street. They crossed the street, seeming to me a gloriously happy group, and went into the park. They were going to walk by the lake. For a time I followed, muttering to myself, "I will never be a part of such a group. How can I? What am I but an advertising writer?" Afterward, when I got to know him Floyd Dell once hurt me bitterly by saying to me the very words I was saying to myself that night. We had got into a quarrel. "You are only an advertising man who would like to be an artist," he said.

I said the words to myself that night. "You are nothing but a pimp for business men." (Mem., pp. 237-238)

A week later Anderson did step forward, fumbling and apologetic, when Margery Currey was alone. He says, "A new life began for me." The bohemians who gathered at Margery Currey's took him in, listened to him, and liked him. Soon he was as comfortable with them as he was with his business cronies. They admired him as the primitive who gave up business for literature and he liked the part. But that too was a supporting role. Years later Floyd Dell, who was just a little less kind and a little more penetrating than the rest, observed:

. . . my critical approval was valued highly by Sherwood, who had just had his first novel rejected by a publisher. A rejection hurts any author's feelings very badly, but Sherwood's feelings were more raw and sensitive than I could possibly realize; for he had a deceptively robust air, which, as I knew later, masked an inward state of doubt and gloom and anxiety.

He had much reason for anxiety; he had failed in business and wandered off in a spell of amnesia; he had separated from his wife and children; he had staked everything rashly on literary success and had met defeat at the outset. Yet his manner was that of one who has not a care in the world. I may have been very insensitive or very gullible; . . . at all events, I was taken in by appearances and had no idea that he was a sick soul.³

The frustration and uncertainty continued, but Margery Currey and her group propped him up. Floyd Dell took his novel to New York to find a publisher and Margery talked to him.

She was one who had an extraordinarily sharp and sensitive feeling for people and perhaps even at the beginning of our acquaintance she felt something of the struggle going on in me and wanted to help build belief in myself. She spoke of the world of the arts, the world that had seemed such a shadowy, dim, faraway place to me, as having a real existence. I could find comrades there. I could find friends. . . . She had given me a kind of new hope. For the first time I had got a new and to me a strange kind of feeling. It was not concerned with sex and all my approach to women had been dominated by sex. If I could have two, three, a half dozen such friends, I felt, I had not failed, I could go on. I did not need to make the great surrender. (Mem., pp. 239-240)

Here was Anderson's discovery of the brotherhood of art. There are women in it, but the "confusions of sex" are not here. Margery Currey was included among those women who were not real women because they lived and thought and worked in the masculine world, the brotherhood of art. Sexuality was not suspended, as Anderson might have thought and wished. The homosexual element was dominant here. The heterosexual urge to couple was undoubtedly here too--there were

probably less sexual goings-on among these "liberated" than there was talk--but the binding force was the brotherhood of art, to Anderson an exclusively male world.

The Chicago brotherhood, essentially homosexual, stabilized Anderson's sexual dislocation. Cornelia and the children came with him to Chicago, and even followed him into the brotherhood. She was graciously received and even made fast friends with Margery and Anderson's next wife Tennessee Mitchell, but it was not her world and she could not stay. Anderson tried to discover the problem with her and resolve it. He took her to the Ozarks in the winter of 1913. Four years later he wrote a very revealing letter to Waldo Frank.

Primarily the difficulty with all of us is that, being Americans, we in some way got a wrong start in life. The notion of success in affairs, in love, in our daily life is so ingrained that it is almost impossible to shake it off.

You perhaps do not know that I was married and the father of three children, that I had to undertake the delicate and difficult task of breaking up that marriage and of trying to win the real love of that woman out of marriage and outside the difficulties and complications of sex.

For myself I found it necessary to disregard all of the smart conclusions of the men of my time and set up gods. I found it necessary to my continued existence to utterly and finally embrace failure, the one terrible, hard thing for an American to do.

That was the year, Frank, that I went into the Ozark Mountains. I took the woman and the children with me. I lived in a separate cabin on a hillside, and together the woman and I went through poverty, hatred of each other, and all the terrible things that come from such a situation.

It is odd now to think that it was misunderstanding that brought us through. She came to the conclusion that I was not mentally sound. That awoke the mother instinct in her. We began to make progress.

No story I will ever write will touch that story, and that is one of the keenest pleasures of life to me,

that I lived something beyond any power of mine to write of it.

There are certain definite things I came to out of that--the ability to be brutal with women, the conclusion that for me there must always be my own place, some hole in the wall into which I could crawl to pray and be alone and to catch and hold my own note out of the jar and jangle of noises. (Letters, pp. 8-9)

There is some of the characteristic Andersonian mysticism in this letter, but for the most part it is a veiled explanation of the sexual problem. It seems likely that Anderson tried to bring Cornelia into the brotherhood, to create with her the kind of homosexual communion he had with Margery Currey and his new found fellows of Chicago. To Anderson "real love" apparently excluded the marital act, it was "outside sex." "Real love" was a thing of the spirit, the world of the male. When Anderson talked to Cornelia about the world of his imagination and his art, communicating his deepest self, it was like talking to Margery, "it was not concerned with sex." Cornelia, not an unenlightened woman, thought that such communication would lead to sexual expression; instead it led away from it. With cohabitation there undoubtedly was sexual encounter, but always without this communication at the deepest level. That inevitably was unsatisfactory for both of them. Cornelia, perhaps sensing that her husband reserved real intimacy for another kind of relationship, which he couldn't somehow integrate with normal sexual expression, concluded that he was in some way abnormal. "She came to the conclusion that I was not mentally sound. That awoke the mother instinct in her. We began to make progress." Anderson could never write about that struggle with Cornelia, as he could about Wing Biddlebaum. ". . . I lived something beyond any power of mine to write of it." He simply did not

understand it, and never did. The whole undertaking with Cornelia in the Ozarks had to fail.

But he came to a few conclusions as a result of this experience. He says he learned to be brutal with women. Since he found that women-- "real" women seen as sexual partners, not artist types like Margery Currey--could not come into the brotherhood of art; they had to be used for what they were worth, sexual release, "refreshment," then thrust aside. In needing to get away to his own place, to "be alone to catch and hold my own note out of the jar and jangle of noises" he is only escaping the sexual arena, "the jar and jangle of noises," to the sexless (he thought) and transcendent brotherhood of art. His building of a walled place with his son John years later (see Chapter One, pp. 11-12) is an example of how one is "alone" in the brotherhood of art. It is very likely that this experience with Cornelia was the source of many of his ideas about women and their relationship to art and to men.

It was very likely some time before that winter in the Ozarks that Sherwood and Cornelia met Tennessee Mitchell. She was a friend of Margery's and one of the group that frequented Margery's apartment. So Anderson probably knew her as one of the brotherhood, which, of course, was "outside sex." Certainly the close three way friendship would suggest that. How the marriage came about in light of Anderson's sexual dislocation can only be explained by some understanding of Tennessee, her peculiar makeup and sexual orientation. Since her unpublished autobiography provides a sense of her character beyond what any description could do, and because she was such an important

influence on Anderson's life in that early period, I would like to include her story here as complete as it can be known from the evidence available. Much of what I have included here does not relate directly to her influence on Anderson at this crucial time. But I would ask the reader to listen to her voice and note how the mask of wit, humor, and gracious sophistication hides an insecurity which is finally tragic in its consequences. Anderson married the masked Tennessee and she served a particular purpose in his life (which will be treated in Chapter Five). When the mask fell away and she was exposed he left her behind and with her the conditions that produced his best art.

II

In a letter dated October 8, 1929, less than three months before she was found dead in her apartment, Tennessee Mitchell Anderson wrote to her former husband telling him that a local publisher had asked her to write her autobiography. This was not surprising, as she was well known in Chicago art circles for her sculpture and had been featured more than once in the local press. In fact, her autobiography was publicly anticipated a year earlier.⁴ But she was reluctant to trade on the name of a now nationally famous author. So in deference to Sherwood's sensitivities about his public image she wrote:

. . . would you have any feeling against it [her including her life with Anderson]--although you can't say not knowing how I would use you--and that I can't say because I don't know. All I do know is that I wouldn't want to exploit myself through you--I also know that the world wouldn't be losing a masterpiece if I never took my pen in hand. Why can't they let me keep at my clay pail. So please be quite frank. As ever, Tennessee.⁵

Apparently she received no answer, but anticipated a later meeting with him. In the meantime, throughout that fall, she wrote of her life up to Anderson's entry into it. She never got beyond. She spoke to Anderson in late December but nothing was settled. Some days later she was found dead in her studio-apartment. Since she had been taking sedatives heavily to sleep, it appeared that she had died of an accidental overdose. At first it was thought to be suicide, but that seems unlikely because, among other reasons, it was so uncharacteristic of her to leave things unsettled, unmailed gifts,

no provision for her belongings, etc.⁶ And it was known that she was taking sedatives.

What she left behind was some seventy-seven pages of penciled manuscript⁷ about her life up to the early years of the second decade. Since it was intended for publication, it is full of wit and sophistication. How accurate it is cannot be known. A feature article about her⁸ tells of how she once told an interviewer she was an illegitimate child because she thought it would be dramatic and make a good story.

It is a good story. It reads like the innocence-to-experience diary of a young girl seen in retrospect by a very clever woman. Tennessee may have recognized that a story of sexual initiation would make popular reading. On the other hand, there is in the autobiography what could be called an excessive interest in sex. That emphasis may mark an emancipated woman, but it may also be there to hide a great ambiguity and a general difficulty with sex. Sexual matters are treated seriously, despite a frequently humorous air, and there is little to suggest that her sexual problems were finally resolved. In that light the humor and sophistication with which sexual issues are treated can be deceptive.

The autobiography begins a little too heavily on the sexual note. Tennessee introduces herself as a plump little girl "built on the lines of a keg." During the time she was writing on her girlhood she says, "I dreamed that I was writing my autobiography and the first sentence read, 'I was a virgin until my fourth year.'" In a footnote which she subsequently crossed out she adds: "The dream was told to several New York sophisticates who expressed great surprise at the

age attained . . . before the fall--or did they mean rise?" In the body of her work she continues, "It made an amusing story but it had no historical connection in my mind with fact, for in common with nice girls of that time I had retained the pearl of great price, at least technically, until maturity if not years of discretion."

The first episode recounts a birthday party of four-year-olds when little Tennessee put the wrong end of a candy cigar in her mouth. "No later social errors," she says, "have made the ghastly impression on me that that did--my life was a failure." Later Sammy, a small boy whose auntie made him always look like a girl, called her over "to talk over the general rottenness of parties." "Suddenly with a resolute look Sammy declared--'I'm not a girl, I'm a boy because I'm not made like girls and I can show you,' which he shyly and charmingly did."

The discovery that the family was a bit unorthodox came about through the death of Letty Rockwell, a neighbor. "Letty fulfilled my dream of fair women. Gentle, thoughtful Letty, whom to be like, look like, and smell like was my ambition." What happened to Letty was the problem and Tennessee's family were not confident of little Sammy's solution that Letty had gone to heaven. Rather, they told her she had become part of the earth. "This probably was the opening wedge to my realization that my family were different." One of the frequent visitors to her grandfather's house--which was across the street and where she spent most of her time--was Robert Ingersoll. She says he came often to talk with her grandfather of Thomas Paine, Darwin or Huxley. "So when I learned that my friend [Ingersoll] was a co-doubter with my family it helped greatly to bolster up my faith

in them." Apparently matters of the spirit in the Mitchell house consisted entirely of seances, in which the young Tennessee enthusiastically participated.

Then there was the strange feeling about my name. I knew without knowing that there was some taint connected with it. Sammy had told me that I was named for a bad woman but my mother said I was named for a very brave woman and that was confusing. In my embarrassment when I started school I called myself Tennie and later thinking it more substantial Tennis. I later learned that the famous or as they were generally thought infamous Claflin sisters--Virginia Woodhull and Tennessee Claflin like Robert Ingersol and the mediums had visited at my grandfather's house. Their visit came just before my advent into the world. My mother had an affection for the charming and spirited Tennessee Claflin--and when a neighbor came to see the baby and tauntingly said--"Then you, I suppose, wouldn't dare name the baby for 'your friend'--my mother said--I like the name, I admire the woman. I dare and I will--so Tennessee I was named without benefit of christening.

In a rewritten section of the autobiography, Tennessee crossed out this last portion about the neighbor's dare⁹ and took up a little more detailed discussion of Tennessee Claflin and her sister.

Of woman suffrage, I had heard much--and at one time associated it with "female trouble," but the free love part of the Claflin creed I never heard discussed. My family probably as good radicals accepted it theoretically, and that was as far as it went. The Claflin sisters were feminists and lived up to their beliefs. A story is told of Tennessee while giving a lecture was heckled by a man who accusingly said,--"Do you believe in free love?" To which she replied--"Of course, of course, I don't believe in buying it--do you?" After their expose of the Henry Beecher--Mrs. Tilden scandal--in Claflin's weekly--which offered no criticism of the participants except to scourge their hypocrisy¹⁰--the beautiful sisters were attacked by Anthony Comstock, their magazine suppressed, law suits were started against them and feeling ran so high they were refused halls in which to lecture. Broken in finance but not in spirit,--they went to England where both married great riches and eminence--and it is said lived happily ever after.

Tennessee follows this with two episodes from her girlhood, both of which have to do with her learning the mysteries of sex. Hattie Wallace, the sprightly daughter of a deacon in the Methodist Church, infatuated the neighbor Mr. Lathrop, who took her to his hay loft, and shortly Hattie had to leave town. The girl Tennessee, who still did not understand where babies came from, could only offer this precocious view: "Mrs. Lathrop was a severe looking woman who was the local president of the W. C. T. U. I had never seen her smile. Hattie smiled and laughed charmingly so why shouldn't Mr. Lathrop prefer Hattie." Other lessons came from another older and also precocious neighbor girl, Carrie May.

. . . Carry May then proceeded to show me how to do what she called "play with yourself." For a time this proved interesting. The only place of privacy was a little house down in the back yard. The walls were papered with leaves from Godey's Lady's Book and I had known and admired these "ladies" from infancy. I soon began to have a feeling of shame before their immaculate perfection. Besides this seemed to me a much more probable way to produce babies and I remembered the fate of Hattie Wallace.

The next bit of education comes from her undertaking a career in music. Since Tennessee could carry a tune so nicely she was encouraged to take up the violin under the tutelage of a Professor Mills, a tall gaunt man of bushy black hair and whiskers and "very thick glasses behind which his eyes wobbled." Little Tennessee played second violin in "Mill's Children's Orchestra." On tour she was promoted to first violin but after the tour Tennessee found out that "the perfidious Professor Mills had substituted a soaped bow and not a sound had come from my fiddle on tour. My being the smallest player had suggested showing me off. This was my first realization that a grown-up could

play a child false." Later Tennessee did play first violin and even played a solo performance at the State prison. But she says her career ended when Professor Mills and his assistant Mrs. Home got into a scandal.

It may have been the sexual smartness of her age--beyond her own great interest in the matter--that caused Tennessee to give her readers the impression that her home town was an early day Peyton Place, but it may also have been the acquaintance with Freud picked up in those Chicago years at the Dell's parties. What suggests it might be the latter is her careful attempt to define her relationship to her parents.

My mother was an only child and so closely bound to her family that my father built his house across the street. But of that house I have no memories, all my activities and emotions were associated with my grandfather's house. . . . My feelings toward my mother were mixed. I felt her love for me and loved her, but my admiration was always being jarred by my critical attitude that held her responsible for all the differences between our household and those of the neighbors.

Tennessee does not specify what those "differences" are. She says little about household events beyond that the prevailing opinions in the house were not the orthodox ones and the neighbors knew it. Perhaps the family's close tie with the home of the grandparents broke up normal domestic patterns. She says her father, who was, among other things,¹¹ a kind of promoter-salesman, built houses and sold them. The Mitchells apparently had their home frequently sold out from under them and in between homes Tennessee lived at her grandfather's.

What suggests most convincingly that Tennessee was under the influence of Freud is her description of her father.¹² What she says

about her relationship to him very obviously reflects on her relationship to males in her more mature years.

My father was little more to me than another person around the house, who sometimes expressed his disapproval but never showed me any affection. He sometimes took me with him on drives. One day he put me between his knees on a high cart while he drove a fractious young horse. The horse dove and reared, I was frightened and clutched my father's hands. He said nothing but got the horse under control, drove it up to a fence, tied it, took me down from the seat quite unsuspecting, turned me over and spanked me. He then explained that what I had done was dangerous, and was one of the reasons why men distrusted and despised females. That made a deep and lasting impression and I decided he would never again see me lacking courage.

There appears to have been love in Tennessee's home, but perhaps advanced opinions inhibited warmth and spontaneous expression of emotion. Her mother apparently fulfilled her maternal duties affectionately, but her father was a cooling force in the house.

It wasn't that my father was a coarse man or a thoughtless man. Perhaps this was the greater tragedy in that he was a person to whom none of us went with a bruised knee or hurt feelings and although he loved and grew flowers, one didn't take an especially beautiful flower for him to admire.

Tennessee's mother died when Tennessee perhaps needed her affection most. At her death there was a brief expression of affection from Tennessee's father, but, she says, he soon after "returned to his sealed reserve."

So as an adolescent, sixteen, Tennessee both took over management of the household and began the teenage boy-girl rituals. Her difficulties with dating, amusing and very revealing, follow immediately these sketches of her father and appear to reflect immediately back on them. Tennessee says that her father was cordial to her young

admirers but closed the house early. Since the Mitchells had an old horse Tennessee often took her admirers riding.

To obviate the difficulties of home entertainment I would take my admirers driving. But Billy was old and unrestrained or it may have been too rich a diet of oats but his frequent gun-like poop-poops made such unbridgeable gaps in the conversation that I soon gave up this form of entertainment for walks in the cemetery. . . . But amusing tombstones were few and time was long and sitting on benches always followed. Then an arm at first on the back of the bench would find its way to waist and there seemed to be a male conviction that my head needed to be pillowed on a male shoulder, although I always explained that I felt better sitting up.

This became more and more confusing and disturbing. I had never heard the practice condemned but there was no Bertrand Russell to give it approval. There was no one to whom I felt free to take this problem. Right and wrong were not terms used in our house so I had no feeling of its being a moral issue but felt it to be one of manners. Dancing school training, which I suspected, and my mother's code of kindness and consideration failed to fit the case and so I attempted to build my own rules of etiquette. I decided against the cemetery bench behavior and found ridicule and witticisms my best defense.

One spare young man gave her no problem about behavior. "I thought him noble," she said, but suddenly, just as a neighbor was putting out the cat, he asked Tennessee to be his wife.

I looked to the heavens for some sign that the great moment of my life had arrived, but not a comet stirred. I decided that great moments could not possibly come under such commonplace auspices. But I couldn't tell the young man that, for surely he would promptly go to his death. I talked of Beatrice and Dante and talked of love that would survive after death. I was literary and told him of my admiration and appreciation but gave him no deciding answer. What to do! The night was spent in serious thought and the plan was evolved of appearing to have a villainous disposition that he might give thanks for his escape. This plan I carried out so successfully that the subject was never broached again.

If the adolescent Tennessee learned to fight off infatuations and entanglements with "ridicule and witticisms" and "a villainous disposition," she also had to learn soon how to cope with devious hostility.

Tennessee's father and grandmother, trying to communicate with the now dead grandfather, attended seances now more than ever. At one of these seances Jay Mitchell met the thrice-widowed Mrs. Lovejoy. When it became apparent that this woman would succeed where two housekeepers before her had failed, Tennessee attempted to graciously make her way into the affections of a new stepmother. Tennessee was only rewarded with glassy stares. After the wedding took place Tennessee declares:

I offered her the reins of the household--She made no reply, and continued in the manner of a guest. And it became plain that I was to play the role of servant. Thinking that doing so uncomplainingly would bring the matter to my father's attention I kept on, but complaints suggested by his wife of my extravagance were the only notice taken. . . . About this time I was told that my father's wife had said before they were married that she intended to be rid of me in a year and the other two in good time.

Tennessee apparently made her way as best she could for a time, but shortly an incident happened which made her suspect that her stepmother had attempted to poison her. In desperation she confronted her father with her intention to have her patrimony and leave. Her father, pained and abject, informed her that his wife had forced him over a period of time to turn all the property over to the new Mrs. Mitchell. He had nothing for his girls. In confused sympathy he said he would give Tennessee what money he could without his wife's knowledge.

For safety I went to a friend's house and tried to think it out. I knew no girl who had earned money or ever expected to. Of ways and means to that end I had never been conscious except to notice that young girls worked in stores and restaurants. . . .

But from somewhere she got a bright idea.

Professor Mills had many times said my ear was unusually accurate, and I had found difficulty in getting our piano tuned to satisfy me, the way was clear. I would tune pianos. . . . But while I realized that it would be a modest contribution to the great symphony of life, I invested my ambition with the aura of romance and felt that the bringing of accord to the jangling pianos of the world had in it something of fineness and the next best thing to spirituality.

Taking my violin once more under my arm, this time in the hope of selling it, with some of my mother's jewelry as a last resort and the two hundred dollars that my father had given me, confident that in a short time I would rescue my younger sisters and that Life awaited me, I started for Chicago.

Tennessee does not say how old she was when she left home, but apparently she was in her late teens.

In Chicago Tennessee went straight to Steinway, where she was patronized but told of "grinding hard work and monotony that made all piano tuners go queer;" she was told emphatically that "no women could do it, and there was no way of learning." "That delayed me," she says, "but didn't discourage."¹³

There were other piano houses, and to these I went with my inquiring until none remained. Always there was courtesy, usually some interest and much amusement, but no way appeared to learn to tune pianos.

One man, the head of his firm, did offer to solve my problem by suggesting that he take an apartment for me, and I, not appearing to understand, said, "Thank you very much, but I am tired of housekeeping." To get a list of piano tuners and to personally supplicate them was my next plan and for three weeks every day and all day was spent traveling on every line of transportation in Chicago to the city's periphery north, west, south.

Some of the tuners were kind, some brusque, some insulting, but all were unanimous in saying my idea was impossible or that they had no time to teach me, until I found an old broken down man in Englewood who agreed to instruct.

Tennessee rented an old piano to practice "until my instructor, nearly dead from his trips from Englewood, said I had the theory, but that I

needed experience on more and different pianos." So she went back to Steinway, where she had been so graciously put off earlier, and by determined coaxing was allowed to tune the pianos in the Steinway warehouse. But in doing so she made jealous enemies of Steinway's tuners. One morning she found that all of the pianos she had tuned had been tampered with and were badly out of tune. What had been done was also obvious to the firm's head. "This appealed to the firm's gallantry and I was appointed tuner of stock at a salary of twelve dollars a week."

As a piano tuner Tennessee gained entrance to the world of art, artists and musicians. She was sent to studios, she met musicians, and she was given concert tickets. Occasionally these musicians made advances, but, she says, "my old defense of humor worked as well here as in a small town." At least this life "gave me a taste of that beauty my mother had talked about."

The pinnacle of success for a piano tuner is the honor of tuning concert pianos for the artists. This took me to the concert halls where many times I met the artists-- I tuned the piano for the charming Theresa Correzio and there was talk of my accompanying her on tour.

Moving around Chicago tuning pianos quickly brought about a kind of worldly education which perhaps could have been gotten in few other ways. Tennessee tells of a number of incidents, among them some piano tuning in Chicago's "red-light district." She tells of being sent to a notorious house of ill-fame called the Everleigh Club. The girls came in to chat and asked her to play and "I left with no suggestion made that I take to a life of sin." "That," she says, "ended my fear of addresses."

But Tennessee's early years in Chicago were no less grim than Anderson's. She was young and alone in a big city. She was not only unprotected, she did not even have the comforting thought of someone, parents, at least, who cared. The wit, aggressiveness, and self-assurance that she developed were only a cover for a lonely, rootless young woman. She often thought of her sisters, who were in the house of her evil stepmother. A younger sister, Louisa, had been sent to school, but the littlest one, Amber, about six, was still in the house of her father. "I was miserable until I evolved a plan to have her with me. My father said it was impossible because his wife, who had never been accepted by his friends, knew there would be more criticism. I suggested that I kidnap her and he agreed." The idea of a father cooperating in the kidnapping of his daughter suggests the pass to which things had come in the Mitchell house, but Tennessee says little of how this was managed. She was delighted to have Amber with her and rented a place for her "with poor people who loved her."

The extent to which Tennessee loved and depended on her little sister points to just how abandoned and desolate she often felt. After the affair of Amber had been straightened out in her father's house, Amber would sometimes go home for brief periods. Tennessee recounts how miserable she was during these periods and how she once got desperately drunk when Amber did not return as expected on Christmas. Later on in her life Tennessee remarked how depressed she invariably got during holidays. The lack of a family's warmth and security was something she keenly felt to the end of her life and perhaps partly explains her solicitude for Anderson's family, Cornelia and her three children.

And it may have been the unfulfilled need for family that broke her health, for when Amber died suddenly Tennessee had a complete collapse from which she never quite recovered. Anderson's frequent mention of Tennessee's illness apparently refers to the nervous condition caused by Amber's death. And it may also explain the heavy use of sedatives which killed her. She records the incident in this way:

One morning my little sister was too ill to go to school and I stayed with her. She begged me not to leave the room and said, "I can never see you after tomorrow." I told her I would stay until she was well, but she said, "No, it's because I am going to die." There seemed nothing serious in her illness, the doctor had not been alarmed, and I tried to laugh her out of her mood.

There was a drug store under suspicion near and the child had often asked the clerk if she might see his little blind pig. To end his embarrassment I had told her the pig had died. She now asked me what became of little pigs after they died and what would become of her. The next morning after being out of the room for a few minutes I returned to find her dead.¹⁴

There was a little mercy for me, in that for many days my mind evaded a full realization of my loss and dwelt in a realm of fantasy, such as is induced by drugs. When by degrees my mind became rational, something in me had stopped--there was no longer a force to order the will to go on working that I might live. It seemed too ironic to make an effort to go on living when living had lost its meaning. But the life force was positive and too strong for the negative lethargy and I realized that people were seldom left to starve, friends or the County saw to that and while I thought I could look on death calmly, dependence was something different and I departed to cope with nerves.

It was called a nervous collapse. . . . I had been told that a year was necessary, but in five months I went back to the front to earn the money to pay back the loan.

As a girl without a home who had learned little socially but various defense mechanisms, Tennessee no doubt found her nervous condition even more inhibiting.

Of young men and women friends I had none because I hesitated to encourage the few contacts I made, for the reason that the setting of a family and a home was lacking. I finally looked my situation squarely in the face and decided

that I was cutting myself off from this thing life that I had set out to meet.

With my changed attitude, when I saw men on the street whom I had met in my few social ventures and they asked me for luncheon I accepted. But usually when in their efforts to place me in the social scheme I explained that I tuned pianos, their attitudes changed and there often were offers of financial assistance.

At home I had been classed among nice girls. There were no degrees between nice girls and other girls, and my young men friends had no thought beyond puppy love-making. Why did not more mature people understand? This troubled me and I again withdrew.¹⁵

Now Tennessee, in maturity, returns to the matter of love and sex.

She mentions no names.

Soon I became conscious of a man, who was interested but never obtruded, who was protective without being patronizing, whom I knew could be my friend. He had social position that impressed me--but he had what meant more--understanding. He belonged to that great number who have little interest or aptitude for business, a yearning for the arts, and lack either a decided talent for or the courage to pursue them. The type has always appealed to me.

We saw more of each other but with difficulty for I felt that his being known and I being a nobody would make comment. The situation had in it something of adventure but more of humiliation. Our relationship was fine and why should a few people in Chicago who meant nothing to me have the power to make me careful? When tickets to the opera were given me I sometimes sat with angry tears in my eyes more absorbed in hating the well-dressed people about me than I was in the music.

It came that without saying it in words we knew we loved each other. Owing to conditions in his life we thought we ought not to marry. I was divided between a very real agony, and a very real sense of relief, for something told me this was a valuable and fine experience but not for all time. My mind and my emotions were at war and my person, the battleground, suffered. If this man went out of my life--how could I know I would ever have the great experience that was so large a part in the literature and art of the world. I saw women to whom I knew either love had not come or that they had renounced it. I could not become one of these. Anyway, if marriage, which seemed only remotely possible, did come, how could one be confident of a lifetime relationship without knowledge of the most important element.

The man had never broached the subject but I did. He said he could not take so great a responsibility, that it might ruin my life. I answered that if such an experience between a man and a woman whose love was beautiful and fine could ruin my life, I was ready to have it ruined.¹⁶

It was about this time, although she mentions no dates, that Tennessee gave up piano tuning for teaching music, very likely piano and violin, to children. She says little about how this came about, but she does recount an experience teaching nuns in a convent. At this time in her life she was interested in nuns and wanted some kind of religious education, which was not surprising in light of her unorthodox childhood. But, she says, "it came more from curiosity than a religious need;" so she went to teach Dominican nuns about educating children to music and in turn hoped for something from them. She tried to carry out convent customs, but fumbled badly. Among other things, she used the small holy water fount at her doorway for her matches. "My mistakes in using the holy water and my misplaced genuflections at mass made it difficult for the nuns to keep their gravity." The nuns taught her about the Catholic faith, but she had a difficult time accepting the transcendental and philosophic. Her response was emotional and immediate. She says she was especially taken by the idea of the Holy Ghost, because the doctrine was:

less defined than the other elements in the Catholic faith, my imagination had been freer to build something of my own partly esthetic and partly religious, that it was my first religious experience and that I knew I would always keep it. I asked what her [the nun teaching Tennessee] idea was of the sin against the Holy Ghost, without getting a satisfactory answer and told her mine was to gain a human being's love by appearing to have qualities than won admiration and love when those qualities were not genuine.

The remainder of the autobiography returns to the social life, love and sex, but the tone is that of the disappointment and bewilderment expressed in the remark above about the sin against the Holy Ghost.

Some play is interspersed. Tennessee tells of some "false breasts" she purchased because her figure "was all wrong for my silhouette was the same forward as backward." A Harvard man sent her a railroad pass to a house party on the Maine coast. The party included a dip in the ocean.

When we came out of the water I saw pained expressions of amusement on all the faces and looking down saw to my horror that I was ludicrously out of drawing, the breasts had lost their anchorage, one mound was on my stomach and the other approaching my collarbone.

The final part of the autobiography is the most poignant and most revealing. It explains her encounter with Edgar Lee Masters¹⁷-- which is obviously of great interest in itself--but more important here, it defines to some extent a developing difficulty with sex.

Soon after my return a poet came upon my horizons-- I had known a few yearners for the arts but none who worked creatively and felt himself dedicated to the arts. He said I had imagination. I replied that I doubted it as I had never been deeply interested in fairy tales. He said I belonged to the realistic school. Many books came from him that I read avidly, because we would later discuss them. It was my first real intellectual stimulus from personal contact.

The man was married but I heard from him and others that the married relationship had for years been only a formality. There seemed to be no question of intrinsic wrong in such a friendship, but there were--conventions. I argued that in my position I was drawing no benefit from the conventions, that I was alone and had no responsibility except to myself. I felt confident to handle that, his situation was his affair. I liked my first taste of intellectual companionship and wanted more.

My poet had been writing many years, had privately printed several books, but had at that time received little recognition from the literary world. About that he was becoming

bitter. Mine were new and eager ears for his poetry, his bitterness and his hopes. He took me into a new world of thought and I was flattered that an impetus for writing was coming in the wake of our relationship.

My need was great for stimulating companionship, and sex was to me a part of an entireness which I knew did not exist in this relation. So that when it ended and ended miserably, I was desolated. He told me I was his source of inspiration, that we must go together to Europe. I argued that earning my living was my first necessity, I could do nothing that would cut me off from that. He turned all the bitterness of an unappreciated poet and a man whose vanity had been hurt against me and told me that if I was too weak to rise to this my life would be ruined.

One man had said a love experience would ruin my life, another that the loss of it would ruin it. Men and sex were confusing.¹⁸ His hatred became so intense that for years to see him casually on the street affected me like a physical danger. I trembled and ran into buildings to avoid a meeting. Several years later when we were in a group and were introduced, I saw by his face that the hatred had spent itself. He asked, "Are you happy?" I replied "I have known much happiness but I am not happy, are you?" He looked away and finally said, "No, I am neither happy nor do I ever expect to be. Happiness doesn't exist."

One man had warned me that a love experience with him might ruin my life, and here was another man who threatened that the refusal of it would also be subversive. Men and sex were confusing. For some time I again led my life alone but only tiring work and trying to keep the zest for reading alive without the joys of sharing with another probably caused me to unconsciously put out my feelers for new friends. I soon found myself with a group of young men who were interested in and intelligent about the arts, with whom I felt free to be friends with a sense of sureness that the element of sex would not be disrupting.

It was a calm sea after a short but rough voyage and I settled myself to quiet enjoyment. It was of short duration. I was told that my new friends were homosexuals. I had vaguely heard of the crime of Oscar Wilde and in my ignorance was only horrified and repelled and made no attempt to be intelligent. It began to seem that for no reason that I could discover there were always to be obstacles in my relationships with men and I lost confidence in myself, my instincts and judgments.

Later I happened on to Edward Carpenter's The Intermediate Sex,¹⁹ which was of great assistance in helping me to sympathetically comprehend--understand and evaluate the experience.

With this Tennessee's manuscript ends. Her encounter with Masters was in 1909-1910. The people who made up the homosexual "group of young men who were interested in and intelligent about the arts" can't be known; but it is possible that they were among the same group in which Anderson found Tennessee some three years later. And since the manuscript ends here perhaps Anderson enters here.

There is much about the woman presented by this autobiography that makes it quite natural that she should become intimate with Sherwood Anderson. She is very much a part of the "rather wonderful new world" that he found. On the surface she is beautiful, witty and sophisticated, independent, aggressive and resolute. On the inside she is alone and insecure, highly nervous and unsettled, seeking love and some kind of family warmth. Yet she is confused and unconfident with love and sex; she is trying to find a circle where "the element of sex would not be disrupting," yet she is longing for the experience. Along comes Sherwood Anderson, one of those "yearners for the arts" that she says always appealed to her.

For Sherwood she was a kind of miracle. She was of the bright, witty world of the arts. She was feminine and attractive yet had a kind of male-like aggressiveness and independence which precluded the kind of domesticity that he had just fled. Actually, Tennessee would probably have preferred that kind of domesticity to anything else. But she talked to him about art, listened to him, admired him for what he gave up for art, encouraged him and believed in him. And she took a feminine interest in him. She was solicitous about his well being and that of his newly abandoned family. All of this came

at a time when he was miserable. He felt guilty about what he had done, and in his self-doubt needed desperately the assurance of entry into the sophisticated world of art. Tennessee was --to him-- that world and everything else too. She was understanding and sympathetic to one and all. Anderson once told a friend there was "a certain thing about her that makes her often almost too decent to be a woman at all" (Letters, p. 73).

About their sexuality and the sexual basis of their later marriage we can only speculate. But there is much to speculate about. First, Tennessee is very much of the male, homosexual--she may even have described it as such--world, to Anderson a world "outside sex." For herself, she had found sex "disrupting." After a girlhood experience consisting mostly of caustic defense mechanisms, it is little wonder that there were always "obstacles" in her relationships with men. From her father she learned only cool distance and in her first serious relationship she was turned away. After the experience with Masters and the discovery of homosexuality it is not surprising that she feels she has "lost confidence in myself, my instincts and judgments."

In light of Anderson's sexual dislocation, it is not at all surprising that their "bohemian" marriage consisted of separate residences. There very likely was a sexual relationship in this marriage; both wanted and needed it. Anderson told a friend that "Tennessee has a bed in her house for me," but cohabitation may have created sexual expectations in themselves and others that they were not capable of fulfilling. Tennessee later told one of her friends that

"her feeling for Sherwood was maternal" and Cornelia "had the same reaction toward him."²⁰ Anderson probably came to Tennessee not that often and when he did it may have been more as son than lover. It is already clear that Tennessee needed family warmth more than passion. Her good relationship with Cornelia may have rested on the private assurance that there was no sexual competition between them. The small sexual element in the relationship might also explain how Tennessee could be so "bully" in an incident Anderson describes to Waldo Frank in 1917:

Out from under a mess. A fool woman came to town intent on going to bed of me. Where do they get that queer little diseased gleam in their eye when they have that notion? I climbed a tree. Then I ran along the treetops leaping with hands and feet. I threw nuts at her and cracked her head.

Tennessee is unspeakably bully in such a situation. She does not become the wife. What she does is walk blithely along and pay no attention. Then when I have hit the lady with a large coconut and the milk streams down into her eyes, she winks. (Letters, p. 25)

Anderson's attachment to Tennessee appears to be largely based on his great admiration for her. In talking of Frank's affection and Tennessee's, Anderson tells Waldo Frank, "I have a feeling sometimes, in view of the affections that have been given me, that I am like a crude woodsman that has been received into the affection of princes" (Letters, p. 36). To another close friend he wrote:

I never go into Tennessee's house but I go a little timidly, questioning. I want to know how I am to be received. If ever I find her in the faintest way not wanting me I shall merely run away. Outwardly, I am strong and sure. Inwardly I often quake hard enough.²¹

Later to the same friend he says, "I do not dare approach too close to Tennessee, make her too close a part of my life because I do not

want to take into her life my greyness but to be where she is means everything.²²

None of this suggests the mutual confidence and complete acceptance between them that would result from a close and passionate intimacy. And it appears to be Anderson who defined the relationship. During the years of their marriage he was gone much of the time, away on his job, to New York to write, to Alabama. He followed his whim. For a while he rented a place in Palos Park, Illinois, which is not far from Chicago. But he wanted to be away.²³ Apparently this started rumors.

And even this is misunderstood. I live away from this woman I have married. I go often to walk alone, to be alone. This also is misunderstood. Rumors run about. The woman is condemned because of the loneliness in my life. She is made to seem hard, cruel and indifferent when she is only big. No want of mine is left unsatisfied. In her love she like others, is willing to give all. I will not take it. Often I shut the door and go away. And she is condemned for that.²⁴

So Tennessee was ideal for Anderson at this time. She needed family warmth, someone to mother. She wanted an artist to admire, understand and encourage. In her difficulties with sex she did not want great sexual demands made on her. Anderson needed mothering, encouragement, and entry into Tennessee's world. And he could not stand great sexual demands. About a year after his marriage to Tennessee he wrote to a friend:

There is a woman who has answered the problem of the flesh and the spirit for me. Away deep within me I know that to play lightly with the fact of my love for her may cast me out into the world a mere sensualist. Well, I hold myself unworthy of that love if I have not the courage to throw it away.²⁵

Though she answered the problems of both worlds for him, the fact that the two worlds were so disjointed made a potentially deep intimacy impossible. She was his "refreshment" and his spiritual sustenance, but never the two simultaneously. So they lived apart rather than cope with the disjunctions in their lives. Already as early as a year after their marriage this unsatisfactory arrangement made him talk about having the courage to "throw it away." Marriage, even to undemanding, emancipated Tennessee, made too many demands, physical, emotional, and sexual. The world of the "spirit" also had a sexual component which he needed too. In 1921 he wrote to the same friend:

Most women simply frighten me. I feel hunger within them. It is as though they wished to feed upon me.

As a matter of fact I am rather strongly sexed but hard work, constant thinking, saving my strength for flights into an imaginative world. All of these things consume strength that might otherwise go into sex expression.

Sexually hungry or starved women are made angry by what therefore seems a perversion of the ends of life to them. The more noble among them do not give way to the feeling. It is however there.²⁶

Undoubtedly Tennessee was among the noble. Her unspoken, unasserted demands were there and became greater; but Anderson didn't have the strength. His sexual energies were going elsewhere.

Notes

¹Among them were Theodore Dreiser, Floyd Dell, Carl Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters, Vachel Lindsay. See Bernard Duffey, The Chicago Renaissance in American Letters (The Michigan State College Press, 1954) and Dale Kramer, Chicago Renaissance (New York, 1966).

²Not true. Anderson's first known published story, "The Rabbit Pen," appeared in Harpers in 1914, long after Dell had gone to New York.

³"On Being Sherwood Anderson's Literary Father," The Newberry Library Bulletin, V (December, 1961), 315.

⁴See the article "Chicagoans: Tennessee Mitchell Anderson" in the appendix to this chapter.

⁵Unpublished letter in the Newberry Library, Chicago.

⁶Dale Kramer, in preparing Chicago Renaissance (New York, 1966), uncovered much of what we now know of Tennessee Mitchell. He talked to a number of people who knew her, checked court records, visited her home town of Jackson, Michigan to search out facts about her family, tracked down her sister, and located the article in the appendix to this chapter. He made use of only a small part of what he had collected. However, he is careless about footnotes (for which he apologizes) and he seldom indicates his sources, so it is often difficult to separate the discovered facts from his surmises. In some places there are obvious inaccuracies. The general gossipy tone of his book makes all of it somewhat suspect but he discusses in detail the relationship of Tennessee and Edgar Lee Masters (pp. 174-182), Anderson's meeting with Tennessee (pp. 289-290), the marriage and domestic arrangement (p. 302), reasons for the break-up (p. 329), and Tennessee's death and funeral (pp. 339-342).

⁷The manuscript of this autobiography in the Newberry Library is in two parts. There is a black-covered notebook measuring about five inches by eight inches about half filled. This is clearly the first draft because there are erasures, words crossed out, and interlinear material. Accompanying the notebook are some 8½" by 11" sheets which are folded into three parts as though they were put into a business envelope. These pages contain the first part of the notebook (up to Tennessee's girlhood before she went to Chicago) and evidently were recopied from the notebook. They may have been meant for the publisher as they are done without the flaws of the notebook; nothing is crossed out and all the notebook's corrections and interlinear material are included in the body.

⁸See Appendix, "Chicagoans: Tennessee Mitchell Anderson"

⁹See note #7. The crossed out material extends from "Their visit came . . ." to ". . . without benefit of christening."

¹⁰About this incident Kramer explains: "One of their stories, charging intimacy between Henry Ward Beecher, the famous Brooklyn preacher, and the wife of Theodore Tilton, a religious editor, had brought on one of America's most celebrated trials when Tilton sued Beecher for alleged 'criminal conversation'. The six-month-long trial, held in the second year following Tennessee Mitchell's birth, ended in a hung jury, but the nation had been titillated as perhaps never before, and the name "Tennessee" was much on the tongues of the populace." (p. 176)

¹¹Kramer says he was a postal clerk (p. 176) but does not indicate from where he has this information. It may have come from Jackson, Michigan records. Tennessee says little about her father's occupation beyond talking of several "deals," some of which went awry.

¹²Freud's "Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex" (1905) considers infant sexuality and the part the parents play.

¹³Typical of some of Kramer's unexplainable material is his assertion that she learned piano tuning before coming to Chicago: "After graduating from high school, Tennessee became a piano tuner and worked for several years at the trade, living at home" (p. 176). Perhaps Kramer again got this information in Tennessee's home town of Jackson, Michigan. If Tennessee really did learn piano tuning before coming to Chicago, it reflects on the reliability of her autobiography because she devotes considerable attention to the events surrounding her learning this trade in Chicago. It could be that she once again thought that this would make a "good story." Or else Kramer's informants were wrong, but he too had access to the autobiography. There is no evidence in his notes (which I have inspected) that he saw a conflict here.

¹⁴Kramer says that Amber died of meningitis but again does not indicate his source. A "blind pig" was slang for a speak-easy.

¹⁵Tennessee is not completely clear about what she means here, but apparently she is puzzled by the fact that her occupation attracts indecent proposals.

¹⁶Tennessee does not say finally whether this relationship is ever consummated or not.

¹⁷The most thorough discussion of the relationship between Tennessee and Edgar Lee Masters is in Kramer, pp. 174-182.

¹⁸These last two sentences are crossed out in the manuscript. The same idea is expressed below.

¹⁹I have been unable to locate this book.

²⁰Letter to William Sutton from Mrs. John Franklin Daniel, May 23, 1962, quoted in Sutton, "Sherwood Anderson's Second Wife," Ball State University Forum, VII (Spring, 1966), 44.

²¹Letter to Marietta Finley, January 12, 1917.

²²Letter to Marietta Finley, January 26, 1917.

²³Tennessee did come to see him a few times a week.

²⁴Letter to Marietta Finley, January 26, 1917.

²⁵Letter to Marietta Finley, May 29, 1917.

²⁶Letter to Marietta Finley, 1921.

Chapter Four

The Artist's Education: A Search for the "Middlebrow"

I

There is more simple insecurity than truth in what Anderson called his lack of education. Later on in his life it was an idea he liked to encourage because it fortified a notion he liked of himself as primitive and bard, and it magnified his achievement. And he, like others, felt (as people still do) that education meant formal schooling, and of that he had little. But in fact he was rather well-educated, at least in literature. The habit of reading was begun early and carried on throughout his life. As a boy he was a borrower of books and he was often seen with his nose buried in a book. In his short stay at Wittenberg Academy he was considered studious, and he belonged to a literary society. In his early advertising years in Chicago he wrote an article in his firm's advertising journal called "A Businessman's Reading."¹ It was an effort to persuade businessmen to read, and it is clear that he spoke out of habit and conviction. His mention of Carlyle, Browning, Shakespeare, and Stevenson came out of some familiarity with these writers.

Cornelia Lane Anderson had picked up some literary interests in college and no doubt was responsible for the literary clubs she and her husband started in Elyria. The amnesia notes' allusion to Elsinore suggests some easy familiarity with things literary. Yet

a statement made in 1939 is characteristic: "Like most writers I am really not a great reader. I did most of my reading before I began writing. Now I am chiefly interested in the lives of the people immediately about me."² Besides wanting to identify with "most writers," Anderson was always anxious to forestall suggestions about influence and convince people that his stories were taken from life rather than books. But his private correspondence indicates that he was reading all the time.

But that reading was desultory and largely undirected. He read whatever came along and read it for enjoyment. He had only the vaguest notions of literary currents and styles when he came to Chicago for the second time in 1913. But he knew that to be an artist required an involvement in literature that he could not get alone and undirected. The new role demanded a whole new education for a real artist had a very special job to do. He had to interpret his time and his place for his people. For that he had to understand them and their history. He had to understand and become part of the prevailing current in order to reach them. And for that he came to Chicago at a particularly vibrant time.

Something was stirring at that time in the world of arts in America. I think everyone felt it. Little magazines with several of which I was to have connections broke out like measles in that period. There was the Little Review in Chicago. The New Republic, the Seven Arts and also what is now known as the Old Masses got under way in New York. In Chicago the old Dial changed hands--later on moving to New York. The impulse reached out over the country. . . .

It was a kind of outburst of energy and penetrated even to the copy department of the advertising agency where I was employed.

And how many remarkable men known, thoughtful friends made in those Chicago days. Henry Justin Smith, Ferdinand Schevill, Robert Morss Lovett, Burton Rascoe, Lloyd Lewis, Ben Hecht, Floyd Dell, Arthur Davidson Ficke, Harry Hansen, Carl Sandburg, Lewis Galantiere, Ernest Hemingway.

With these men and others I sat about in restaurants, talked of books, had the works of old writers brought to my attention, discussed new writers. . . .

It was the time of a kind of renaissance in the arts, in literature, a Robin's Egg Renaissance I have called it in my mind since. It had perhaps a pale blue tinge. (Mem., pp. 197-199)

These men and these magazines were Anderson's literary academy. From them he learned the role of the artist, what he is and does, thinks and says, and finally what he writes. But Anderson did not slavishly parrot what was being aired in his circle. His own impulses about his art harmonized with those of his new-found friends in Chicago and he joined them in a mutual enthusiasm. He was the great unpublished author before he had met any of them. His first critical declaration was made in his own name and in theirs. It was put into the very first number of the Little Review published only about a year after his arrival in Chicago.

In the trade of writing the so-called new note is as old as the world. Simply stated, it is a cry for the re-injection of truth and honesty into the craft; it is an appeal from the standards set up by money-making magazines and book publishers in Europe and America to the older sweeter standards of the craft itself; it is the voice of the new man, come into the new world, proclaiming his right to speak out of the body and soul of youth, rather than through the bodies and souls of the master craftsman that are gone.

. . . in the craft of writing there is no such thing as age in the souls of the young poets and novelists who demand for themselves the right to stand up and be counted among the soldiers of the new. That there are such youth is brother to the fact that there are ardent young cubists

and futurists, anarchists, socialists, and feminists; it is a promise of a perpetual sweet new birth of the world; it is as a strong wind come out of the virgin west. . . . we will have a world not half-new but all new.

Do not be led aside by the many voices crying of the new. Be ready to accept hardship for the sake of your craft in America--that is craft love.³

In the second number of the Little Review he wrote "More About the New Note."

. . . Given this note of craft love all the rest must follow, as the spirit of self-revelation, which is also a part of the new note, will follow any true present day love of craft. . . .

. . . Why do we so prize the work of Whitman, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky [sic], Twain, and Fielding? Is it not because as we read we are constantly saying to ourselves, this book is true. A man of flesh and blood like myself has lived the substance of it. In the love of his craft he has done the most difficult of all things: revealed the workings of his own soul and mind.

To get near to the social advance for which all moderns hunger, is it not necessary to have first of all understanding? How can I love my neighbor if I do not understand him. And it is just in the wider diffusion of this understanding that the work of the great writer helps the advance of mankind.⁴

In order to understand Anderson here as the voice of the rebirth, the "new note," it is necessary to have some sense of the prevailing views of those he was speaking for. What follows in this chapter is a brief recapitulation of the literary and intellectual currents of this second decade, mostly by a look at the magazines that Anderson mentioned and was reading. It is not an attempt to define the "Chicago Renaissance" or to determine finally the influences on Anderson. He was at this time looking for a role. What should he as an artist do and how should he do it? His own intuitive sense of his role was constantly being fortified and added to. I only mean to point to what

was dinning in Anderson's ears and how he might have developed his own esthetic out of what he heard and read. His correspondence suggests that he was talking and reading much at this time, and he was listening to these men. Most of the writers included here--Theodore Dreiser, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, Max Eastman, Floyd Dell, Francis Hackett, Randolph Bourne, James Oppenheim, Amy Lowell, John Dos Passos, Mrs. Padriac (Mary) Colum, Leo Stein--were people Anderson either knew personally or admired from a distance. The magazines they wrote in were often magazines they themselves began or "took over:" Friday Literary Review, New Republic, Little Review, Poetry, The Masses, Dial, and most important, Seven Arts. The material chosen from these magazines reflects particularly on Anderson's ideas and his work. Winesburg, Ohio might be thought of as in the immediate background.

II

In March of 1917 Anderson wrote to Theodore Dreiser: "My dear Dreiser: I must personally thank you for your illuminating article in Seven Arts magazine. It sets forth as nothing else I have ever read has set forth the complete and terrible fact of the wall in the shadow of which American artists must work" (Letters, p. 9). The article Anderson referred to here had the all-embracing title "Life, Art and America."⁵ There is perhaps more of the shrill voice of an indignant Theodore Dreiser in this article than there is of objectivity and balance. But the article re-creates the passion of the men of the "renaissance" beyond probing the sores of American life and art. It explains why, in Anderson's words, ". . . the door was closed to anything like subtlety in writing in the country. . . . the big story here is the story of repression, of the strange and almost universal insanity of society" (Letters, p. 44). Dreiser attempts some psychoanalysis of this sick society:

To me, the average or somewhat standardized American is an odd, irregularly developed soul, wise and even forward in matters of mechanics, organizations, and anything that relates to technical skill in connection with material things, but absolutely devoid of any true spiritual insight, any correct knowledge of the history of literature or art, and confused by and mentally lost in or overcome by the multiplicity of the purely material and inarticulate details by which he finds himself surrounded.

Dreiser then castigates religious superstition and repression: "We were taught persistently to shun most human experiences as either dangerous or degrading or destructive. The less you know about life the better. The more you knew about the fictional heaven and hell, the same."

The realities that Dreiser discovered set against the images created by a schizoid society suggest to him another--and not much healthier--image. That image labels that entire literary period: naturalism.

The race, if you please, was to the swift, and the battle to the strong. . . . I admit a vast compulsion which has nothing to do with the individual desires or tastes or impulses of individuals. That compulsion springs from the settling processes of forces, which we do not in the least understand, over which we have no control and in whose grip we are as grains of dust or sand, blown hither and thither, for what purpose we cannot even suspect. . . .

The individual, as I found, was trying to do one thing: make himself happy, principally. Life was plainly trying to do another, or at least what it was doing involved no great concern for the welfare of any particular individual.

Dreiser finds it hard to confine himself to the picture of the life of his era which he is trying to put forward. Instead his vision constantly enlarges. He says that although the world has stored up endless treasures of knowledge, the people wallow in ignorance. "They live in theories and isms, and under codes dictated by a church or a state or an order of society, which has no least regard for a relationship to their natural mental development."

Dreiser then returns to America to confront specific institutions.

Nevertheless, here in America, by reason of an idealistic constitution, which is largely a work of art and not a workable system, you see a nation dedicated to so-called intellectual and spiritual freedom, but actually devoted with an almost bee-like industry to the gathering and storing and articulation and organization and use of purely material things. . . . no nation has ever contributed less, philosophically or artistically or spiritually, to the actual development of the intellect and spirit.

. . .

American schools and colleges, Dreiser says, have produced students who "are little more than types, machines, made in the image and likeness of their college. They do not think; they cannot think, because they are bound hard and fast by an iron band of convention."

Dreiser moves to the pervasive graft and hypocrisy in our history which, he says, has been consistently and regularly accompanied "by a religious and a sex puritanism which would be scarcely believable if it were not true."

One of the interesting phases of this puritanism or phariseism is his [the American's] attitude toward woman and their morality and their purity. . . . It matters not that his cities and towns are rife with sex . . . [she is] a princess, a goddess, a divine mother or creative principle, all the virtues, all the perfections, no vices, no weaknesses, no errors. . . . she is too good to be true; a paragon, a myth! . . . Women are too good, the sex relationship too vile a thing, to be mentioned or even thought of. We must move in a mirage of illusion. . . . How this must affect or stultify the artistic and creative faculties of the race itself must be plain. Yet that is exactly where we stand today, ethically and spiritually, in regard to sex and women.

As a result of all this, Dreiser posits that artistically, intellectually, philosophically, Americans are weaklings; financially, and in all ways commercial they are very powerful. Consequently, America has produced freaks, men who have gathered great wealth, but whose spiritual and emotional lives are a desert. The prototype American is Philip Armour, Chicago's hog king, who said, "I have no other interest in life but my business. I do not want any more money; . . . I have more than I want. I do not love the money. What I do love is the getting of it. All these years of my life I have put into this work, and now it is my life and I cannot give it up. What other interest can you suggest to me? I do not read. I do not take part in politics. What can I do?"⁶

To the men of the renaissance such a spiritually impoverished country could only produce a dead literature, and in their minds that

literature was entombed in the universities. The professor's function there was to worship at the tomb of past glories and to smile down on the tantrums of modern scribblers like Dreiser, who were only poor, misguided step-children of mother England. In an unsigned review in the Dial of January, 1915,⁷ called "An American Literature" there is a revealing statement about the climate in which men like Dreiser worked. This is what emanated from the universities:

Professor Brander Matthews is of the opinion that American literature has no existence apart from English literature. His opinion, since he is nothing if not orthodox in his view of literature, is probably that of the majority of those who have considered the point. We [presumably the editors of the Dial] are indeed inclined to agree with him as to the fact that "the literature of a language is one and indivisible and that the nativity or domicile of those who make it matters nothing."

Professor Matthews is willing to admit to some differences resulting from geography but those differences are "subtle rather than important." The reviewer is inclined to accept the Professor's dictum but is more willing to concede that political, geographical and racial factors "may profoundly modify our present likeness to England."

It is something of a shock to discover that as late as 1915 the orthodox attitude was that the difference between British and American literature was "subtle rather than important." But it explains to some extent why the assaults on these establishment views were so vigorous and so often repeated in the periodicals of the new movement. The battle lines between the warring factions might be loosely drawn to divide the professors from the renaissance men and the popular critics writing in the avant-garde periodicals. Anderson must have often heard attacks on the universities and "professors."

The fundamental nature of the conflict can be presented by counterposing two articles, one by Charles Leonard Moore⁸ called "Modernity in Literature and the Next Movement" in a 1913 issue of the Dial⁹ and one by Van Wyck Brooks called "On Creating a Usable Past" which appeared in the Dial of 1918 after that magazine had been overhauled.

The Moore article reflects the respectable, academic, what Brooks later called the "highbrow" view of literature and what it ought to be. It is aloof, urbane, and patronizing. Its eyes are on Mount Parnassus rather than on the life abounding in the country. It is divinely wise and bored in the knowledge that there is nothing new under the sun.

The tumult and the shoutings of the captains of realism have died away. Of course there never was any such thing as realism. The good books produced by the movement do not differ in essentials from the good books evolved by any other recipe or formula invented by man. . . .

In default of any better term, these whirlings and blind motions of literature and art in the present may be called modernity. Modishness is its note. It aspires to be "brand new," "up-to-date," "right off the bat." More decisively even than realism it tries to break with the past. It has an utter lack of reverence for the great work or established reputations of the past. . . . The most curious feature of our passing madness is that we believe we have re-created a whole world of art and art-forms out of our own heads. Yet the fact remains that nothing in our recent output is new. In spite of the contortions and struggles of our novelists and play wrights and poets to be strong, to be daring, to be extreme, there is nothing that they utter which will compare in these qualities with much of the literature of the past.

.
 But modern literature has done its best to banish the ideas . . . of beauty and the cognate ideas of grandeur and sublimity. . . . The trend of modern literature towards

the worst in life, is all but universal. A few poets and mystics have stood out for beauty, nobility, and charm, but the greater part of Europe and America has been submerged by the ugly, the abnormal, the unclean, and the merely dull.

Anderson's declaration of freedom from the "master-craftsmen that are gone" and his desire to advance mankind in understanding by reaching into his own soul are set against Moore's call for an imitative return to the old verities in search of "the Spirit of Beauty." Moore obliquely wishes for an aristocracy of art which will banish the modern rabble of the barnyard.

It is time that the Spirit of Beauty should again put forth her power and impel art to a new advance. . . . Design, order, distinction should set their seals again on literary work. Will the Spirit of Democracy oppose the Spirit of Beauty? I do not think so. . . . Democracy may have a passion for art, and even if this were not so, we are not all going to be democratized into pigs.

Speaking for the pigs is the unlikely Van Wyck Brooks.¹⁰ Brooks confronts "our professors," analyzes their limits, and resists their attempts to cut off modern literary impulses from the glorious tradition. Brooks' article builds a framework, an historical attitude, for Anderson's new man, "proclaiming his right to speak out of the body and soul of youth." As such it serves as an introduction to Anderson's new world and provides the intellectual underpinnings for the literature of experience, of feeling, and of life as it is lived. It was Van Wyck Brooks, more than anyone else Anderson knew, who could confront the professors on their own terms.

Brooks admits to the anarchy of the present scene, that there is a "lack of inherited resources." He ascribes this to "our professors" who "continue to pour out a stream of historical works repeating the same points of view to such an astonishing degree that they have placed a sort of Talmudic seal upon the American tradition."

I am aware, of course, that we have had no cumulative culture, and that consequently the professors who guard the past and the writers who voice the present have less in common in this country than anywhere in the Old World. The professors of American literature can, after all, offer very little to the creators of it. But there is a vendetta between the two generations, and the older generation seems to delight in cutting off the supplies of the younger. What actuates the old guard in our criticism and their energetic following in the university world is apparently no sort of desire to fertilize the present, but rather to shame the present with the example of the past.

The professor, says Brooks, has an ideal "not of the creative, but of the practical life." He suggests that in making a tradition out of the past, the ideal that has guided the professor is the commercial and moralistic ideal of the prevailing American character; everything else, the literary past of groping struggle, defeat, confused and dishonorable impulses, --the really useful past--has been culled out. He has overlooked these parts of the literary past because they are not compatible with the way the "system"--what Dreiser has described above--likes to see itself. And the professor is committed to that system. Brooks puts it this way:

The American writer . . . not only has the most meager of birthrights but is cheated out of that. For the professorial mind, as I have said, puts a gloss upon the past that renders it sterile for the living mind. Instead of reflecting the creative impulse in American history, it reaffirms the values established by the commercial tradition; it crowns everything that has passed the censorship of the commercial and moralistic mind.

Brooks says that it is the "literature of exploitation, the counterpart of our American life" that has succeeded in this bustling, commercial democracy; from Irving, Longfellow, Cooper, and Bryant, who exploited their environment, to the local colorists. Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman have been successful exceptions, "but they have survived not because of what they still offer us, but because they were hybrids, with enough pioneer instinct to pay their way among their contemporaries."

Brooks asserts therefore that modern writing, which rebels against commercial exploitation, must discover or invent a usable past. For the past "is an inexhaustible storehouse of apt attitudes and adaptable ideals." What is important in the past for the modern writer to bring order out of anarchy? "To approach our literature not of the successful fact but of the creative impulse, is to throw it into an entirely new focus. What emerges then is the desire, the aspiration, the struggle, the tentative endeavor, and the appalling obstacles our life has placed before them. Which immediately casts over the spiritual history of America a significance that, for us, it has never had before."

Brooks asks that criticism abandon the view of American literature as American success story, as though the American captains of industry had counterparts who were captains of literature--exploiters. He asks that criticism now find the source of the recently unbottled elements that have no opportunity to develop freely in the open.

Those sources can be found because "the creative past of this country is a limbo of the non-elect, the fathers and grandfathers of the talent of today."

If Brooks' "usable past" was not likely to be found or if his notion of the literature of exploitation is not altogether compelling, his effort to find a critical and intellectual foundation for the confused literary gropings of the time represents a firm and widespread conviction that Anderson's new note was neither ephemeral nor necessarily destined to be swallowed by the glories of the past. Anderson's new man had a heritage too.

The battle represented here was not newly joined in 1913, nor were the complaints of Dreiser original with him. They were simply the current expressions of the apparently on-going conflict between traditional academics and contemporary activist intellectuals and between one generation's values and another's. There just happened to be a burst of new offensives in these battles when Anderson arrived in Chicago. The paper that first took notice of Anderson, the Friday Literary Review of the Chicago Evening Post had been sounding off for realism and against censorship and domination of the effete, genteel, and abstract in American literature since the Review's inception in 1909. And many of the movement's biggest voices began in the Post review.

There were some new magazines and changes in the old ones in the middle years of the second decade that swelled the voices of the new to a considerable crescendo. These were the magazines that Anderson

mentioned. The Little Review for the most part stayed little and published the creative work of the new voices, including James Joyce's Ulysses. The Masses was more interested in revolution under Max Eastman but when Floyd Dell joined the staff in 1914 it became a nearly successful synthesis of revolutionary politics and revolutionary literature.

In November of 1914 the New Republic was founded; among the editors were Walter Lippman and Francis Hackett, the former editor of the Post's Friday Literary Review. In the third number, Francis Hackett, who pretty well took charge of the magazine's literary matters, sounded the new periodical's literary note in an article called "Our Literary Poverty." The article echoes matters that have already been raised with emphasis on a literature and criticism uniquely American.

In England literature has followed fairly closely the experience of the people. . . . But in America . . . the wealth of the British culture was drawn upon at the time when American genius most needed encouragement, and in the entire educational establishment "literature" came to mean preeminently English literature, always fully intelligible but never quite at home. . . . Too much of literature had no associations whatever with things that were heard and seen and felt.

. . . the time seems to have come when Americans realize that for our own peculiar life we need interpreters and critics who speak, if not a distinct language, at least the language of a distinct people, to whom even the most perceptive Englishman must come a little from outside.¹¹

Anderson read the New Republic¹² and knew Francis Hackett in Chicago. The fact of books being divorced from direct experience was one of his frequent themes and theirs. Another familiar idea that

may have caught his eye was in an article on Theodore Dreiser by Randolph Bourne, one of the New Republic's most brilliant critics and vehement anti-war spokesman. Anderson undoubtedly knew of Dreiser by this time, but Bourne on the subject of characters and the endings of novels certainly finds echoes in Anderson:

I suspect myself of an almost morbid eye for that theme of redemption which no excellent American novelist seems able to resist. One may start bravely enough with an uncompromisingly real person . . . set firmly in the American scene. After a few hundred pages, the author's incorrigible itch to make over the character gets the better of him. . . . and before our astonished eyes the moral transformation takes place. . . . People awaken to the barrenness of their lives, and find purpose and meaning before the novelist allows us to part from them. The only trouble is that these metamorphosed personalities have long ceased to be interesting.¹³

Anderson's "literary father" Floyd Dell also published in the New Republic while on the staff of the Masses. Dell's views about literature were no doubt well known to Anderson, but there are some curiously provocative observations which Dell makes in a New Republic review of Edgar Lee Masters' Spoon River Anthology which point straight to Winesburg, Ohio.

. . . But when the poet appears who cannot but see in the faces of men and women the half confessed secrets of pride and passion, who cannot but observe and reflect upon the course of their loves and hatreds, and who if he searches his own heart does so to discover what these other people are like¹⁴--when such a poet appears, we mix our affectionate admiration with a deep respect.¹⁵

There is evidence that Anderson read Spoon River Anthology in the same month of--and possibly because of--this review. Could it have given him an idea about the stories later made into Winesburg, Ohio written the following winter?¹⁶

The New Republic frequently addressed itself to the matter of poetry and became a forum for discussions of the new freedom. Contributors complained that the genteel manner, with its emphasis on form, was empty of passion, generally effete and lifeless. In March of 1916 Amy Lowell announced "The New Manner in Modern Poetry." Among other things, poetry in the new manner is marked by 1) "externality:" the attitude of being interested in things for themselves and not because of the effect they have upon oneself, 2) humor, 3) insistence upon the poetry in unpoetic things, 4) the syntax of prose, the ordinary phrase construction of everyday speech, 5) a social consciousness.

The poet of the "new manner" paints landscapes because landscapes are beautiful, not because they chime with his mood. He tells stories because stories are interesting, and not to prove a thesis. He writes narrative poems because his range embraces the world and is not confined to himself. He is ironic, grotesque, ugly at times, because he has the feeling of the universality of life.¹⁷

The spokesmen of the new were particularly discontent with the short story. In 1912 Floyd Dell wrote in the Friday Literary Review: "The short story has never been mastered. It has only been experimented with. And in general it has only been fumbled, bungled, mismanaged. Even the most eminent of those who have used the form have failed to make the most of their opportunities."¹⁸ In April of 1917 Mary Colum reviewed The Best Short Stories of 1916 in the recently overhauled Dial and pronounced it "not much to the credit of America." Despite the fact that America was in the grip of the short story, "the short story in America is at low ebb." The blame is on the magazines, essentially, but:

Most of all the short story suffers from the blight which affects all creative art in America--the want of intellectual freedom. . . . A few magazine editors could do a great deal to raise the level of the American short story. They could at once eradicate two of the things that cause a part of the evil--the wordiness and commercial standardization of the story.¹⁹

But the Dial's sharpest attack on the short story appeared in the following month. In an article called "The Senility of the Short Story" Herbert Ellsworth Cory announced that the short story as it was currently done was on its last legs. There is much of the voice of Sherwood Anderson in his complaints and prophecies:

Seldom has the short story, even in its prime in the last half of the nineteenth century, attained to high seriousness. And today there are few of its practitioners, . . . whose attitude toward life is not more or less vitiated by some tinge of the triviality, the egocentric mania, the commercialism, or the mere virtuosity that contaminate all petty or casual artists. The depths of our age, beneath a phantom surface of intermittent and delirious gaiety, cry out for a deeper art. . . . The short story is but a more delicate manifestation of that universal fever that has bankrupted mankind. . . . From the depths, the most naive and most sophisticated of our readers yearn for new prophets like Carlyle and Ruskin, who came too soon. We would turn gladly from the prettily suggestive to the earnestly and beautifully explicit. . . . For the supreme artist is not one who concerns himself with "originality," at least not self consciously. . . . The great artist is so moved with a conviction that is extra-individual, the conviction of his community in its most spacious moods, in its most magnificent hopes, that he loses himself in these to save himself.²⁰

By this time Anderson had already published a number of his Winesburg stories. If he read these articles, and he certainly might have, he found reinforcement for views he expressed many times, the deadly commercialism of the magazine stories, the rejection of a self-conscious originality. The last sentence of Corey's here describes no one so well as it does Sherwood Anderson.

In October of 1916 a sweeping critique of literature much like Dreiser's critique of society appeared in the New Republic. It was called "Against American Literature"²¹ and was signed by J. R. Dos Passos, Jr.

. . . I defy anyone to confine himself for long to purely American books without feeling starved, without pining for the color and passion and profound thought of other literatures. Our books are like our cities; they are all the same.

Our literature, says Dos Passos, lacks roots, "the earth feeling, the jeweled accretions of the imagination of succeeding ages."

Then there is the cult of the abstract. Perhaps it too grows out of our lack of root, out of our lack of spiritual kinship to the corn and wheat our fields grow, out of our inane matter of factness. . . . Worse than its [our art and literature's] lack of depth and texture is its abstractness, its lack on the whole, of dramatic actuality.

For illustration Dos Passos compares the novels of Edith Wharton with Turgenev: "The Russian stirs eyes and ears and nose and sense of touch, portrays his story with vivid tangibility; the American leaves an abstract impression of intellectual bitterness. It is not so much a question of technique as of feeling."

The tone of the higher sort of writing in this country is undoubtedly that of a well-brought-up and intelligent woman, tolerant, versed in the things of the world, quietly humorous, but bound tightly in the fetters of "niceness," of the middle-class outlook. And when the shackles are thrown off the result is vulgarity, and what is worse, affectation.

Dos Passos closes by turning to the Russians. One is reminded of the frequent linking of Anderson with Dostoievsky and Chekov and Anderson's great enthusiasm for Turgenev's Annals of a Sportsman.

In all this may lie the explanation of the sudden vogue of Russian literature in this country. It has so much that our own lacks. There is the primitive savagery, the color, . . . the freshness . . . No wonder it is a relief to us Americans to turn from our prim colonial living room of thought, where the shades are drawn for fear the sun will fade the carpet Puritan ancestors laid there, to the bizarre pains and passions, to the hot moist steppe-savour of a Russian novel. And it becomes harder every day for any race to gain the lesson of the soil.

III

In the very first issue, November, 1916, of the Seven Arts Waldo Frank wrote an article called "Emerging Greatness:"

There have been pure and delicate visions among us. In art, there has been Whistler; and Henry James took it into his head to write novels. But the clear subtlety of these men was achieved by a rigorous avoidance of native stuff and native issues. Literally, they escaped America; and their followers have done the same, though in a more figurative meaning. Artist-senses have gone out, felt the raw of us, been repulsed by it, and so withdrawn to a magnificent introversion. So, when we found vision in America, we have found mostly an abstract art--an art that remained pure by remaining neuter. What would have happened to these artists, had they grappled with their country, is an academic question. But I suspect that the true reason for their ivory tower was lack of strength to venture forth and not be overwhelmed. This much is sure however--and true particularly of the novel--that our artists have been of two extremes: those who gained an almost unbelievable purity of expression by the very violence of their self-isolation, and those who, plunging into the American maelstrom, were submerged in it, lost their vision altogether, and gave forth a gross chronicle and a blind cult of the American Fact.

The significance of Sherwood Anderson whose first novel, Windy McPherson's Son has recently appeared is simply that he has escaped these two extremes, that he suggests at last a presentation of life shot through with the searching color of truth, which is the signal for a native culture.

Mr. Anderson is no accident. The appearance of his book is a gesture of logic. Indeed, commentators of tomorrow might gauge the station at which America has arrived today by a study of the impulses--conscious and unconscious--which compose this novel. But it is not a prophetic work. Its author is simply a man who has felt the moving passions of his people, yet sustained himself against them just enough in a crude way to set them forth.²²

Frank goes on to point out Windy's likeness to the Russians and to criticize its ending, but it "is the romance of inchoate America. . . . through it all, is a radiant glow of the truth."

Frank had not met nor ever heard of Sherwood Anderson before seeing Windy McPherson's Son. But the shock of recognition above was the index of how Anderson's literary impulses accorded with the felt need of American literature as understood by the country's best literary people. The most articulate voice of that need, the culmination of all the "new spirit" and "new manner" expressed above, was found in the short, happy life of the Seven Arts. In a period of a little less than a year this one magazine had a more profound impact on American thought than any other in this decade. It was the first organ to identify the new spirit as a national movement and give it a self-conscious medium. Seen in retrospect, the Seven Arts was prophetic of the literature of the following decades. James Oppenheim was the editor, but Waldo Frank and Van Wyck Brooks were the leading spirits of the group. On the advisory board were Kahlil Gibran, Louis Untermeyer, Robert Frost, Edna Kenton, David Mannes, and Robert Edmond Jones. Among the contributors besides these were John Dos Passos, Eugene O'Neil, Randolph Bourne, John Reed, H. L. Mencken, D. H. Lawrence, Paul Rosenfeld, John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, and Theodore Dreiser. It was through the New York based Seven Arts and the men he found there that Anderson continued and matured the "formal" education in art begun in Chicago. His contact with the Seven Arts was close and continuous. Anderson spotted Frank's review of Windy (above) and wrote to thank him. It appears that with that first issue, Anderson felt that he had found his medium, for the very next week he wrote again to Frank, outlining the Winesburg plan and

sending along some of the stories.²³ By December Anderson was writing regularly to Frank and the basis of a deep friendship of several years was formed. In February of 1917 Anderson visited the office of Seven Arts in New York where he met James Oppenheim and Van Wyck Brooks. He read the magazine faithfully, commenting to correspondents often about something he saw there. He even collected and saved all the issues.

The Seven Arts had essentially one chord which it played in variations and in changing keys. That message was the emotional poverty and spiritual death resulting from an America dedicated to the exterior and the material. This chord was struck repeatedly and with passion by the editor James Oppenheim and with the emotional balance and insight which was characteristic of Van Wyck Brooks. These men laid bare the spiritual malaise of America and demanded a cure. The sources of the cankers are explored in an unusually penetrating essay which, along with Dreiser's article in the beginning of the chapter, strikes the persistent notes of Seven Arts. Leo Stein, art critic and essayist who was Gertrude's older brother, analyzes "American Optimism"²⁴ and its shallow foundations. He cites optimism as the most insistent fact of the American spirit and sees its roots in the hope engendered by science and discovery.

The natural consequence of this [science and discovery] has been the greatly increased power over nature. . . . it is almost impossible for skepticism to prevail against our quite unlimited confidence in the range of scientific understanding and utilization. But another of the benefits from the machine that was as hopefully expected has not

been realized at all. The social benefits that were so confidently predicted have failed of realization, and a disillusioned century learned that not alone the engine, but the engineer also would have to be transformed. . . . In reality, authority, tradition, prejudice, continued to rule, as they had always done.

Stein asserts that hygiene, the control of pain and disease, cooperating with the products of mechanical science, has helped to sustain the cheerful hope of progress. He also notes that often in the interests of social amelioration there has been some vigorously effective description in current literature. But about the realistic movement he adds:

This reportorial work is admirable, yet no one reading this literature can escape the conviction that in spite of its buoyancy, its husky energy, and its wide flung intelligence, its interest in fact is only an interest in externals and that beneath the surface it is traditionally elementary. The outer aspect for mind and body both is realistic, but within we find the spirit of the fairy tale. . . . The souls of hero and heroine are only a trifle more complicated than those of the fairy tale, but the scene has become realistically elaborate. . . . the people are . . . cast in a simple mold of spiritual consistency, and undisturbed by inner contradictions. Their conflicts, when they have them, are sometimes as deep as are the outer layers of the skin. The soul of man is treated as though it were a simple thing, as though what one did not know would never hurt one, as though an optimistic faith required the sustaining force of ignorance and fatuity.

A few hopeful currents are cited, but more courage is needed.

The parochialism of our soul's outlook must be enlarged, and we must get more insight and more understanding. The range of intelligent investigation must be extended, and we must add to the courage that is leading us to grapple with the hygiene of society, the greater courage that is needed to grapple with the hygiene of the soul. . . . We must learn to face the complexity of our inner life.

Stein hails the coming of Freud but regrets that "we feel it as discoveries in a new and interesting field rather than as something that tears deeply at our vitals."

However, if we succeed, upon the basis of such knowledge, in adding to the description of mere outward things an equally successful presentation of the inner, we shall produce a picture of our time, which even in the absence of transcending genius will be vital and sufficient.

. . . a deeper insight would have important consequences, for it is not only in regard to spiritual depths that expression in America has been inhibited by the failure to plumb the soul's demand. It was a similar uncritical simplicity of thought and shallowness of feeling that justified the identification of the flesh and the devil.

. . . It is not then optimism, nor materialism either, as we often hear, that is the crying fault of American life and art, but shallowness. Its superficiality has kept its optimism from the ultimate test, but has not disproved it.

Stein's thoughts ring out again and again in the Seven Arts with varying degrees of passion and clarity. Of course, to the prophets of the Seven Arts the only answer to this sterilizing shallowness of feeling is art. The editor James Oppenheim:

Only through the emotional development of the race may we have personalities whose thinking is not in advance of themselves. This is one of the tasks of art which must lift the hidden desires into consciousness, which must tap and drain off destructive impulses, and which must save the individual through a vicarious experience.²⁵

For Oppenheim the kind of art that creates this vicarious experience is not a genteel realism, for there are none of us genteel.

The belief in pure art doubtless springs from the modern fallacy that we have men and women amongst us . . . who have no under parts. . . . And yet it takes but little psychologic analysis to discover in your pure man a region all slums. He may hold his nose and half shut his eyes . . . but it is there--the vulgar passions, the primitive instincts, and all that is brutal, sordid, ridiculous, absurd and cheap.²⁶

Currently there is a force at work to help restore the whole, unified man. That is, curiously, the war.

If the War is a destroyer, it is also a creator. . . . the population rises to a consecration very similar to that of the philosopher, the artist and the teacher. . . . the nations are going through an experience of life and death: they are enduring again the ancient disciplines of heroism and of sorrow. They have died that they may be born again.²⁷

But beyond the war, the period is a rich one and demands a richer, deeper expression. That Anderson could see himself in his work as the prototype of all Americans²⁸ is reflected in Oppenheim's description of the present stage of American civilization.

Adolescence is our period; adolescence when everything is possible . . . when all is in flux and the next tide may destroy us. These are the days of high ambition, of un-resting activity, of lack of self-knowledge, of brutal sport and animal spirits, of sudden sporadic attempts at nobility and transcendentalism, of the see-saw between the gross and the supernatural.²⁹

For the heart of his adolescent land and the material of his art the American artist does not have far to do.

He has the dream of the future, the life flowing vividly and rankly around him. . . . He has only really to go to himself . . . to go down layer beneath layer of his human nature, to tap the stored heritage of the life of man.³⁰

The intellectual foundation and guiding light of Seven Arts' ideology was Van Wyck Brooks. What Oppenheim contributed in passion and vigor Brooks matched in intelligence, depth and breadth, and a clear, firm hold on American literary tradition. If this renaissance had in it one intellectual strain, it flowed from the idea first set forth in Brooks' America's Coming-of-Age,³¹ first published in 1915. His diagnosis of the sources and his version of the backgrounds of

America's cultural malady were accepted and propounded by most of the renaissance men. That idea has now become a familiar and accepted part of American literary criticism. Fundamentally, it is a dualism which became a polarity in American culture. Those two poles now divide national life between them:

So it is that from the beginning we find two main currents in the American mind running side by side but rarely mingling-- a current of overtones and a current of undertones--and both equally unsocial; on the one hand the transcendental current, originating in the piety of the Puritans, becoming a philosophy in Jonathan Edwards, passing through Emerson, producing the fastidious refinement and aloofness of the chief American writers, and resulting in the final unreality of most contemporary American culture, and on the other hand the current of catchpenny opportunism, originating in the practical shifts of Puritan life, becoming a philosophy in Franklin, passing through the American humorists, and resulting in the atmosphere of our contemporary business life. (pp. 4-5)

Brooks calls these two incompatible strains "highbrow" and "lowbrow." All the great minds of American history are "in one way or another permutations and combinations of these two grand progenitors of the American mind."

In everything one finds this frank acceptance of twin values which are not expected to have anything in common: on the one hand, a quite unclouded, quite unhyprocritical assumption of transcendent theory ("high ideals"), on the other a simultaneous acceptance of catchpenny realities. Between university ethics and business ethics, between American culture and American humor, between Good Government and Tammany, between academic pedantry and pavement slang, there is no community, no genial middle ground. (p. 3)

This polarity has one explanation: ". . . without doubt the Puritan theocracy is the all-influential fact in the history of the American mind" (p. 4). The Puritan God had to have a city on earth. And God's city must thrive. The elect were manifest in their success in the city, success produced by practical expediency.

It was the Puritan conception of the Deity as not alone all-determining but precisely responsible for the practical affairs of the race, as constituting, in fact, the State itself, which precluded in advance any central bond, any responsibility, any common feeling in American affairs and which justified the unlimited centrifugal expediency that has always marked American life. . . . The eternal issues the Puritans felt so keenly, the practical issues they experienced so monotonously threw almost no light on one another; there was no middle ground to mitigate, combine or harmonize them. (p. 4)

The piety of the Puritan evolved into the highbrow transcendental strain, the repository of American refinement and "culture," for which the university serves as caretaker. But a sense of the pious and the ideal faded in most, but only after the Puritan ideal had deprived the average American of a sense of his own inner richness and potential.

Full of the old Puritan contempt for human nature and the sensuous and imaginative experience that seasons it and gives it meaning, the American mind was gradually subdued in what it worked in. For possessing as it did a minimum of emotional equipment, it had no barriers to throw up against the overwhelming material forces that beleaguered it, and it gradually went out of itself as it were and assumed the values of its environment.³²

The casualty was a genuine, organic literature, "for the creative impulses of men were always at war with the possessive impulse, and poetry, as we know, springs from brooding on just those aspects of experience that most retard the swift advance of the practical mind."³³ Today, Brooks observes, there has evolved an almost hopeless split between highbrow and lowbrow. The creative impulses are rarified into the misty unreality of writers like James, Howells, and Wharton. The lower impulses are commercialized into cheap magazine stories and sensational journalism. Either the expressive American is pure intelligence and soul or "a region all slums." The writers of a unity,

Whitman and Twain, are an embarrassment to the highbrow and a puzzle-ment to the lowbrow.

Van Wyck Brooks and the others of the Seven Arts played over and over again on this theme of a polarized duality. The total sway of the Brooks idea is reflected in the Oppenheim editorials and Frank's discovery of Sherwood Anderson. Oppenheim declares in the second number:

With the increase of democracy one would naturally expect art to contact more and more of the majority. The opposite seems to be true. Art for the people seems to lie behind us. . . . For what we call art today seems to be largely the work of specialists in expression for specialists in appreciation. In the aristocracy of culture, in the high-brow circles, there is abundance of fine work: especially art of the "pure" type--pure music cleansed of the dirt of thinking and image, pure painting thrice-purged of the "story" and the "picture," pure novels with melodrama and incident burnt out, pure poetry all wrought of images and combed clean of sentiment and thought. But as Shaw probably said, purity is for the pure. And so most of the species is excluded.

However, this onset of "purism" is not confined to the aristocracy: it also reaches to the democracy. Here is purity of another sort. Pure trash, pure vulgarity, if you will, but pure. Here are the stories that are all plot, snap, ginger, and wish-fulfillment: cheap fairytales of business and adventure, turned out as by machinery. . . .

The truth of the matter is that great art was never pure. It was the expression of the whole man, and not merely his sublimated upper layer. He never separated soul from body, the aesthetic from the emotional, the intellect from the intuitive. . . .

Extremely significant for our future then, is the emergence in America of the so-called "new poetry." From the older, the New England standpoint, it lacks refinement, gracefulness and respectability. But it is a vital growth from below upwards. It starts on the level of vaudeville and the newspaper but it rises to the heights of "culture." It includes vulgarity and passionate aspiration, it is both simple and complex, . . . The Spoon River Anthology has some of the greatness of great art for this reason. Its expression is simple, it springs directly from many levels of experience, it leads off toward high places. . . . Once

again we have prophecy and philosophy and vulgarity in art. . . . In this lies a great hope for a national art.³⁴

So the call for a national art was a call for a middle artistic stance reaching both downward and upward. Brooks might have called it a "middlebrow" art. Waldo Frank, also echoing the Brooks idea, thought he saw such a middlebrow in Sherwood Anderson.

This much is sure, however--and true particularly of the novel--that our artists have been of two extremes: those who gained an almost unbelievable purity of expression by the very violence of their self-isolation, and those who, plunging into the American maelstrom, were submerged in it, lost their vision altogether, and gave forth a gross chronicle and a blind cult of the American fact.

The significance of Sherwood Anderson . . . is simply that he has escaped these two extremes, that he suggests at last a presentation of life shot through with the searching color of truth, which is a signal for a native culture.³⁵

Anderson absorbed completely the ideology of the Seven Arts; he was infatuated with the quality and standing of the men he found there, and stirred by their ideas. What took place was a cross-fertilization of his art and their ideas. His ideas about art were formed by theirs. His art held a mirror to their theories. It was a happy, if brief, marriage.

Anderson was, of course, particularly taken by the ideas of Brooks. To him he wrote:

I cannot resist an impulse I have to write to you again concerning your book America's Coming-of-Age. Are there any others of your books in which you also develop the theme you have taken hold of so firmly?

The amazing thing to me about your mind, Brooks, is that you see so clearly what I did not suppose any man with a background such as I had thought of you as having could see. (Letters, p. 36)

To Waldo Frank he wrote: "As for Brooks, I say frankly I love the man. . . . I do feel in him a solid and direct stab at truth that I respect all the more because the things he says hit so often and so closely at me (Letters, p. 35). Anderson was not close to Brooks as he was to Frank at this time. But he read all of what appeared of Brooks' in Seven Arts. He once wrote to Frank: "Again I have to thank Brooks for a bully article. Tell that man to keep his vision. He is thundering along on the right trail sure as hell" (Letters, p. 10). In the issue of the month following that remark Brooks outlined the state of the American spirit and the only possible direction for the American artist.

Thus we see today, emerging from his illusions, the American as he really is: obscure to himself and others, a peasant, and yet not a peasant, an animal, but full of gentleness and humor, physically sane but neurotic from the denial of his impulses, a ragbag of inherited memories and unassimilated facts, a strange, awkward, unprecedented creature, snared by his environment, helplessly incapable of self-determination in a free world--in a word, "low-brow" and aware of it. . . . Presently, therefore, . . . he turns back again to his old habits--only to find that they in turn no longer appeal to him as they formerly did. Things, in short, repel him now instead of engaging him. . . . And so he has to turn about once more and face that blank within himself where a world of meanings ought to be.

Now is it possible that all the poets and artists of history, whose function it has been to create and manifest these meanings are unable to fill up this blank in his mind? . . . He knows that by this process only the upper levels of his brain are touched, and that they are touched only by minds in which the true fires of life have never been lighted.

That is why we feel today that it is the real work of criticism in this country to begin low. For the American mind will never be able to recapture the wisdom of the world except by earning it, and it can only earn this wisdom through its own ascent upward on the basis of these primitive facts to which it has been gradually

awakened. . . . the only strictly organic literature of which at the moment this country is capable is a literature that is being produced by certain minds which seem, artistically speaking, scarcely to have emerged from the protozoa. That our life contains a thousand elements to which these writers just now fail to do justice is quite beside the point.

We are simply at the beginning of our true national existence and we shall remain there. . . . until we have candidly accepted our own lowest common denominator.³⁶

In November of that same year, just seven months after Brooks' assessment above appeared, Anderson published in the Dial his second public critical statement. It was called "An Apology for Crudity."

For a long time I have believed that crudity is an inevitable quality in the production of a really significant present-day American literature. How indeed is one to escape the obvious fact that there is as yet no native subtlety of thought or living among us? And if we are a crude, a childlike people, how can our literature hope to escape the influence of that fact? Why indeed should we want it to escape? . . .

But let us first of all accept certain truths. Why should we Americans aspire to a subtlety that belongs not to us but to old lands and places. Why talk of intellectuality and intellectual life when we have not accepted the life that we have? There is death on that road and following it has brought death into much of American writing. . . .

Who, knowing our America and understanding the life in our towns and cities, can close his eyes to the fact that life here is for the most part an ugly affair. As a people we have given ourselves to industrialism, and industrialism is not lovely. . . . The dominant note in American life today is the factory hand. When we have digested that fact, we can begin to approach the task of the present day novelist with a new point of view.

. . . To our grandchildren the privilege of attempting to produce a school of American writing that has delicacy and color may come as a matter of course. One hopes that will be true, but it is not true now. And that is why, with so many of the younger Americans, I put my faith in the modern literary adventurers. We shall, I am sure, have much crude, blundering American writing before the gift of beauty and subtlety in prose shall honestly belong to us.³⁷

The voice here is only that of Sherwood Anderson, but the vision and the need expressed is widely shared, as has been shown. Anderson, the artist, is now clear about what he must do.

What Anderson finally absorbed from his friends and their magazines was not primarily their ideas. Many of those ideas were impulses he brought with him to Chicago in 1913. Windy McPherson's Son, written in Elyria, strongly reflects Anderson's conviction of the sorry spiritual condition of America. However, in its literary aspects he admits that that novel was largely imitative. Other ideas about the state of art in America--its highbrow unreality and commercial trickiness, its lack of intellectual freedom and the consequent superficiality--were also impulses which were given form and definition in his first year in Chicago. Most of them are implicit in his first public critical statement, "The New Note," considered at the beginning of this chapter.

What he did take from what he heard and read was a clearer definition of these problems and a better understanding of their root causes (especially from Van Wyck Brooks). But far more important, he took from them confidence. Those early days of doubt when he hated his pile of manuscripts and ran from them were gone. He now knew, in the testimony of the best, most cultivated minds in America, that what he thought, felt, and wrote was not only worthy, it was desperately needed.

Notes

¹The most thorough study of Anderson's early life and the source of this information is an unpublished dissertation by William Sutton, Sherwood Anderson's Formative Years, 1876-1913, Ohio State University, 1943.

²"The Situation in American Writing: Seven Questions, Part II," Partisan Review, VI (Fall, 1939), 106.

³"The New Note," Little Review, I (March, 1914), 23.

⁴Little Review, I (April, 1914), 16-17.

⁵Seven Arts, I (February, 1917), 363-389. The quotes that follow are taken at random from this article.

⁶Wayne Andrews, Battle For Chicago (New York, 1946), p. 95.

⁷LVIII, 37-38.

⁸Moore was not a professor but a minor poet and frequent contributor to the various respectable journals. Of course, there was no one view that represented "the professors." The rebels only liked to put them all in one corner so they could be assaulted more conveniently. Moore's view is typical of the one usually ascribed to "professors."

⁹LIV (February 16, 1913), 123-124. The material quoted here is taken at random from this brief article.

¹⁰LXIV (April 11, 1918), 337-338.

¹¹I (November 21, 1914), 10-11.

¹²Anderson eventually became annoyed with the respectability and intellectuality of the New Republic. In April of 1917 he warned Waldo Frank of the Seven Arts about its faults: "There is a danger that always besets a group of keen fellows like yourself. It is the sort of thing that has happened to the crowd over at the New Republic. You become too keen; a madness for analysis takes hold of you." (Letters, pp. 11-12).

¹³II (April 17, 1915), 7-8. One of Anderson's favorite ideas was the necessity in fiction to be faithful to what people actually are and to the way life is actually lived. He told Norman Holmes Pearson: ". . . in distorting the lives of these others--often imagined figures to be sure--to achieve some tricky effect, you are betraying not only this indefinable thing we call form, but you are betraying all life. . . . in short that it is as dirty and unworthy a thing to betray these imagined figures as it would be to betray or sell out so-called

real people in real life." "Anderson and the New Puritanism," The Newberry Library Bulletin, II (December, 1948), 57.

¹⁴Looking into oneself for source material is one of the primary tenets of the new movement. See "More about the New Note" on page 87 of this chapter.

¹⁵"Spoon River People," II (April 17, 1915), 14.

¹⁶The issue of Anderson's contact with Masters and Spoon River Anthology is thoroughly treated in an unpublished dissertation: William L. Phillips, "Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio: Its Origins, Composition, Technique, and Reception," University of Chicago, 1949, pp. 89-90.

¹⁷VI (March, 1916), 124-125.

¹⁸VI (May 17, 1912), 12.

¹⁹LXII (April 19, 1917), 346.

²⁰LXII (May 3, 1917), 378.

²¹VIII (October 14, 1916), 269-271. The quoted material is taken at random from this article.

²²I (November, 1916), 73-74.

²³Anderson wrote to Frank: "I made last year a series of intense studies of people of my home town, Clyde, Ohio. In the book I called the town Winesburg, Ohio. Some of the studies you may think pretty raw, and there is a sad note running through them. One or two of them get pretty closely down to ugly things of life. However, I put a good deal into the writing of them, and I believe they, as a whole, come a long step toward achieving what you are asking for in the article you ran in Seven Arts. . . . It is my own idea that when these studies are published in book form, they will suggest the real environment out of which present day American youth is coming" (Letters, p. 4-5). Seven Arts published "Queer" (December, 1916), "The Untold Lie" (January, 1917), "Mother" (March 1917), and "The Thinker" (September, 1917).

²⁴II (May, 1917), 72-92. The quotes following are taken at random from this article.

²⁵I (November, 1916), 56.

²⁶I (December, 1916), 154.

²⁷I (November, 1916), 55. Hope that the war might somehow improve the spiritual condition of America by awakening basic emotions is a notion frequently expressed by the men of the new movement. Anderson wrote to Frank in April of 1917: "In a dim way I am trying to feel that the War has meaning, that it is mankind's stupid way of working something out, a terrible house cleaning" (Letters, p. 12). Later on he wrote: "It is an odd, perverse thing, but it is nevertheless right that American artists should have prayed for war or anything else that would break up the ugly commercialism of our times, and it is right also that now that we are in war we should go to jail rather than take part in the ugly thing (Letters, p. 15).

²⁸Anderson wrote to his friend Marietta Finley in a letter of December 8, 1916: "nearly all of the qualities of the Americans of my time are embodied in me. My struggle, my ignorance, my years of futile work to meaningless ends--all these are American traits."

²⁹I (January, 1917), 267.

³⁰Ibid., 268. See note #14 on p. 118.

³¹References to this book will be taken from the Doubleday Anchor edition (Garden City, N. Y., 1958) and included in the text.

³²"The Splinter of Ice," Seven Arts, I (January, 1917), 274.

³³"The Culture of Industrialism," Seven Arts, I (April, 1917), 656.

³⁴I (December, 1916), 152-156.

³⁵"Emerging Greatness," Seven Arts, I (November, 1916), 74.

³⁶"The Culture of Industrialism," Seven Arts, I (April, 1917), 664-666.

³⁷LXIII (November 8, 1917), 437-438.

Chapter Five

The Artist as Bisexual Bard

I

The years from 1913 through 1917 were the most important of Anderson's life. Winesburg, Ohio came out of this period, but that was only the manifestation, not the reason, for the importance of these years. It was in this period that Anderson found himself. That is, he found his part to play and all the help he needed to play it. His lack of education, his sexual dislocation were all reconciled in the unique role he carved out for himself with the help of chance, the men and the magazines he found, and Tennessee Mitchell.

The importance of Tennessee cannot be overemphasized. She encouraged him and mothered him. But that most any woman could have done. She had a much higher function. She was the radiant embodiment of art, his own private Muse. Everything about her--her stately, well-groomed appearance and manner, her artistic knowledge and talent, her gay wit, her arty dress, her immense sophistication and high-brow social contacts, her elegant apartment done in international decor--was to Anderson utterly other-worldly. She was to him a living, breathing goddess of art. He approached her anxiously and reverently, as though to offer incense in her presence. He was the primitive to be brought into the shining, transcendental world of art. She in turn dressed him up and took him to concerts and the opera; and he

was appropriately awed, not by the music so much as by the costumes, the society, the elegance of it all. And she introduced him to rhythmical dancing, its uninhibited spirit and gay nature-inspired costume. That transporting spirit is described by Anderson's friend Harry Hansen:

One occasion that stirs an ancient fund of reminiscence was Anderson's birthday, when a barbaric dance was staged out in the open. . . . Anderson clad himself in two vivid oriental hangings from a curtain pole in the shack, entwined oak leaves in his hair; the others vied with him in attiring themselves in wisps of grass, vari-colored garments, odds and ends of pillow cases and bed spreads. There were sacrificial dances in the sand; one maiden was buried alive; over all the fantastic rites presided Sherwood Anderson. . . .¹

All of this absorbed and enraptured Anderson. Life with Tennessee was inspiring and joyously free. It was religious and she was his goddess. And in this spirit he married her, more at her insistence than his.

Out of this woman and this context emerged a view of himself and art which evolved into an idea of his own special function as artist. He adopted the view of himself which Tennessee and his new friends had, the gifted primitive, "a man who had felt the moving passions of his people." They introduced him to the religion of art; provided him with rubrics and vestments. He was the crude and unlettered but impassioned soul learning the barbarous freedom of music and the dance, and cultivating the transporting power of the word. Simply, he was the folk-bard, the twentieth-century Robert Burns.

Anderson delighted in this role, and beyond that it was his salvation. As a folk-bard he could escape himself, trance-like, into the

higher world of which Tennessee was presiding goddess. "Art is the great, the true religion. It alone satisfies."² As the prototype of crude, midwestern Americans, he came to see himself as their priest and prophet, ministering to them, raising their thoughts, and giving to them the words to reach the transcendental mystery that breathes throughout their special land. He was their apologist, their singer, of the crude and barbarous but moving, life-giving spirit of the midwestern earth, which contained all the beauty, the dreams and religious aspirations of midwesterners, past and present.³ Harry Hansen aptly called him "corn-fed mystic;" beyond that he was the soul, the life, and the voice of the middle west.

There is no way of knowing exactly when Anderson came to this view of himself. It appears to be in him, but not consciously, when he wrote Winesburg, Ohio. Some precise and detailed consciousness of this attitude seems to have appeared in late 1916 and early 1917. It found its fruition and expression in Mid-American Chants published in early 1918.

In his first letter to Frank, Anderson quotes from an article by French novelist Romain Rolland, author of Jean-Christophe and winner of a Nobel Peace Prize⁴ which appeared in the first issue of Seven Arts. Anderson says the article represents "the thing that I would like to try to do." That article may have elevated to consciousness what Anderson felt to be his role:

This is your first task: --The diverse personalities that compose your states must dare to express themselves,

freely, sincerely, entirely in art. They must avoid the false quest after originality. They must be careless of form. They must be fearless of opinion.

Above all, dare to see yourselves; to penetrate within yourselves--and to your very depths. Dare to see true. And then, whatever you find, dare to speak it out as you have found it. . . . if one searches deep enough, it means, for the artist, the plunging of roots within the spirit of his people. Seek out your people's dreams and trials; make them your own. Aspire to be the Light, flushing the darkness of these potent, murmurous masses. For they have been called to recreate the world. They,--the people . . . are the Dumb. And since they cannot express themselves, they cannot know themselves. You must be their voice. You must let them hear you speak in order that they may grow conscious of their own existence. Give voice to your own soul, and you will find that you have given birth to the soul of your people.⁵

This is clearly a call for a bard, a voice to give expression to the Dumb. It requires that special man out of the people who feels their primitive life and can sing that life. That, to Anderson, was the definition of a poet:

Well, alas, I am a poet. It is the nature of the poet to have something primitive in him. The poet is in some odd way akin to the savage. It cannot be denied. When he is a true poet he is tender, cruel, isolated from others, intensely a part of others in a way the generality of men will never understand. (Mem. p. 315)

Anderson's first efforts at poetry came about in early 1917. After a visit to the Seven Arts group in New York in February he seems to have suddenly become acutely conscious of his own role as a midwestern voice. He wrote to a friend in late February, "I cannot tell you how deeply this inclination to song has taken hold of me."⁶ He wrote those songs throughout that spring and by April he had some forty of them. In his letters of this period and in these

songs he is very much under the spell of a newly discovered vision and a need to bear witness. Out of his lyric expressions of this overwhelming sense in him a clear picture emerges of what he conceived art and its function to be and how he saw his own special role.

Anderson had a fairly specific if mystical conception of a uniquely midwestern spirit, a genuine transcendental presence that pervaded the land and the people. He tried often to explain it to Waldo Frank, without much success:

A curious notion often comes to me. Is it not likely that when the country was new and men were often alone in the fields and forests, they got a sense of bigness outside themselves that has now in some way been lost? I don't mean the conventional religious thing that is still prevalent. . . . The people I fancy had a savagery superior to our own. Mystery whispered in the grass, played in the branches of trees overhead, was caught and blown across the horizon line in clouds of dust at evening on the prairies.

I am old enough to remember tales that strengthen my belief in a deep, semi-religious influence that was form-erly at work among our people. The flavor of it hangs over the best work of Mark Twain. . . . I can remember old fellows in my home town speaking feelingly of an evening spent on the big, empty plains. It has taken the shrillness out of them. (Letters, p. 23)

That "sense of bigness" and "deep, semi-religious influence" became in his poetry the spirit of the corn. It embodied a religious sense of the land, its people, past and present, their sufferings, their hopes and loves. Anderson's personal lyric sense of this spirit is contained in the best work of Mid-American Chants called "Mid-American Prayer."

.
 All about me the corn--in the night the fields myster-
 ious and vast--voices of Indians--names remembered--
 murmurings of winds--the secret mutterings of my
 own young boyhood and manhood. . . .

There were my cornfields that I loved--what whisperings there--what daring dreams--what deep hopes--what memories of true old savages, Indians striving toward gods, dancing and fighting and praying while they said big words--medicine words.

And all this in the long cornfields.⁷

But that spirit is dumb, dead, without the bard to give it life and manifest its healing power. The bard is first swept up into the spirit. In his trance-like state he lives in it and moves with it over the land. He envelops and becomes that very spirit. Again he tried to explain it to Waldo Frank:

. . . I write advertisements and go about, . . . but no one is quite onto me or sure of me. I am walking at the edge of a new fancy, at the outer edge of the bowl of life. . . . I am a river running down through a valley. I am a princely man with a broken leg. I am one who sits on the roofs of tall buildings in Chicago and sees sheep nibbling grass beside a brook in the state of Missouri. (Letters, p. 47)

Shortly after he wrote the chants, he tried again to tell Frank of his mystical state.

As I have loafed and danced and waited in the sun up here this summer, a peculiar thing has taken place in me. My mind has run back and back to the time when men tended sheep and lived a nomadic life on hillsides and by little talking streams. I have become less and less the thinker and more the thing of earth and winds. When I awake at night and the wind is howling, my first thought is that the gods are at play in the hills here. (Letters, p. 15)

This "thing of earth and winds" plays over the entire midwest land: "I am like a great mother bird flying over this broad Mississippi valley, seeing its towns and its broad fields and peoples and brooding over some vague dream of a song arising, of gods coming here to dwell with my people" (Letters, p. 25).

The mystic vision of Anderson gave him the responsibility to translate that vision for the salvation of the midwesterner and the understanding of everyone else: "I shall bring God home to the sweaty men in the corn rows. My songs shall creep into their hearts and teach them the sacredness of the long aisles of growing things that lead to the throne of the God of men" (Letters, p. 13). To his eastern friend Frank he wrote: "I've got in some way a big swinging notion to get to you. It isn't mine. It belongs to waving cornfields. . . ." (Letters, p. 10). But it is in the Whitmanic⁸ Mid-American Chants that Anderson undertakes the role chosen for himself: "I am an old priest in an old place. I am a firm believer in the gods" (Letters, p. 29).

In the Forward of the book, which is itself a poem in its mystic suggestion, Anderson defines the chants, the chanter, and the spirit of the corn.

I do not believe that we people of mid-western America . . . have come to the time of song. To me it seems that song belongs with and has its birth in the memory of older things than we know. In the beaten paths of life, when many generations of men have walked the streets of a city or wandered at night in the hills of an old land, the singer arises.

The singer is neither young nor old but within him always there is something that is very old.⁹ The flavor of many lives lived and of many gone weary to the end of life creeps into his voice. Words run out beyond the power of words. There is unworldly beauty in the song of him who sings out of the souls of peoples of old times and places. . . .

For this book of chants I ask only that it be allowed to stand stark against the background of my own place and generation. . . . In secret a million men and women are trying, as I have tried here, to express the hunger within and I have dared to put these chants forth only because I hope and believe that they may find an answering and clear call in the hearts of other Mid-Americans. (pp. 7-8)

In the opening poem "Cornfields," the bard declares his mission and his ordination into the spirit of that "unworldly beauty."

.....

In the darkness of the night I awoke and the bands
that bind were broken. I was determined to bring
old things into the land of the new. A sacred vessel
I found and ran with it into the fields, into the
long fields where the corn rustles.

All of the people of my time were bound with chains.
They had forgotten the long fields and the standing
corn. They had forgotten the west winds.

.....

On my knees I crawled before my people. I debased
myself. . . . Into the ground I went and my body
died. I emerged in the corn, in the long corn-
fields. My head arose and was touched by the west
wind. The light of old things, of beautiful old
things, awoke in me. In the cornfields the sacred
vessel is set up.

I will renew in my people the worship of gods. I
will set up for a king before them. . . . The sacred
vessel shall be filled with the sweet oil of the
corn. (pp. 11-12)

The bard-priest, mediator between the people and the spirit of the
corn, merges with and becomes that spirit, the Corn Deity himself.
He becomes a Corn-Christ, who is called "Cedric the Silent" and
who redeems for love.

. . . The son of Irwin and Emma I am, here in America,
come into a kingship.

I would destroy and build up. I would set up new kings.
The impatience has gone out of me. Hatred and evil
I have put far away. . . .

The terrible poison of my body has laid waste the land.
I embrace Hell for you, go to my damnation for my
love of you.

Into the land of my fathers, . . . beauty shall come--
out of the black ground, out of the deep black ground.

.....

Broad long fields. Wheat that stands up.
 Cedric, the son of Irwin and Emma, stand up. Give you
 life, give your soul to America now. Cedric, be
 strong. (pp. 19-20)

In sweeping all up into the seventh heaven of the Corn Spirit,
 the realm of the unworldly beauty of art, Cedric redeems by embrac-
 ing all in love. For God, heaven--art--is love, and salvation
 thereby. The people are lonely and suffering.

We have to sing, you see, here in the darkness. All
 men have to sing--poor broken things. . . . We have
 to find each other. . . . Lift your voices. Come. (p. 18)

But the embrace of all into the primeval mystical unity of art-love
 is not a mere spiritual love. It is explicitly physical, but bi-
 sexual. It embraces both male and female. The bardic Corn-Christ
 is a phallic assertion. He is bred from the corn, which is both
 phallus and womb ("The cornfields shall be the mothers of men.
 They are rich with the milk with suckle men" p. 67), but the act of
 love is a phallic penetration into all ("I am of the blood of strong
 bearded men. The milk of the corn is in me" p. 67). That penetra-
 tion comes in the act of artistic creation. The resulting orgasmic
 ecstasy is other-worldly. Anderson sings this primeval sexual union
 in art, which is also the act of bearing witness to what has now be-
 come a single deity of Corn Spirit, Art-Love. The poem is called
 "Song of Theodore."

O my beloved--men and women--I come into your presence.
 . . . I am a lover and I would touch you with the
 fingers of my hands. In my eyes a fire burns. . . .
 I see the loveliness in you that is hidden away. I
 take something from you. See, I embrace you.

I am alone in my room at night and in me is the spirit
 of the old priests. What cunning fingers I have.
 They make intricate designs on the white paper. See,
 the designs are words and sentences. I am not a

priest but a lover, a new kind of lover, one who is of the flesh and not of the flesh. My cunning fingers are of the flesh. They are like me and I would make love always, to all people--men and women--here--in Chicago--in America--everywhere--always--forever--while my life lasts. (p. 25)

But the priest-lover is unworthy until he transports himself into the Corn Spirit with his art. The fingers and the pencil become now the purifying, penetrating phallus.

Now, my beloved, I am not pure and I dare not come to you. I run away and hide. I am a priest and my head is not shaven. . . .

It was night and I had come into my room. . . . I was afraid. The pencil was gripped in my cunning fingers. Words came. Over the paper my pencil ran--making the words--saying the words.

There is a song in the pencil that is held in my cunning fingers. Out--out--out dear words. The words have saved me. There is a rhythm in the pencil. It sings and swings. It sings a great song. It is singing the song of my life. It is bringing life into me, into my close place.

Out--out--out--out of the room I go. I am become pure. To the homes of the people I go. Here in these words I am become a man. The passions and lusts of men have taken hold of me.

I have gone into the woman's chamber, into the secret places of all women and all men I have gone. I have made love to them. . . .

Do you not see, O my beloved, that I am become strong to caress the woman! I caress all men and all women. I make myself naked. I am unafraid. I am a pure thing. I bind and heal. By the running of the pencil over the white paper I have made myself pure. I have made myself whole. . . . The song of the pencil has done it. . . .

. . . My cunning fingers are of the flesh. They are like me and I would make love always--to all people--men and women . . . --everywhere--always--forever.

(pp. 27-28)

The bisexual embrace of the artist-bard transports by an artistic orgasm into the primeval unity which is the god--Corn Spirit, Art-Love. This embrace is fertile. The embraced receive "the milk of the corn," which is a solacing balm ("the sweet oil of the corn"), a renewal in joy of courage and strength. "To never, braver gods, to dawns and days / To truth and cleaner, braver life. . ." (p. 51). To the Corn-Christ it brings a renewal of mystic transports ("I am pregnant with song" p. 11).

These basic elements make up the core content of Mid-American Chants: The artist-bard, the priest of his people, transports them in a loving, bisexual embrace into the primeval spirit of the corn--which is the world of art and love--and is thereby himself transported. Most of the poems following "Song of Theodore" contain one or more aspects of this core. From "Manhattan":

From the place of the cornfields I went into the new
places. . . . How men laughed and put their hands
into mine.

To a high place overlooking the city I climbed. Men
came running to me. . . . Understanding came in to
me.

I am of the West, the long West of the sunsets. I am
of the deep fields where the corn grows. The sweat
of apples is in me. I am the beginning of things
and the end of things.

.

In the morning I arose from my bed and was healed. To
the cornfields I went laughing and singing. The men
who are old have entered into me. As I stood on the
high place above the city they kissed me. The caress
of those who are weary has come into the cornfields.

(p. 29)

From "Spring Song":

In the forest, amid old trees and wet dead leaves, a
 shrine.
 Men on the wet leaves kneeling.

The spirit of God in the air above a shrine.
 Now, America, you press your lips to mine,
 Feel on your lips the throbbing of my blood.
 Christ, come to life and life calling
 Sweet and strong.

Spring. God in the air above old fields.
 Farmers marking fields for the planting of the corn.
 Fields marked for corn to stand in long straight aisles.

In the spring I press your body down on wet cold new-
 plowed ground.
 Men, give your souls to me.
 I would have my sacred way with you
 (p. 30)

From "Chant to Dawn in a Factory Town":

In the ground
 Below the great buildings
 Below the running of waters and the threshing of feet--
 Deep--
 Buried away--
 Long forgotten,
 The spirits of strong men.

I hail thee, O love!

In the soft night I have touched the bodies of men,
 I have touched with rough fingers the lips of women,
 I have become with child to all men,
 I, master of life, embrace all men.

I hail thee, O love!
 (p. 56)

The sexual elements in these poems are so insistent as to be conspicuous. That fact, combined with Anderson's repeated assertions about his desire to embrace all his people (He repeats often to Frank what he asserts in the Chants: "I wanted to embrace them all, men and women" Letters, p. 19), makes the bisexual element obtrusive. In this

light two more poems of the Chants are worth examining. The first is the most explicitly sexual of the entire volume. It is called "The Planting."

'Tis then I am the tiny thing,
 A little bug, a figure wondrous small, a sower on
 prairies limitless.
 Into her arms I creep and wait and dream that I may
 serve,
 And do the work of gods in that vast place.

Awake--asleep--remade to serve
 I stretch my arms and lie--intense--expectant--'til
 her moment comes.
 Then seeds leap forth.
 The mighty hills rise up and gods and tiny things like
 me proclaim their joy.

Man in the making--seeds in the ground.
 O'er all my western country now a wind,
 Rich, milky smell of cornfields, dancing nymphs,
 And tiny men that turn away to dream. (p. 34)

The nature of the event in this poem is purposely ambivalent. At first it appears to be a heterosexual union complete with orgasm (" . . . and lie--intense--expectant--'til her moment comes. / Then seeds leap forth. / . . . Man in the making--seeds in the ground"). But on closer look a more comprehensive interpretation is suggested. It is a seed, probably a corn kernel, that is planted in the womb of the earth ('Tis then I am the tiny thing, / . . . Into her arms I creep and wait and dream that I may serve, / And do the work of gods in that vast place). The two meanings come together in "Man in the making--seeds in the ground" and from there the poem moves out into a larger suggestion which harmonizes with the theme of the entire book. That is, the bard-poet fertilizes his earth and its people to bring forth the Corn Spirit who lives in Art-Love.

So the poem at once celebrates a heterosexual embrace and moves into the larger primeval embrace of the earth which is bisexual. We are reminded of Anderson's own sexuality, which went from a merely physical heterosexuality to an all-inclusive and distinctly physical, if more hallowed and transcendental, bisexuality.

The second poem, "Song of the Love of Women," underscores the inadequacy of mere physical heterosexuality and laments that women appear to be capable of no more. It might be retitled "Complaint Against Women."

Have you nothing to offer but bread and your bodies--
 Women, my women?
 Long nights I have lain by you, sleepless and thinking--
 Sisters, my sisters.

.....

Come to me, sisters, come home to the cornfields--
 Long have I ached for you, body and brain.
 Have you nothing to offer but bread and your bodies--
 How long must I wait for you, sisters, in vain? (p. 37)

This is the first time that Anderson asserts the difficulty of women entering the spirit of art, "home to the cornfields." Women must also be embraced, but somehow that embrace is not fertile. The world of the spirit is not their world.

II

Against Tennessee, Anderson had no such complaint. She was bread and occasionally perhaps--body. But that was undoubtedly rare and highly unsatisfactory. Mere physical writhing on a bed with Tennessee had the character of violation, of desecration of the holy in the temple. For she was other-worldly, a goddess who dwelled in the primeval unity. Anderson eventually saw this as unreal and impossible as the basis for a marriage, which was, at least in his third wife, a matter of bread and body, "refreshment." About the marriage to Tennessee he wrote in his Memoirs: "But our marriage had been a mistake. We were both too much on the artist side and it is a mistake for two such people to marry. Our marriage . . . was not a marriage" (p. 347). Tennessee as artist was herself bisexual, and so to Anderson an aspiration rather than a wife. And in her sexual difficulty that role suited her. She sought to make him realize that aspiration, not sexually, but as Venus to Aeneas. She mothered him, guided him, inspired him and played to his role as bard. In 1917 Anderson wrote to Frank:

There is a blessed flavor about understanding people. Tennessee is one of them. She has bought me a little feather to wear in my hat. She has bought me a golden yellow scarf. Tomorrow she will buy me socks all splashed with purple and yellow crystals.

You see, Brother, all this is absurd, but with the feather, the scarf, and the socks I venture out into a drab, warworn world. Not they with the sorrow and the deep grief, but little old me with my splashes of color have the true light on life. . . . I have restored truth in the midst of ugliness. (p. 29)

That truth was the truth and the solace of the Corn Spirit. And he wanted to include Frank in his embrace. "I want to restore to you something of the old semi-barbaric thing that I know so well is in your blood." It was in that year that he first met Frank and the others of the Seven Arts. It was the high point of that year because it was a "real" love experience. He wrote his friend Marietta in February from New York: "A world of love has come into me to strengthen me. . . . Everyone, everything--the things people think and hope of me."¹⁰ Later: ". . . there was the feeling of having entered more or less into the affection of a great many new people. . . . I am learning what it is to love." And right after in that same letter: "I cannot tell you how deeply this inclination to song has taken hold of me."¹¹

In February of 1917 Anderson was at a peak of inspiration; he was in an extended mystical state brought about by the vision of the goddess Tennessee and her inspiring aid, the discovery of the Corn Spirit, Art-Love, the personal discovery, once again, of "real" love and in that an acceptance of his own sexual nature, a universal sexuality "as Walt Whitman proclaimed it."¹² In meeting Waldo Frank he found another of "some three or four, perhaps six or eight, men I have truly loved." In acknowledging that love, he tried always to explain it--self-consciously, anxiously, pathetically.

Why is it that men, as males, constantly deny their greatest inheritance, the love of the male for the male? The love of man for woman is a different matter. The two passions are not alike. The whole thing has nothing to do with a man's being, or not being, a fairy. . . .

The male love of the male is something else. It is something that must, some day, come back into the world. . . .
Upon the acceptance of it with pride, hangs the chance
we males have of again getting. . . on top of our lives.
(Mem., p. 383)

In Mid-American Chants Anderson proclaimed that universal sexuality. The poems are not up to the vision out of which they came, but the love he celebrated lived in art and in the corn; and it was, above all, the object of song. Beyond that, it was the primary object of his life.

Notes

¹Midwest Portraits (New York, 1923), p. 176.

²Letter to Marietta Finley, January 17, 1917.

³For a discussion of Anderson and the religion of his art, see Jarvis Thurston, "Anderson and Winesburg: Mysticism and Craft," Accent, XVI (Spring, 1956), 107-128.

⁴Jean-Christophe was much read and discussed among critics and intellectuals at this time. Rolland, also a social essayist and war critic, won the Nobel prize in 1916. It was very likely for that reason that he appeared in the Seven Arts of November of that year. Seven Arts was also anti-war (especially in the person of Randolph Bourne) and, in fact, died because the magazine's wealthy patroness didn't like its vigorous opposition to American participation in World War I.

⁵"America and the Arts," Seven Arts, I (November, 1916), 48-49.

⁶Letter to Marietta Finley, February 20, 1917.

⁷Mid-American Chants (New York, 1923), p. 69. Quotes from this volume of poems will hereafter be cited by page numbers in the text.

⁸Whatever of inspiration and ideas Anderson took from Tennessee and his Chicago friends, he took as much for Mid-American Chants from Walt Whitman. Anderson read Whitman long before coming to Chicago in 1913 but Whitman is, in the period of Chants and after, very much in Anderson's consciousness, as is indicated in his correspondence especially with Van Wyck Brooks. His debt to Whitman is obvious in the style of the Chants. But more important I suspect is his debt to Whitman in matters of content. Most of the core ideas which appear in the Chants echo Whitman. "Song of Myself" contains almost all of them: the spirit moving over the land, the religion of love in art and in the artist ("Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touch'd from, / The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer, / This head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds"), the agelessness of the artist ("I am of old and young . . . I know the amplitude of time"), and the universal sexuality ("I am the mate and companion of people . . . / Every kind for itself and its own, for me mine, male and female").

This universal sexuality is the primary theme of "Children of Adam." Typical is "I Am He That Aches with Love:"

I am he that aches with amorous love;
Does the earth gravitate? does not all matter,
aching, attract all matter?
So the body of me to all I meet or know.

The "Calamus" poems appear to emphasize a homosexual love very similar to the love espoused by Anderson. Typical are these lines from "For You O Democracy:"

I will plant companionship thick as trees along
 all the rivers of America . . .
 I will make inseparable cities with their arms
 about each other's necks,
 By the love of comrades,
 By the manly love of comrades.

And from "The Base of All Metaphysics:"

.
 Yet underneath Socrates clearly see, and under-
 neath Christ the divine I see,
 The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction
 of friend to friend,

⁹That sense of a special agelessness combines with the artist's bisexuality to set him apart. This theme appears in his "New Note" (Chapter Four, page 87): ". . . there is no such thing as age in the souls of the young poets and novelists who demand for themselves the right to stand up and be counted . . ." In the prologue of Winesburg, Ohio, "The Book of the Grotesque," the writer is an old man "but something inside him was altogether young."

¹⁰Letter to Marietta Finley, February, 1917.

¹¹Letter to Marietta Finley, February 20, 1917.

¹²See note #8, p. 137.

Chapter Six

The Religion of the Lonely

I

In the stimulation of Chicago, the people and the life there, Anderson found a role and a vision. But the work that came out of those years was the product of the experience and insight of Anderson as townsman. The role and the vision only gave form to a remarkable intuitive understanding of human beings. A psychologist friend, Dr. Trigant Burrow, whom Anderson met through Tennessee in the summer of 1916, said of him, ". . . Sherwood Anderson was an original psychologist in his own right.¹ . . . Sherwood possessed insights into behavior, especially with regard to the sexual determinants of it, which arose from his own independent intuition."² That insight is perhaps best revealed in a story Anderson published in 1918 called "Seeds." It is more of a discussion than a story and grows out of a conversation Anderson had in 1916 with the same Dr. Burrow. The story contains some explicit discussion of Anderson's credo and as such illuminates all of his early stories.

"Seeds" first recounts a conversation with the psychoanalyst about the possibility of "getting beneath the surface of the lives of men and women" and curing them with psychoanalysis. The narrator, who might be Anderson, doubts the value of psychoanalysis as a cure. "It is given to no man to venture far along the road of lives. . . . The illness you pretend to cure is the universal illness. . . . The thing you want to do cannot be done." The psychoanalyst will not be

so easily dismissed and asserts, "The lives of people are like young trees in a forest. They are being choked by climbing vines. The vines are old thoughts and beliefs planted by dead men."³ The psychoanalyst suggests that he is trying to pull the choking vines away and reveal the patient. But the narrator opts for love rather than revelation and adds, "Fool, do you expect love to be understood?"

In a second part the story shifts into a narrative told by a painter friend of the narrator called LeRoy. LeRoy, another alter-ego of Anderson, tells of a certain woman from Iowa who came to Chicago to study music and lived in the same rooming house as the painter. She is afraid of men and unable to talk to them, yet she cannot resist making mute and clumsy sexual advances. The landlady is shocked and asks her to leave. She suddenly bursts in on the painter and demands: "Take me quickly. There must be a beginning to things. . . . You must take me at once" (p. 27). The men of the house have been asserting all along that it is a lover that she needs, but LeRoy, explaining to the narrator, has another idea and in his explanation lies Anderson's fundamental idea about life, sex, and the human condition.

LeRoy explains that the woman taught music to young girls and lived her whole life among women, "and all the time she wanted desperately to be loved by a man." She had thought too much and acted too little.

"The life force within her became decentralized," he declared. "What she wanted she could not achieve. The living force within could not find expression. When it

could not get expressed in one way it took another. Sex spread itself out over her body. It permeated the very fiber of her being. At the last she was sex personified, sex being condensed and impersonal. (pp. 29-30)

LeRoy suddenly begins to repeat the words of the psychoanalyst in the first part of the story: "The woman--you see--was like a young tree choked by a climbing vine. The thing that wrapped her about had shut out the light. She was a grotesque as many trees in the forest are grotesques."

"She needed a lover, yes, the men in the house were right about that," he said. "She needed a lover and at the same time a lover was not what she needed. The need of a lover was, after all, a quite secondary thing. She needed to be loved, to be long and quietly and patiently loved. To be sure she is a grotesque, but then all the people in the world are grotesques. We all need to be loved. What would cure her would cure the rest of us also. The disease she had is, you see, universal. We all want to be loved and the world has no plan for creating our lovers." (p. 31)

Here the Anderson credo is explicit. To live means to be in contact with the world, with nature and its mysteries, with civilization and with individual human beings and their individual mysteries. The drive to live, the "life force," is the drive to come into contact, to be one with life and with others--to love. Sex is not the life force but the biological force to reproduce the mystery of life and a physical and psychological means of the closest and most intense contact. It is the most insistent instrument and manifestation of the life force but, nevertheless, "a quite secondary thing." The universal illness is that men are all choked by "old thoughts and beliefs planted by dead men." These old thoughts and beliefs are the countless traditions, customs, forces of all kinds that inhibit

contact. Anderson felt that American life, coming out of a Puritan heritage, had multiplied these forces. He felt that the mindless pursuit of material things closed one off from the variety and multiplicity of experience.

Anderson did not believe that psychoanalysis was the answer, because psychoanalysis tried only to unravel the mysteries. "You cannot venture far along the road of lives." What was needed was contact and a sympathetic receptivity--love. Anderson also recognized that love was the Christian message. When he enthusiastically announced to his copy department that he "was sold on Jesus Christ," it was that discovery that he was announcing.⁴ Of course, it appeared to him, as it appeared to many, that organized Christianity was more interested in sin than in love. The idea that art was "the great, the true religion" was the recognition that understanding and love, the gospel message, came through art. He wrote in 1914 in one of his earliest critical statements:

To get near to the social advance for which all moderns hunger, is it not necessary to have first of all understanding? How can I love my neighbor if I do not first understand him. And it is just in the wider diffusion of this understanding that the work of the great writer helps the advance of mankind.⁵

"Understanding" means only knowing man and accepting him; it is not trying to violate his mystery by unraveling the threads that make him what he is. That is what psychoanalysis attempts, and it is impossible. "Understanding" means to touch, to "get close to the mystery."

While Anderson speaks in the above statement about the social function of the great writer, the artist has what is ultimately a

greater function. He is a messiah and a personal savior because life and personal fulfillment are also found in "love my neighbor." The act of creating understanding between men in art is a messianic act of "creating lovers." It is a loving act and a religious act; "the world has no plan for creating our lovers." The artist is then a mediator, a priest who is also a creator, God-like. He is a Christ; art is his religion.

Anderson's work of the Chicago years, undoubtedly his greatest work, was written under the influence of his conception of art as religion and of himself as folk-bard, priest and savior, giving voice to the dumb, creating understanding and love, and thereby bringing salvation. Like the Chants, Anderson's best stories are love songs. The gospel of love is written by an illumination of the individual lives of his people. The gospel songs tell the story of love and exhort to love. The silent woman from Iowa in "Seeds" is an archetype of all Anderson characters. They are all reaching out for life, for contact. Anderson, like LeRoy, explains them and makes them understood and lovable by giving them words. He is like Joshua at Jericho, bringing down with his songs the walls--his favorite metaphor--between people and making love possible.

Anderson's grotesques, his heroes and heroines, in seeking contact are seeking God, the "life force," the mystery. Consequently, they are often found in the attitudes and postures of religion. And many of them, like Alice Hindman, Reverend Curtis Hartman and Jesse Bentley, substitute orthodox religious behavior for the contact they are seeking. Often too they experience mystic moments of revelation

when they go out of themselves--as Anderson did in creating them--
and momentarily achieve that transported state of contact with nature,
that primeval unity in the corn. The remainder of this final chapter
will explore how Anderson's grotesques, moved by essentially religious
impulses, reach out for contact.

II

Of the many things written about Winesburg, Ohio (which was originally called The Book of the Grotesque) one of the most useful, especially for this study, is by Jarvis Thurston called: "Anderson and Winesburg: Mysticism and Craft."⁶ Thurston points to Anderson's conception of the religious function of the artist and to the mystical and religious content of Winesburg. He throws light on how Anderson, in the series of portraits which is Winesburg, creates understanding for his grotesques and love for them in his readers.

Seeing life and art from a mystical frame of reference, Anderson rarely thought of the human character as something in process, as shaper and shaped, or as a complex product of both internal and external realities. His vision was focused on the "soul," on an essential innerness (whether of an individual or a society) that the artist can disclose by imaginative loving identification [author's emphasis], by "entering into lives" and going "beneath the surface."⁷

These soul portraits come about by a mystic elevation of the artist-bard into identification with his people. The portrait is created by a significant selection of characterizing detail, and readers are allowed to peer into a soul.

The genesis is invariably some everyday tableau, or little anecdote, in which an individual unknowingly reveals--through a gesture, a small act, or an unguarded speech--a hidden aspect of personality. This is interpreted by the writer, through the lens of his own spiritual preoccupations, as being a revelation of the inner-person.⁸

These grotesques are in a passionately religious search for contact, for love. Wing Biddlebaum of Winesburg loved with his hands. "By

the caress that was in his fingers he expressed himself." The passion of his hands is resisted and George Willard flees and Wing continues a pathetic suffering. "Although he still hungered for the presence of the boy, who was the medium through which he expressed his love of man, the hunger became again a part of his loneliness and his waiting."⁹ Anderson highlights the religious nature of Wing's need by a moving final image.

In the dense blotch of light beneath the table, the kneeling figure looked like a priest engaged in some service of his church. The nervous expressive fingers, flashing in and out of the light, might well have been mistaken for the fingers of the devotee going swiftly through decade after decade of his rosary. (pp. 16-17)

Kneeling in front of their love objects is what the Anderson grotesques are invariably doing. George Willard's mother (in "Mother"), who sought to give "something out of herself to all people," is left only with her son and kneels in front of his door in a dark hotel hallway. Dr. Parcival, "The Philosopher," who restlessly sought someone to hear his story, prays when left alone and declares finally, ". . . everyone in the world is Christ and they are all crucified." Jesse Bentley ("Godliness"), the "odd sheep" who "had not got on with his brothers," becomes passionately religious and frequently drops to his knees to ask God to bear witness to his election. The Reverend Curtis Hartman, who finds the passion missing in his marriage at the sight of the naked Kate Swift, is continually kneeling and begging for strength and courage. Kate Swift, in an agony of loneliness and sexual frustration, kneels naked on the bed to pray for deliverance. Elizabeth Willard ("Death") kneels at the knee of her strange lover Doctor Reefy.

Thurston says, "All of the Winesburgers are frustrated spiritual questers . . . unable to articulate their 'vague and intangible hunger.'"¹⁰ The spiritual nature of that quest, the search for "God-is-love" is most vividly seen in "Adventure." Alice Hindman has been abandoned by her lover. She joins the Winesburg Methodist Church, but:

As time passed and she became more and more lonely she began to practice the devices common to lonely people. When at night she went upstairs to her own room she knelt on the floor to pray and in her prayers whispered things she wanted to say to her lover. (p. 127)

Thurston points to a mysterious beyond as the real object of the quest.

The thing to love, though, seems never to be of this world. At times Anderson would seem to suggest that the frustration is sexual--notably with Alice Hindman and Kate Swift--but there is always the implication that something deeper than unsatisfied sexual desire lies beyond. . . . Anderson tended to see the sexual relation mystically. Through sex, Anderson seems to say, we approach union, tantalizingly sense the greater union beyond the reciprocal love of man and woman, but are unable to make the last leap to the goal so poignantly and momentarily realized.¹¹

Of course, the sex drive, though "a quite secondary thing," is dominant as the immediate and recognizable agent of the "life force." Wing Biddlebaum is undoubtedly homosexual and Reverend Curtis Hartman recognizes the lust in his need to spy on Kate Swift. But these are facts of little consequence. Sex by itself provides no release. George Willard's sexual encounter with Louise Trunion provides nothing more than the satisfaction that "nobody knows" and is followed by a uniquely Andersonian "He had wanted more than anything else to talk to some man" (Emphasis mine). Wash Williams of "Respectability" goes into a fury when his mother-in-law tries to reunite him with his wife by undressing her and thrusting her at him.

In fact, sexual fulfillment comes only in conjunction with and as the instrument of that mysterious "greater union beyond" which in Anderson is the primeval unity of nature and all men in love, which to Anderson was manifest symbolically in the corn.

The last stories of Winesburg bring together in complete definition what all the Winesburgers are seeking. In these stories Anderson releases the tension built up by the emotional and spiritual deprivation of the Winesburgers. He provides the four principals with a momentary release and some fulfillment and points out through George Willard the direction of salvation.

In "Death" Doctor Reefy is an old man and alone.

He was almost a poet in his old age and his notion of what happened took a poetic turn. "I had come to the time in my life when prayer became necessary and so I invented gods and prayed to them," he said. "I did not say my prayers in words nor did I kneel down but sat perfectly still in my chair. In the late afternoon when it was hot and quiet or . . . when the days were gloomy, the gods came into the office and I thought no one knew about them. Then I found that this woman Elizabeth [Willard] knew, that she worshipped also the same gods. I have a notion that she came to the office because she thought the gods would be there but she was happy to find herself not alone just the same. It was an experience that cannot be explained. . . . (p. 270)

The invented gods talked about were the substitutes for the contact that was missing in their lives, but soon those gods became embodied in one another:

She and the doctor talked . . . most of her life, of their two lives and of the ideas that had come to them as they lived their lives in Winesburg. . . . Now and then after a period of silence, a word was said or a hint given that strongly illuminated the life of the speaker, a wish became a desire, or a dream, half-dead, flared suddenly into life. (p. 271)

They became lovers of a kind and Doctor Reefy was moved to expostulate on the holy and mystic character of Anderson's primeval love:

Love is like a wind stirring the grass beneath trees on a black night. . . . You must not try to make love definite. It is the divine accident of life. If you try to be definite and sure about it and to live beneath the trees, where soft winds blow, the long hot day of disappointment comes swiftly. . . . (p. 272)

Elizabeth in the ecstasy of love tried to make her soul known to Doctor Reefy. She told of her youth and her marriage and how she wanted to flee it all: "I wanted to run away from everything but I wanted to run towards something too. Don't you see, dear, how it was?" (p. 278).

That mysterious something to run toward was never quite arrived at in "Death." Elizabeth Willard died and Doctor Reefy married a young woman to whom he "expressed a good many things he had been unable to express to Elizabeth." It remained for her son George to reach "some hidden wonder in life" which Elizabeth never quite found.

In "Sophistication" there is a momentary realization of the object beyond so desperately sought in all the stories preceding it. The sexual component of the experience of George Willard and Helen White follows and is integrated into a larger and more profound experience of the unity of all in nature.

On the festive day of the Winesburg County Fair, George Willard is alone and particularly reflective. He has arrived at "the sadness of sophistication" in which he senses for the first time "the limitations of life." "He knows that in spite of all the stout talk of his fellows he must live and die in uncertainty, a thing blown by the winds, a thing destined like corn to wilt in the sun."

Already he hears death calling. With all his heart he wants to come close to some other human, touch someone with his hands, be touched by the hand of another. If he prefers that the other be a woman, that is because he believes a woman will be gentle, that she will understand. He wants, most of all, understanding. (p. 287)

In this mood George seeks out Helen White, but resists the intrusion of sex: "He wanted to love and to be loved by her, but he did not want at the moment to be confused by her womanhood" (p. 296). George and Helen walk slowly to the fairground. They climb up on the grandstand and sit quietly, looking over a cornfield to the lighted town. A mood comes over them and Anderson dips directly into his own experience to describe it.

There is something memorable in the experience to be had by going into a fairground that stands at the edge of a Middle Western town on a night after the annual fair has been held. The sensation is one never to be forgotten. On all sides are ghosts, not of the dead, but of living people. . . . Farmers with their wives and children and all the people from the hundreds of little frame houses have gathered within these board walls. Young girls have laughed and men with beards have talked of the affairs of their lives. The place . . . has itched and squirmed with life and now it is night and the life has all gone away. The silence is almost terrifying. One conceals oneself standing silently beside the trunk of a tree and what there is of a reflective tendency in his nature is intensified. . . . If the people of the town are his people, one loves life so intensely that tears come into his eyes.

In the darkness under the roof of the grandstand, George Willard sat beside Helen White and felt very keenly his own insignificance in the scheme of existence. . . . The presence of Helen renewed and refreshed him. . . . He began to think of the people in the town where he had always lived with something like reverence. . . . In the darkness he took hold of her hand and when she crept close put a hand on her shoulder. . . . With all his strength he tried to hold and to understand the mood that had come upon him. In that high place in the darkness the two oddly sensitive human atoms held each other tightly and waited. In the mind of each was the same thought. "I have come to this lonely place and here is the other," was the substance of the thing felt. (pp. 295-296)

Adulthood, "sophistication," and a sense of their own people have made George and Helen feel like atoms in a larger scheme, a feeling which both isolates and unites. The sense of insignificance has made them a part of that larger scheme for the first time. They are united with all the other insignificant atoms and the feeling engendered is a holy love for all, a "reverence." In that larger unity George is suddenly brought close to Helen:

In the darkness of the grandstand Helen White and George Willard remained silent. Now and then the spell that held them was broken and they turned and tried in the dim light to see into each other's eyes. They kissed but the impulse did not last. . . .

George and Helen arose and walked away into the darkness. They went along a path past a field of corn that had not yet been cut. The wind whispered among the dry corn blades. (p. 297)

The wind and the corn and the mood that they are in at this point make a sexual encounter suddenly uplifting and meaningful. They can now break through the adolescent self-centeredness and the consequent need to establish their individual sexuality. Their encounter is alternately solemn and playful.

When they had come to the crest of Waterworks Hill they stopped by a tree and George again put his hands on the girl's shoulders. She embraced him eagerly and then again they drew quickly back from that impulse. They stopped kissing and stood a little apart. Mutual respect grew big in them. They were both embarrassed and to relieve their embarrassment dropped into the animalism of youth. They laughed and began to pull and haul at each other. In some way chastened and purified by the mood they had been in they became not man and woman, not boy and girl, but excited little animals. (pp. 297-298)

They pulled and played on the hillside in the darkness. They sensed that they had suddenly become adults; they had felt their place in the scheme of things and discovered how their minds and their bodies could

come together in a holy witness to love for all of their people.

Helen White is suddenly moved by this new realization.

For just a moment she stopped in the darkness. There is no way of knowing what woman's thoughts went through her mind but, when the bottom of the hill was reached and she came up to the boy, she took his arm and walked beside him in dignified silence. For some reason they could not have explained they had both got from their silent evening together the thing needed. Man or boy, woman or girl, they had for a moment taken hold of the thing that makes the mature life of men and women in the modern world possible.
(p. 298)

The experience of George and Helen which makes "the mature life of men and women possible" defines Anderson's idea of how mature sex works. It works only to reach and to express the higher union which includes nature and all men, past and present. The coupling of man and woman is only one form of this expression but special in its power to reproduce the mystery. However, in Anderson's mind other forms of sexual contact can serve almost as well. It is for this reason that he can so sympathetically accept Wing Biddlebaum's sexual expression--and his own--and why homosexuals, as Anderson himself testifies, found in him a certain sympathy. It is not sexual frustration, that is, an unfulfilled wish to couple with a man, that drives Alice Hindman of "Adventure" naked into the rain. And it is not an autoerotic act. "She did not want Ned Currie or any other man. She wanted to be loved, to have something answer the call that was growing louder and louder within her" (p. 132). She wanted the caress of nature, the rain, which was a sexual act of love from all men in the higher union of nature. The rain on her naked body transported her momentarily in a kind of orgasm into that higher unity.

As she stood on the little grass plot before the house and felt the cold rain on her body a mad desire to run naked through the streets took possession of her.

She thought that the rain would have some creative and wonderful effect on her body. Not for years had she felt so full of youth and courage. She wanted to leap and run, to cry out, to find some other lonely human and embrace him. (p. 133)

Of course, the vines of dead men's thoughts, the impropriety of what she was doing, immediately choked her expression and she ran back to her house after only a momentary fulfillment. She is left grotesque, as are the other denizens of Winesburg, "trying to force herself to face bravely the fact that many people must live and die alone, even in Winesburg " (p. 134).

III

All of Anderson's new-found definitions--his sense of his role as midwestern folk-bard, the religious function of himself and his art, the grasp of what human beings need for salvation and the part sexuality plays--appear in the works following Winesburg, Ohio. Much of that work has been neglected in the recognition that Winesburg is a classic. Most notable of the neglected is Anderson's best novel, Poor White, written in late 1918 and early 1920, and published in late 1920.

In creating the portraits which make up Winesburg, Anderson's intention as folk-bard and interpreter was to create understanding and love for his grotesque midwesterners. The larger social purpose for America, he tells Waldo Frank, was to "suggest the real environment out of which present-day American youth is coming" (Letters, p. 5). But he recognized that that environment had changed and was still changing.

One has to realize that, although there is truth in the Winesburg things, there is another big story to be done. We are no longer the old America. Those are tales of farming people. We've got a new people now. We are a growing, shifting, changing thing. Our life in our factory towns intensifies. It becomes at the same time more ugly and more intense. (Letters, p. 31)

That big job began as early as January, 1917. He started a novel he called Immaturity "to cover the period during which a town of the middle-west passes from agricultural into industrial life."¹² In

another place he described it as "Factories come to Winesburg, Ohio."¹³ Immaturity was abandoned and its theme merged into Poor White.

But Poor White, despite Anderson's stated interest in a town, is another gallery of portraits intensely realized and the stated social theme is distinctly secondary. They are again a group of midwesterners who seek understanding and love, and if the novel is not as successful as Winesburg it is because, as Thurston points out, Anderson cannot create human characters in process, being shaped by inner and outer realities, which an extended work requires. Poor White is at its best when, like Winesburg, it provides static glimpses of souls. The novel's earliest critics rightly suggested that it seems more like a group of short stories.

The chief character is Hugh McVey, a composite of Huckleberry Finn and Abe Lincoln, to Anderson the most truly native of midwesterners. Hugh has the tall, stooped and strong figure of Lincoln, with the shambling gait and the cold extremities resulting from poor circulation. But he has Huck Finn's background and special communion with nature, especially with the Mississippi River. He is the son of a drunken, no-account river bum descended from "poor whites" of Kentucky and Tennessee. But Hugh as a child is not unhappy. "His life, lying on the river bank through long summer afternoons or sitting perfectly still for endless hours in a had bred in him a dreamy detached outlook on life."¹⁴ Hugh as a child lived much more contented than most of the Winesburgers, because he had something of what they sought, communion with nature. Here Anderson borrows heavily from Mark Twain:

On the Sunday afternoons in the woods south of Midcat Landing Hugh had lain perfectly still in the grass for hours. . . . Above his head a breeze played through the branches of the trees, and insects sang in the grass. Everything about him was clean. A lovely stillness pervaded the river and the woods. He lay on his belly and gazed down over the river out of sleep-heavy eyes into hazy distances. Half formed thoughts passed like visions through his mind. He dreamed, but his dreams were unformed and vaporous. For hours the half dead, half alive state into which he had got persisted. He did not sleep but lay in a land between sleeping and waking. (p. 27)

But the boy Hugh comes under the wing of a stationmaster's wife, Sarah Shepard, who is a New Englander straight out of the theories of Van Wyck Brooks. She is lowbrow, energetic and industrious, building the City of God for herself and hoping for the inevitable sign of election in the form of promotion for her husband. She draws Hugh out of his stupor and tries to instill in him the possessive instinct, and in order to do so drags him away from contact with his fellows, "a lot of miserable, lazy louts."

As Hugh matures and becomes stationmaster, he senses that he is missing something.

A hundred new and definite desires and hungers awoke in him. He began to want to talk with people, to know men and most of all to know women, but the disgust for his fellows in the town, engendered in him by Sarah Shepard's words and most of all by the things in his nature that were like their natures, made him draw back. (p. 20)

So Hugh, like the Winesburgers and the woman from Iowa in "Seeds," is choked by the vines of the Puritan Sarah Shepard and suffers alone. He sets out on the same spiritual quest fortified, as the Winesburgers are not, with a transcendent sense of nature.

The street climbed upward and after a time he got into open country and followed a road that ran along a cliff

overlooking the Mississippi River. The night was clear and the sky brilliant with stars. In the open, away from the multitude of houses, he no longer felt awkward and afraid, and went cheerfully along. After a time he stopped and stood facing the river. Standing on the high cliff and with a grove of trees at his back, the stars seemed to have all gathered in the eastern sky. Below him the water of the river reflected the stars. They seemed to be making a pathway for him into the East. (p. 24)

Hugh's experience is not unlike that of George Willard on the night of the county fair. But the experience is habitual for him and only makes him cheerful. He is as restless as ever because there are no farmers and laughing girls, "his people," and no Helen White. That restlessness is transmuted into another transcendent experience for Hugh. This time it is a dream of isolation and horrible agitation, prophetic of his own struggle and that of the townspeople of Bidwell, Ohio, whose lives even in isolation he was going to transform. That vision introduces Hugh into the larger struggle of the industrialized midwest--to bring its souls into permanent contact with the life force, which is now manifest not in perpetual fields of corn, but in rapid change. It is also a vision of all who would suffer and be lost in that struggle.

Hugh thought his mind had gone out of his body and up into the sky to join the clouds and the stars, to play with them. From the sky he thought he looked down on the earth and saw rolling fields, hills and forests. He had no part in the lives of the men and women of the earth, but was torn away from them, left to stand by himself. . . . A great quiet prevailed and he looked abroad beyond the wide expanse of the river and saw fields and towns. They were all hushed and still. . . . And then the river was whipped into action by some strange unknown force, something that had come out of a distant place, out of the place to which the cloud had gone and from which it had returned to stir and agitate the other clouds.

The river now went tearing along. It overflowed its banks and swept over the land, uprooting trees and forests and towns. The white faces of drowned men and children, borne along by the flood, looked up into the mind's eye of the man Hugh. . . . His mind was also swept away. The clouds of which he felt himself flew across the face of the sky. They blotted out the sun from the earth, and darkness descended on the land, on the troubled towns, on the hills that were torn open, on the forests that were destroyed, on the peace and quiet of all places. In the country stretching away from the river where all had been peace and quiet, all was now agitation and unrest. Houses were destroyed and instantly rebuilt. People gathered in whirling crowds.

The dreaming man felt himself a part of something significant and terrible that was happening to the earth and to the peoples of the earth. (pp. 28-29)

Hugh occupies his lonely mind with figures, becomes an inventor, and settles in Bidwell, Ohio. Poor White then moves into a series of portraits of the people of Bidwell. The portraits are much like the Winesburg series; each grotesque is trying to come to grips with the change that is happening to the town as a result of its new factories. A number of the villagers succeed in a limited way, like Steve White, the young entrepreneur, Tom Butterworth, the financier, and Ed Hall, the tough foreman. But as expected, Anderson's most poignant portraits are of those who fail.

There is a counterpart to Hugh, who, like Hugh, remains isolated and in a curious way uninvolved in the change. Poor White cuts away from Hugh to the story of Clara Butterworth, eventual wife of the inventor, who is used to bring some fulfillment into Hugh's life. Her story is the familiar one of Anderson heroines, only more extensively drawn. She is introduced at the point of her adolescence when she is awakened by adult needs and hungers. "A greater hunger for

understanding, love, and friendliness took possession of her." As she rides by train from school she is gripped by a now familiar vision.

An obsession, that the whole world was aboard the moving train and that, as it ran swiftly along, it was carrying the people of the world into some strange maze of misunderstanding, took possession of her.

. . . It seemed to her that the walls of the sleeping car berth were like the walls of a prison that had shut her away from the beauty of life. The walls seemed to close in upon her. The walls, like life itself, were shutting in upon her youth and her youthful desire to reach a hand out of the beauty in herself to the buried beauty in others.

(p. 177)

On her father's farm Clara reaches out for contact but her needs are, predictably, misinterpreted. She is confused and angered by a farm hand's attempted rape and her father's suspicion of her guilt. She goes off to school where she makes her first rewarding relationship with a lesbian, Kate Chancellor. But that is not quite adequate.

There was something she did want and in a way some man, she did not know what man it would be, was concerned in the matter. She was very hungry for love, but might have got that from another woman. Kate Chancellor would have loved her. She was not unconscious of the fact that their friendship had been something more than friendship. Kate loved to hold Clara's hand and wanted to kiss and caress her. (p. 243)

Clara, in reaching out for the life force, "the beauty in life," must fulfill her own nature, and in that way "get close to the mystery."

There was something back of her desire for a man. She wanted something more than caresses. There was a creative impulse in her that would not function until she had been made love to by a man. The man she wanted was but an instrument she sought in order that she might fulfill herself.

(p. 244)

Here for the first time Anderson suggests the necessity of creativity (This idea is developed in Chapter One of this study.) in order to be

fulfilled and to be in contact with the life force. The industrialization described by Poor White is particularly ominous because it severs man from the spiritual nourishment found in creating with his hands. What George Willard experienced in the grandstand above Winesburg can also be found in creative work. But as a result of the machine age "there will have to be built up a new and stronger sympathy as between man and man. We may find the new mystery there."

As for Clara, the homosexual love between her and Kate Chancellor gave her a vision of a higher union. In that love she could see "the possible sweetness of marriage."¹⁵ But for fulfillment she needed, as did George Willard, the sense that she was part of the larger natural scheme of things, a creative individual atom in harmony with all the other of nature's atoms. That meant that her femininity had to function creatively; she needed a love with a man that could be fertile. Her love with Kate, while rewarding, was momentary and incomplete, like that between Dr. Reefy and Elizabeth Willard.

Hugh McVey and Clara both fantasize about the mates in their lives, and when they come upon one another, each fits the other's fantasy and they marry suddenly and precipitously. Since there is no inner communion between them at all sex is impossible. As Wash Williams of Winesburg strikes out in fury when only sexual contact is expected of him, so Hugh strikes out by abandoning Clara on their wedding night. Clara waits, and Anderson highlights the religious nature of her need: "Although he [Hugh] did not know it Clara . . . expected him to come to her, and knelt on the floor just inside the door, waiting, hoping for, and fearing the coming of the man" (pp. 307-308). (Emphasis mine.)

In a repetition of the "Adventure" of Alice Hindman of Winesburg union finally comes; like Alice's experience, it comes only momentarily and in darkness and rain.

Her hand crept up and lay in his hand. . . . When her hand had rested in his for a moment she arose and stood beside him. Then the hand went out of his and touched, caressed his wet coat, his wet hair, his cheeks. . . . Gladness took hold of him, a gladness that came up out of the inner parts of himself as she had come up to him out of the chair. (p. 318)

The sexual union that follows transports them into the higher union they are both seeking. The image of the bird that Anderson used in his letters¹⁶ to suggest the movement of the spirit of the primeval unity reappears.

Now there was no defeat, no problem, no victory. In himself he did not exist. Within himself something new had been born or another something that had always lived with him had stirred to life. It was not awkward. It was not afraid. It was a thing as swift and sure as the flight of the male bird through the branches of trees and it was in pursuit of something light and swift in her, something that would fly through light and darkness but fly not too swiftly, something of which he need not be afraid, something that without the need of understanding he could understand as one understands the need of breath in a close place. . . . the thing inside himself that responded to the thing inside the shell that was Clara his wife, did not stumble. It flew like a bird out of the darkness into the light. At the moment he thought the sweeping flight of life thus begun would run on forever. (pp. 318-319)

The marriage of Hugh and Clara has moments like this one but Poor White ends leaving them unfulfilled. Clara becomes a mother but that alone is not enough.

After that night when he ran away from her bridal bed Clara had more than once thought the miracle had happened. It did sometimes. On that night when he came to her out of the rain it had happened. There was a wall a blow could shatter, and she raised her hand to strike the blow. The wall was shattered and then builded itself again. Even as she lay at night in her husband's arms the wall reared itself up in the darkness of the sleeping room. (p. 324)

Nothing ends satisfactorily in Poor White. The new industrialism only heightens the walls between various individuals in Bidwell. Labor difficulties bring new resentments and hate. The factories bring into the town a kind of fever; as Anderson says, "The possessive passion . . . destroyed the ability to love." Ben Peeler, a respected carpenter, serves as a symbol. Ben used to move around the sidewalks and stores buying things, planning everyone's construction, and generally "talking things over." "Now he had no time to think of such things." He hires crews now and sits in an office with his partner. Gone too is the sweet contact with nature's many sensations: "On warm still nights the sweet smell of new-cut boards filled the air of the yard and crept in through the open windows, but the two men, intent on their figures, did not notice" (p. 201).

Two typical and particularly tragic characters stand forth from Anderson's gallery. One is Smokey Pete, the blacksmith. After his wife died Smokey Pete broke his loneliness by drinking whiskey and "roaring at his fellow citizens and making ribald jokes at their expense" (p. 212). "He became in an odd way the guardian of the town morals," publicly calling down anyone guilty of indiscretions. However, when his son is taken into the factory by the town's leading citizens, he becomes concerned for his son's position and is forced to shout his scandal in an empty field alone at night. His isolation is complete in the neighbor's declaration, "The man's crazy."

Perhaps the most important sub-plot, and one which has some of Anderson's most moving writing, is the story of Joe Wainsworth, the town harness-maker.¹⁷ In Joe, Anderson portrays the tragedy of the

man emasculated by the machine. Joe's self-respect, the basis of his communion with his fellows and his contact with the spirit of his age, has been in his pride of craftsmanship: "To the men who came into the shop to loaf during winter afternoons he presented a smiling front and talked of their affairs, of the price of cabbage in Cleveland or the effect of the cold snap on the winter wheat" (p. 52). To all of them he talked of his trade. " 'I could learn something to all the harness-makers I've ever seen, and I've seen the best of them,' he declared emphatically" (p. 53).

One day a farmer asked Joe to repair factory-made harnesses. Joe became furiously angry and swore at the man.

. . . the harness-maker . . . could not get over the effect of the conversation had with Butterworth, the farmer, who had asked him to repair harnesses made by a machine in the factory. He became a silent, disgruntled man and muttered as he went about his work in the shop. . . . He got the name of being disagreeable, and on winter afternoons the farmers no longer went into his place to loaf. (p. 132)

Joe's trade had become obsolete and he had lost contact. He had been swept out of "the sweeping flight of life." In his confusion he tried to reestablish contact by investing his life's savings in the new factory. "If machines kill the harness-making trade, what's the difference? I'll be all right. The thing to do is to get in with the new times" (p. 134). In trying "to get in" Joe repeats Anderson's archetypal religious act of the grotesque seeking the lover.

He was sure it must be the lathe his money had bought. . . . Joe knelt on the floor and put his hands about the heavy iron legs of the machine. "What a strong thing it is! It will not break easily," he thought. He had an impulse to do something he knew would be foolish, to kiss the iron legs of the machine or to say a prayer as he

knelt before it. Instead he got to his feet and crawling out, . . . went home. He felt renewed and full of new courage because of the experiences of the night.(p. 135)

The relief is again momentary as the factory fails and Joe loses his money. But the town thrives and there is much factory harness to be repaired. He regains his money but never his pride and never his contact. In despair he hires a drunken but aggressive assistant, Jim Gibson, who takes care of "business" (" . . . what do I know about business? I'm a harness-maker, I am"). Jim Gibson bullies the broken man and finally forces him to buy factory-made harnesses. Gibson brags about what he has done to everyone who comes near. The misery of this final humiliation severs Joe's contact completely. He commits murder in a final insane act of rape. The scene is one of the most powerful in the novel.

Joe worked in silence beside his employee and night began to settle down over the disturbed town. . . . When it had become quite dark outside the old harness-maker climbed down from his horse and going to the front door opened it softly and looked up and down the street. Then he closed it again and walked toward the rear of the shop. In his hand he held his harness-maker's knife, shaped like a half-moon with an extraordinary sharp circular edge. The harness-maker's wife had died during the year before and since that time he had not slept well at night. Often for a week at a time he did not sleep at all, but lay all night with wide-open eyes, thinking strange new thoughts. In the daytime and when Jim was not about, he sometimes spent hours sharpening the moon shaped knife on a piece of leather. . . . He had been sharpening the knife as Jim talked to the workmen outside. When Jim began to tell the story of his humiliation he had stopped sewing at the broken harness in his vise and, getting up, had taken the knife from its hiding-place under a pile of leather on a bench to give its edge a few last caressing strokes.

Holding the knife in his hand Joe went with shambling steps toward the place where Jim sat absorbed in his work. A brooding silence seemed to lie over the shop and even outside in the street all noises suddenly ceased. Old Joe's gait changed. As he passed behind the horse on which Jim

sat, life came into his figure and he walked with a soft, cat-like tread. Joy shone in his eyes. . . . The old man made a peculiar half step, half leap past the horse, and the knife whipped through the air. At one stroke he had succeeded in practically severing Jim Gibson's head from his body.

. . . For an hour Joe stayed in the shop with the dead man. The eighteen sets of harness shipped from a Cleveland factory had been received that morning, and Jim had insisted they be unpacked and hung on hooks along the shop walls. He had bullied Joe into helping hang the harnesses, and now Joe took them down alone. One by one they were laid on the floor and with Jim's knife the old man cut each strap into little pieces that made a pile of litter on the floor reaching to his waist. (pp. 333-335)

The rape of the "new times" is completed by an attack first on the owner of the factories and then on the inventor himself. Clara, the wife of the inventor, springs to Hugh's defense but in fact exonerates the harness-maker: "Everything worth while is very far away. The machines men are so intent on making have carried them very far from the old, sweet things" (p. 341).

This final statement of Clara's sums up the essential point of Poor White, and if the novel tends to romanticize the agricultural past (in an ironic contradiction of Winesburg) it does represent a more mature complication of the personal salvation theme in Winesburg and in Chants. It suggests some skepticism about ever achieving anything more than a very momentary unity and fulfillment and that fact makes even that moment not very satisfactory. Gone is the sense of hope in the possibility of love and union which is found in the last stories of Winesburg, and gone too is the exhilaration and naive romanticism of all that singing in the corn which is the Chants. Poor White says finally that factory towns will replace the corn fields and things are going to be worse than ever for love.

IV

Anderson's best book of short stories (if we consider Winesburg a novel) is The Triumph of the Egg. Most of the stories were written within one year after the completion of Poor White. These stories repeat the religious tableau of prostrate, pleading grotesques, but are no more hopeful than Poor White. The question asked in "I Want to Know Why" has no very encouraging answer. "The Other Woman" makes an unsettling suggestion about the possibility of fulfillment in a marriage. In "The Egg," perhaps Anderson's best story, the triumph of the egg means nothing less than the triumph of that perverse principle in nature which makes the Father of the young narrator permanently on his knees and permanently grotesque. "Unlighted Lamps" asserts the artist's own conviction that words can break down the walls, but death comes before the words can be spoken. In "The Man in the Brown Coat" the power of words is doubted:

I wear a brown coat and cannot come out of my coat. I cannot come out of myself. My wife is very gentle and she speaks softly but she cannot come out of herself. . . . Why in all our life together, have I never been able to break through the wall to my wife. Already I have written three hundred, four hundred thousand words. Are there no words that lead into life? (pp. 100-101)

There are four stories of Triumph which I would like to draw attention to. Two because of the way in which they reaffirm what has already been said and two because of future Anderson themes.

In the way that "Seeds" is disappointing because it is more a discussion than a story, "The New Englander" is disappointing because it is too contrived and blatantly symbolic. In "The Egg" the tragedy

is submerged, almost hidden, in a loose and light-hearted but credible yarn about rural life. "The New Englander" carefully piles up its symbols and situations to create an intensity. But the only impression achieved is that the emotion is false and the symbolism tasteless.

The New Englander is one more of Anderson's heroines but more obviously repressed by a Puritan heritage. Elsie Leander dreams like other young girls but finds no outlets. She moves west with her family "only to find herself locked up more closely than ever." Her awakening sexuality discovers Anderson's vitalizing corn spirit. The symbolism of the experience is so overplayed as to be offensive.

An impulse came to her. She arose and going down three or four steps seated herself almost on a level with the ground.

Immediately she got a sense of release. She could not see over the corn but could see under it. The corn had long wide leaves that met over the rows. The rows became long tunnels running away into infinity. Out of the black carpet grew weeds that made a soft carpet of green. From above light sifted down. The corn rows were mysteriously beautiful. They were warm passageways running out into life. She got up from the steps, and walking timidly to the wire fence that separated her from the field, put her hand between the wires and took hold of one of the corn stalks. For some reason after she had touched the strong young stalk and had held it for a moment firmly in her hand she grew afraid. (p. 145)

The redeeming, fulfilling power of the corn spirit comes to Elsie especially at night when sexual urges keep her awake.

At midnight a little breeze came up from the south and when she sat up in bed the floor of corn tassels lying below her line of sight looked in the moonlight like the face of a sea just stirred by a gentle breeze. (p. 146)

The murmuring in the corn becomes "like the voices of children" who "crept into her arms." "She became so excited over the fancy that she sat up in bed and taking a pillow into her arms held it against her breast" (p. 146).

The remainder of the story is a parade of sexually symbolic episodes. There is a dead rabbit the blood of which "ran out on the delicate flowers of a white crocheted table cover" and an imprisoned bird cut off, like Elsie, from "the sweeping flight of life." "Elsie stood perfectly still, also frightened, not by the presence of the bird, but by the presence of life" (p. 154). Elsie is then stirred by the sight of her niece and her niece's sturdy ploughman boy friend.

Elsie ran into the vastness of the cornfield filled with but one desire. She wanted to get out of her life and into some new and sweeter life she felt must be hidden away somewhere in the fields. . . . As she ran nervously forward . . . the dry corn blades brushed against her shoulders and a fine shower of yellow dust from the corn tassels fell on her hair. (p. 155)

The sounds like "the murmuring voices of unborn children" combined with the sight of the young niece with her beau brings about an incredible orgy of sex and symbolism.

And then Elizabeth came into sight accompanied by the young ploughman. They stopped near Elsie and the man took the girl into his arms. At the sound of their approach Elsie had thrown herself face downward on the ground and had twisted herself into a position where she could see without being seen. When their lips met her tense hands grasped one of the corn stalks. Her lips pressed themselves into the dust. . . . The storm that had been threatening broke with a roar. Broad sheets of water swept over the cornfields. Sheets of water swept over the woman's body. The storm that had for years been gathering in her also broke. Sobs arose out of her throat. (pp. 158-159)

All of the Anderson mythology is brought together in this one story and the result is hopelessly crude and false. The devices which Anderson used sparingly and successfully in earlier work now betray him in a parody of excess.

Another story, not quite as bad, which has a similar effect is the novelette "Out of Nowhere Into Nothing." The story is not as metaphysical as the title suggests, nor as symbol-laden as "The New Englander." But it does contain, in the course of the thoughts and activities of Rosalind Wescott and all the people she meets, a complete recitation of all of the Andersonian ideas and attitudes. Rosalind has left her small midwestern home town to work in Chicago. There she has fallen in love with her employer and has come home to consult her mother, with whom she has never really talked. In the course of the story she wanders around the countryside, thinks thoughts, dreams and has experiences.

Rosalind is one of Anderson's everlastingly-the-same heroines: "Her hair was yellow like cornsilk. She was . . . a complete, a lovely daughter of the cornlands, a being to be loved passionately, completely by some son of the cornlands" (p. 241). Rosalind has become somewhat sophisticated in the city and has learned some lessons.

She read books--always written by men or by man-like women.¹⁸ There was an essential mistake in the viewpoint of life set forth in the books. . . . The writer had hold of the key. . . . "Sex," he cried. "It is by understanding sex I will untangle the mystery."¹⁹
(pp. 202-203)

But Rosalind was not taken in. "If the sex impulse within had been gratified in what way would my problem be solved? I am lonely now.

It is evident that after that had happened I would still be lonely" (p. 205).

There was another way to reach people.

A new world of thought had opened itself before her. After all human beings might be understood. . . . There was the voice that said words. . . . They had once expressed living truth. Then they had gone on being said, over and over. . . . It was clear there was something hidden away within people that could not get itself expressed except accidentally. One was startled or alarmed and then the words that fell from the lips became pregnant words, words that lived. . . . She hungered for someone to whom to say the words. (p. 197)

It was through words that Rosalind fell in love, for her employer was not a businessman but a frustrated singer.

The singer who would not sing had begun to sing because of her presence. Song was the true note of life, it was the triumph of life over death.

What sweet solace had come to her. . . . How alive she had suddenly become! It was at that moment she had decided definitely, finally, that she wanted . . . the ultimate physical closeness--to find in physical expression through what in his song he was finding through her.

It was in expressing physically her love of the man she would find the white wonder of life. (p. 254)

Rosalind went home to find out from her mother about life and words. But the old woman had no words so the storyteller speaks her mind for her, that there are no words in marriage, only crude violation, "love is a lie." Only Melville Stoner, the neighbor, and another alter-ego of Anderson, has an answer. He has words. He tells her, "We are all for action. I sit still and think. If I wanted to write I'd do something. I'd tell what everyone thought." Melville Stoner, who knew words and knew what everyone thought, was the artist-savior.

It was Melville Stoner who lifted the town of Willow Springs up out of the shadow of death. . . . With him

she had established the thing beyond words, beyond passion--the fellowship in living, the fellowship in life. . . . "He is like the gulls that float above the river in Chicago," she thought. "His spirit floats above the town of Willow Springs. When the death in life comes to the people here he swoops down, with his mind, plucking out the beauty of them."
(p. 265)

Rosalind, elated by this new realization, begins to run. She is elevated into the spirit through the corn and becomes "a creator of light" but goes only "out of nowhere into nothing."

These two stories represent the deterioration of Anderson's earliest phase. The vision which he had transmuted so beautifully into the felt life of his people becomes a mere idea. The characters and the situations he creates are no longer real but studied vehicles for his idea; he repeats them over and over again. He has no more yarns in which to set his villagers so he creates formless meandering episodes with the same symbols and the same false intensity.

V

After The Triumph of the Egg Anderson only seldom succeeded in recapturing the sense of prayer and agony in the lonely villagers. Undoubtedly his early sense of mission came to seem naive as his artistic contacts broadened and deepened. And, as we have already seen, Tennessee became more a burden than an inspiration. There is something of what he might have felt in "The Door of the Trap," also in Triumph. Hugh Walker sees his wife and his children as a trap, keeping him from reaching out to the life in Mary Cochran. "We are imprisoned by the fact that we belong to each other." This entire theme is taken up in Many Marriages (published in 1923) written while Anderson is in the process of getting a divorce from Tennessee.

Another phase, which also has hints in The Triumph of the Egg, produced Dark Laughter. While in Alabama writing Poor White Anderson came into extensive contact with negroes. He romanticized them in his characteristic way and felt that they had easy contact with the primeval spirit in nature, contact which was so difficult and so momentary for whites. He is never able to define or develop this idea very well and is content with the mystic suggestion of "dark laughter." Some of this notion is suggested in "I Want to Know Why." "Niggers" have a special feeling for horses not shared by white trainers. This idea is carried into "The Man Who Became a Woman" (which was published in Horses and Men), in which the young hero in a very real sense makes love to a horse, sees himself in a mirror with the

face of a girl, and then is attacked by "niggers" who mistake him for a girl. The story is one of Anderson's better and is, in a way, a capsule of Anderson's ideas of love, sexuality, and the spirit of nature, which includes in a special way horses and "niggers."

Tennessee's clay impressions in the front of The Triumph of the Egg are a reminder that by the time of that book, she is no longer a goddess but a competitor. It also suggests that with a sense of competition--Dark Laughter is frankly imitative of Lawrence and Joyce--the sense of folk-bard of the midwest gave way to a sense of writer among writers. It is hard to conceive of Anderson in 1925, after having been taken to Europe, lionized, and awarded prizes of money, saying what he said in early 1917, ". . . art is the great, the true religion. It alone satisfies."²⁰

The deterioration of Anderson's view of himself as folk-bard and his art as religion had much to do with what is still seen as a decline in Anderson's power after his early Chicago work. It was, after all, that vision of himself and his art that made him capable of the "loving identification" which gave his portraits their power. It was too the fact of his artistic insecurity that created the need to escape into identification with the forlorn villagers he left behind.

But with fame and reputation came some self-assurance, gone was the need to flee. In the brotherhood of art and in the assurance of himself as artist he found his own personal "loving identification." He now had a part, he belonged. But finding the role meant losing the power to play it. Gone was the need for salvation, the religion of art; and so gone too was its transporting power, the power that

made his writing "automatic." It became harder and harder for him to recapture that transported state because he no longer needed it. He was reduced to the mere earthly state of writer trying to sell books and keep his name before a fickle public while keeping his integrity as an artist. In those matters he was not doing so well, as Hemingway was anxious to let him know in The Torrents of Spring.

Finally, even though his insecurity as an artist was to some extent responsible for his power in those early Chicago years, the state of personal well-being he found in Tennessee and in the "Chicago Renaissance" group was a personal security he never had again. He found in his fourth wife some marital success, but even in her he was to some degree being accepted in his past glories. His bisexuality denied him the self-assurance in relating to others that the heterosexual, and even the homosexual, can achieve by clearly taking the measure of his needs and proceeding accordingly. Anderson was never clear about what he wanted and needed, although he thought at times he was. He only knew that in those years in Chicago he had it, and he never had it again.

Notes

¹Letter to William Phillips, March 4, 1949.

²Letter to William Phillips, March 10, 1949.

³The Triumph of the Egg (New York, 1921), p. 23. Passages quoted from short stories are all taken from this volume and will be cited by page numbers in the text.

⁴Both James Schevill (Sherwood Anderson: His Life and Work [Denver, 1951], p. 85) and David Anderson (Sherwood Anderson: An Introduction and Interpretation [New York, 1967], p. 35) cite this remark to suggest that Anderson's interest in the Bible was in its rhythms, imagery, and style. David Anderson says that the author's interest was in "the poetry he found in the New Testament." The implication of these two critics is that Anderson was not especially taken by the message of the Bible. Unquestionably Anderson was interested in the techniques of the Bible, but his remark that he was "sold on Jesus Christ" means just that; he was convinced of the truth and the value of Christ and his message. Anderson wrote to his friend Marietta Finley in January of 1917: "I imagine that your mind . . . turned for relief to the figure of Jesus walking alone by the shores of the sea. How strong and true and virile that figure. He only, of all men, deserves our complete love. He only dared to let his soul grow, asking no reward, seeking none of our silly modern goals, money, comfort, fame, and established place in a distorted world . . . He alone is the master-artist." (Emphasis mine)

⁵"More About the New Note," Little Review, I (April, 1914), 16.

⁶Accent, XVI (Spring, 1956), 107-128.

⁷Ibid., p. 109.

⁸Ibid., p. 110.

⁹Winesburg, Ohio (New York, 1919), p. 16. Quotes from the stories in Winesburg will be cited by page numbers in the text.

¹⁰Thurston, p. 110.

¹¹Thurston, p. 113.

¹²Letter to Waldo Frank, January 15, 1917.

¹³Letter to Marietta Finley, January 12, 1917.

¹⁴Poor White (New York, 1920), p. 5. Quotes from this novel will be cited by page numbers in the text.

¹⁵At no time does Anderson suggest that the lesbian relationship between Clara and Kate is anything but good and healthy. In fact, while not fulfilling her, that love contributes considerably to Clara's happiness and growth.

¹⁶See Chapter Five, p. 125.

¹⁷Anderson's father was also a harness maker who, like Joe Wainsworth, suddenly found his craft obsolete.

¹⁸Real women, of course, could not write books. See Chapter One.

¹⁹This is another slap at Freud and psychoanalysis.

²⁰Letter to Marietta Finley, January 17, 1917.

Appendix to Chapter Three

There is very little hard information to complete Tennessee's autobiography. There are only a few letters from her available and they were written late in her life. Anderson himself is the principal source, and beyond what he says about her, much has to be intimated.

Apparently there was no thought of divorce when Anderson and Cornelia separated in 1914. The divorce only took place a few days before Anderson's marriage to Tennessee on July 31, 1916¹ at the summer camp of Alys Bentley at Lake Chateaugay, New York, where Tennessee used to go for practice in rhythmical dancing, one of her many interests. At the end of that summer they returned to Chicago and their separate residences. About the marriage in those early years we know nothing beyond what Anderson has said about his admiration for Tennessee, his attitude toward her, and the circumstances in which they lived.

There is no way of knowing what Tennessee felt or said about their relationship and the pattern of their marriage. She sometimes went with Anderson in his frequent comings and goings, but there is some evidence that perhaps she was not with him as often as she might have liked. In a letter to a friend dated around 1926 she says, "I have had very little in my life of people looking out for me. It has been taken for granted that I was quite capable of taking care of myself. Of course, I have developed some technics [sic] but underneath I do so want . . . thought and affection."² Anderson in his letters seldom mentions Tennessee beyond sending greetings from her to mutual

friends. In his letters written away from Chicago he sometimes says that she is "joining him" or that she will "stay on" beyond his leaving. But the impression is unavoidable that they did not travel much together, and also that when she did accompany him or join him, it was at her behest rather than his. He seldom says anything that indicates enthusiasm for her presence. Not too much can be surmised from this, however; she did have a job and he felt (since he did not support her) that she had to keep it.

One curious event in this regard concerns the trip to Europe made by Anderson and Tennessee with Paul Rosenfeld in the summer of 1921. In a letter dated January 23, 1921, Rosenfeld tells Anderson of a windfall he came into and offers to pay Anderson's fare to Europe, but he makes no mention of Tennessee. Anderson responds enthusiastically but also makes no mention of Tennessee. It seems unlikely that they at first considered Tennessee because Rosenfeld does talk about a limited sum which was not enough for three fares.³ In a letter that spring to friends Anderson, talking about the European trip, says, "For a time Tennessee planned not to go but later changed her mind."⁴ Yet there is no evidence that Rosenfeld ever invited her or offered to pay her passage. Nor does Anderson ever mention asking her or prevail on Rosenfeld to invite or accept her. Yet suddenly she appears on the scene. What seems most likely is that she asked to go along and Anderson agreed, perhaps reluctantly. In a letter dated March 10, 1921, Anderson sounds as though he is trying to sell Rosenfeld the idea of having her with them.

The prospect of this summer with the three of us together stirs me deeply every time I think of it. Tennessee is much stronger physically than she has been since I have known her and will be a great companion. I am glad you are going to know from longer association a certain thing about her that makes her often almost too decent to be a woman at all.
(Letters, p. 73)

Yet that same summer in Europe after this high praise of Tennessee, Anderson wrote to Trigant Burrow: "I may make soon a rather fundamental change in my way of life. I may cut out by myself, live pretty much by myself, and here and there, looking at life more closely, listening perhaps."⁵ So even at this time he may have been planning to be rid of Tennessee. And the break came the following year.

Another related incident which had more far reaching consequences was the Alabama visit in 1920 when Tennessee first took up sculpturing. In early February of 1920, Anderson, after having been sick in bed for ten days, decided "to go South instead of East as I must be out of doors."⁶ He took up residence in Mobile, Alabama, and later moved to the colony of Fairhope on the Bay. He finished his novel Poor White and wandered around the area, his spirits restored. Suddenly, in early March, he wrote to Ben Huebsch, his publisher, that he has "been unexpectedly called to Chicago, so my stay at Mobile Bay is off." On March 13, 1920, he told the publisher: "I am back in Chicago as Tennessee has been ill but I am going back to Fairhope some time next week and will take her with me." In early April Anderson wrote his brother: "I came here in February and then Tennessee went to pieces nervously and I went to Chicago and persuaded her to chuck her job for the year and come here."⁷ Apparently what happened is that Tennessee, ill and alone, summoned Anderson in the middle of

his play. He must have been annoyed at having to cancel his fling; but when he found her in Chicago perhaps not so bad off, he must have decided that he could take care of his responsibility to her and still have his fling by taking her back with him. Tennessee very likely knew that this is what he would do, or even suggested it. In any case, prior to the summons there is no indication in his many letters to friends while in Fairhope that he was anxious to have her with him.

Anderson began painting while he was in Fairhope, and this is what he wrote about Tennessee:

It has been a wonderful time for me here these three months. In the first place, I persuaded Tennessee to be utterly reckless, chuck her job and income, and run off here with me. That has worked out. She is getting well and is happier than I have ever seen her. What a tremendous thing life is. For several years she has been a tired woman. Here she rested and then suddenly began to play. There are great quantities of red, yellow, and blue clay here, very fine and plastic. Tennessee suddenly began working in it, and already she does really remarkable things. What new joy in life that approach towards beauty coming in a definite form out of herself has given her. I go about whispering to myself, "She is going to be well. She is going to be well. O, for a world of people not tired. What things would come out of them." (Letters, pp. 54-55)

His great elation at having Tennessee well suggests something of the great weight she was on him and explains why he might not have been anxious to have her with him. Later remarks about her "gloom" and "the ghosts of death" about her confirm this.

But nothing is as revealing about the whole Alabama incident, about Anderson's real attitude toward Tennessee (despite all he wrote to friends), and about the marriage in general as the following paragraphs from the Memoirs, which were written many years later.

It is stark evidence of how ambivalent Anderson was toward Tennessee by this time and also how he could falsify the truth in order to put himself into a certain light:

We had been married but not really married and had been persistently unhappy together. Once having saved a little money, I ran away from her. This was the time I went to Mobile, Alabama, and, crossing the bay, got a little house near a place called Fairhope.

She followed me. I think that, while she did not want me, she also did not want to let me go. When she appeared there at the retreat I found for myself, I was annoyed. It was then she became a sculptress. I taught her. (Mem., p. 346)

Surely by this time there was no sexual relationship at all ("We had been married but not really married . . .") in the marriage and divorce was inevitable. This passage also confirms the likelihood that he took her to Europe with him only reluctantly.

For Tennessee the Alabama excursion was the beginning of a new career, but for Anderson it was a new and complicating factor in the relationship. Her obvious talent forced Anderson to regard her in a new way. She was now worthy of the respect accorded to "the artist," but she could not develop her talent. He now had a new burden of guilt. He wrote to his friends in fall after the return from Alabama:

Tennessee is pretty well. It's too damn bad she has to go to work teaching because she married me who won't settle down and support a woman as a respectable man should . . . she has done some heads of Americans that are great. I get to talking to her about some imaginary character--say Mrs. Windpeter Winters. We talk about her for several days and then she takes some clay and there she is--very realistic vivid things.⁸

And to Waldo Frank he wrote:

Naturally it makes Tennessee happy that you like her work and that Margaret [Frank's wife] likes it so much.

She is unfortunately married to a man who can't support her so she has to make her own living. Therefore, she doesn't get time to work when she isn't tired. In other words, having found the impulses of an artist within herself, she is meeting the same situation that practically every American artist meets.⁹

Another problem emerged and that was Tennessee as competitor. Sutton observes, "There arises what seems to be a half-humorous, rather unhappy note, as toward a person who unexpectedly becomes a competitor, thinly masked by polite acceptance, in Anderson's correspondence of this period":¹⁰

. . . the trouble with her now is this. Down in Alabama she got some beautiful clay in her hands and turned out some remarkable heads. The result is that she doesn't want to be an honest working woman any more, but has the same disease that has caught the rest of us. She wants to sit under a fig tree by a green sea and have beautiful blacks bring her clay to be modeled. . . . Anyway the poor woman went and married me and is stuck to make her own living, and its hell. She really has something smashing, I believe, in the clay thing.¹¹

The possibility of Tennessee as a competitor is confirmed by a remark Anderson made some years later when he was seeking a divorce from her.

One of the things Tennessee never realized was the harm in our relations to each other. Can you understand my saying, without my feeling her to blame, that these months away from her have done more to make me feel less assertive, combative, egotistical than I ever felt in her presence. Can you conceive of this being true and at the same time of my effect on her being equally bad.¹²

For some apparent reasons, and no doubt for some unknown, divorce came inexorably. What is apparent is that Anderson felt guilty about not supporting his wife and burdened by the demands and restrictions, both physical and emotional, of her illness—he spoke of her "heavy, rather gloomy hand" (Letters, p. 99). Undoubtedly he felt challenged by her wit and her ever more apparent artistic ability and reputation

even though he could soothe himself with the notion that he had taught her. His continual movement made a real intimacy, both spiritual and sexual, very difficult even if both of them had been completely adjusted sexually. What the nature of their communication was we can't know, but it seems unlikely that she paid him the admiration in 1921 that she paid him in 1913 when he was unknown. Whatever happened, on December fifth of 1921, a bookshop clerk named Elizabeth Prall wrote Anderson asking for a large picture for the book shop window. This was the beginning of the end. Things were, it seems, rather difficult between Anderson and Tennessee throughout early 1922 as he was cultivating Elizabeth Prall. In April he speculated with his brother Karl about whether artists should ever make permanent attachments.¹³ In May he told Hart Crane that he was "making some permanent changes this summer in the mechanism of my life."¹⁴ In early August he spoke of "revolutions in my life" and then told Gertrude Stein that he had "run away from all my friends, including friend wife."¹⁵ To the wife of his brother Karl he said that fall, "I have recently gone through an experience that will I am sure in the end make me understand not only you and Karl but all men and their women better."¹⁶ Finally on September 22, 1922, he wrote to Gertrude Stein:

. . . Afterward I decided, or rather we decided, that Tennessee Mitchell and I were not doing the job of being man and wife very well so I [the "I" is crossed out and "we" is inserted] called it off. However this isn't being advertised, not yet. . . . Have fallen in love, am living in New York, and writing again.

Some time later that fall he visited his friends Lucille and Jerry Blum with his new love and then wrote to Lucille:

How shall I tell you, how much both Elizabeth and myself enjoyed being at your house. . . . It just happens that there are very few people in the world to whom Elizabeth and I can go and in whose presence we can frankly accept each other as a man and a woman who love.

Your own and Jerry's fine acceptance was very sweet to both of us. I've been pretty starved for this woman, for a long time--I mean for her in just the healthy atmosphere you two give off.

Lucille, dear, I've been pretty mixed up. I've helped mix others. Don't quit loving me and I've a notion I'll come out all right yet.

P. S. And dear, I know you and Jerry will never get into the starved state I was long in and into which I perhaps unconsciously tried to drag others.¹⁷

For what was Anderson starved? For warmth and admiration? For sex? For a "healthy atmosphere" which Tennessee's illness and gloom made impossible. Perhaps for all these things, but he left Tennessee that fall and apparently never saw her again until shortly before she died. He went to New Orleans and then to New York. The following year he went to Reno, Nevada, for a divorce. Early that year he wrote from Reno to a friend:

My old energy comes back. How did I know under what a cloud I lived. The central fact that T. is one who herself cannot believe in life becomes more apparent.

The dark moody terrible thing always lurking there. Poor child--I know now she came toward me as toward something warm and in the end I grew tired and myself wanted warmth outside myself.¹⁸

Later:

As you know the last year has been a shattering one for me and I am not yet through the valley of ghosts. To one who like myself lives upon life T. did a dreadful thing. She filled my house with the ghosts of death and it will take long in quiet places and in the sun to cure me.¹⁹

Tennessee was broken by Anderson's desertion. He (and his first family) were her only family. Her need for someone to mother remained

and she fought the divorce, not by denying him directly, but by stalling and by refusing to cooperate. During this period Anderson used his friend Ferdinand Schevill as a kind of mediator between him and Tennessee. What he wrote to Schevill and others reflects much about their relationship and their past years of marriage.

In July, 1923, Anderson wrote to his friend and new literary agent:

Of course, T. knows the whole situation, as I have been perfectly frank with her from the start. Have even been in direct communication with her to ask her to let someone out here [Reno] act as her attorney to exercise service and expedite the whole matter as much as possible. She has refused--first on the ground that something (concerning a matter in Chicago with which I had never anything to do and that involved she claimed the liability of her being involved with another man's [Edgar Lee Masters'?] suit for divorce, etc., etc). Well anyway that fell through. Now she takes the ground that I must wait until such time as a divorce will not harm her economically--which means of course to be at the mercy of her whim.

Naturally I am going right ahead--as I have told her and if she, after a lifetime of scolding and storming at such people wants to put herself in the position of hanging on to a marriage that has no reality but by the technique of law, I'm going to give her the opportunity.

This is my program now and I'm going through with it. The silence of which you speak she has maintained I believe with everyone. God knows what kind of thinking is back of it--none I fancy.

. . . With T. I think it is just a kind of dogged determination not to face simple facts and an unwillingness to make the gesture that would be most generous and fine. I shall certainly ask nothing more of her.²⁰

In October he wrote to another friend: "The woman has been a great feminist all her life. Oh, for the freedom of woman, etc., but doesn't seem to want to take her own medicine. Not an uncommon reaction I believe."²¹ In December he wrote Ferdinand Schevill:

You and Clara have come, more and more to mean something very dear to me. After all, dear friend it is a sad mistake to think that the ending of the attempt of Tennessee and myself to form a real intimate relation is the ending of the relation such as you two have. There has been no real tenderness, loyalty, no subtile [sic] joining of our two lives.

As for the situation--I have today wired Clarence Darrow to make no more attempts to serve the papers in my suit until I have the chance to write him. . . .

I have been out here nearly a year now and before coming notified Tennessee. At first she said she had no objections other than the hurting of her income and I tried to [?] the situation by offering at once to find the money to make good to her any loss. When that offer was made she at first accused me in advance of bad faith and then shifted the grounds of her objections. Many objections were made, a new one often in each letter and finally she predicated her consent on my waiting until the Chicago Tribune changes its news policy as regards divorces. They were, I believe, at some time in the future, to treat such matters with the greatest respect, etc., etc. Shades of the patient Jacob [sic] --one cannot unfortunately make a tea party of these matters in our day, can they?

Later she did want me to leave the whole matter to you as a kind of arbitrator, I fancy, of how long I should wait, but I had a decided objection to doing any such thing to a friend. I felt that it was our mess and that we should be able to handle it between us and not hand it over to another, making him pay so heavily for being a friend, Poor Ferdinand.

Oh, these feminists, man! Tennessee has always been so very scornful of other women trying to block the efforts of men trying to get out of bad marriages.

And surely she is making a rather gigantic matter of this business of earning her living. I also have one to make not only for myself but for my three children and she has not seemed to take that into consideration at all. Really I think I have come to feel that she has in a way enjoyed the ability to hurt. She has written such letters, attacking the integrity of my work, my relations with my children, etc., etc. The things that one would pick out to hurt most and that have nothing to do with our matter.²²

The idea of Tennessee's emancipation seemed to grow on Anderson as the cause of all the problems. It was symptomatic to him of some peculiar flaw in her character, some special lack of femininity.

. . . The truth is that Tennessee Mitchell and I have been at loggerheads for years. She is a feminist and I have long thought that to be pretty definitely about the last thing one wants in a wife--in a friend perhaps O.K.--I don't know.²³

To Ferdinand Schevill he went somewhat further.

As to the whole T M period of my life--it may be naïf and cruel of me but the truth is that she as a person, does not remain in my consciousness at all. I do not believe her capable of love or tenderness and while I know the circumstances of her life before I knew her, may have brought about what she is and has been in my own life--the fact remains that she is to me now but as an illness passed through.

The main reason I should leave any approach to her in the hands of others--which I am Oh so thankful for the privilege of doing.²⁴

The divorce was finally settled in early April of 1924 and shortly thereafter Anderson married Elizabeth Prall.

What Tennessee's state of mind was during these proceedings cannot be known. The only record of her thoughts in these later years are in letters to a close friend Bernardine Szold, who was also an acquaintance of Anderson's and the former wife of a friend of his. These letters begin in the fall of 1925 and show Tennessee with a lingering affection and engagement in Anderson's life, but with more than a touch of bitterness.

I heard Sherwood was all off with New Orleans now and is going to Virginia--at least for summers and I hope not New York for winters. I found I could still be surprised by him. When Mr. Huebsch [Anderson's former publisher] told me he had instructed him not to pay me any royalties on Triumph²⁵--the account is very small--but when Mr. H. told me I had a legal right to it. I at first felt like fighting. I've always gone on the non-resistance plan but I'm losing faith in it.

Countess Korzytska [?] the old dear once said to me--It isn't enough to do the right thing by other people. You owe it to them to see to it that they do the right thing by you.²⁶

In a letter of the following year she tells of some surprising wit from Cornelia, to whom she is still close. Affection for Anderson lingers.

The most amusing thing--I hear S. feels that having lived with an artist and then being deserted has made me a sculptor--I told Mrs. A No.1. [Cornelia] whose reply was--He made me a school teacher and you a sculptor--what a pity it is he doesn't work faster so he can do more for women.

It's foolish of us to be down on him. He's as he is-- a very charming person--maybe its too much to expect more-- that I did was my mistake. I ought not to whine.²⁷

Later that year Tennessee, writing about the troubles of Ernest Hemingway and his wife, lets some of the bitterness come through. What she says also reflects on Anderson's concept of the artist as a particular role which one puts on over the person.

What you write about Ernest and Hadley doesn't surprise me. I'm convinced that all these realists are really the greatest of romanticists and in their own lives jump reality without regard for whom they jump on--I only met Hadley once or twice but my impression was she was good stuff and I go out to her in what I know so well she is going through. I wonder if she can see how quickly those tears will turn to venom if she doesn't comply meekly with his every demand--Sherwood weeping on every lamp post in New York when asked to wait four months before getting a divorce so that I could land a job before the school scented a danger of publicity turned all his force and imagination into deviltry--Did I write you that he says now that he made me an artist. I've gotten to hate the word. The poor word isn't to blame but I've heard so much silly and foolish talk. When my show came off in Chicago he wrote--Tennessee Mitchell--congratulations on your recognition as an artist. Sherwood Anderson. All of which might have seemed kind--hadn't I known it was meant to be a demarkation between me as a human being and an artist-- If my late collaborator on the Triumph of the Egg would pay me my share of the royalties for the last two years it would help--But as he has instructed Mr. Huebsch not to pay me my 5% there's no chance without a law suit and as Mr. H. said when I talked with him, I couldn't go into that and S. knows it. The amount is so small its absurd that I should think he'd feel nasty.²⁸

Tennessee was involved in many things during the late twenties, drama, dancing, her sculptor. She was widely acquainted, and among those acquaintances were some celebrated people. But her letters, like her autobiography, reveal her to be still frightened and alone. She is constantly upbraiding Bernardine for not writing often enough. Perhaps she continued to use the name Anderson--she used it always and had it on her stationery--to maintain some sense of belonging to a family;²⁹ she never used or mentioned Sherwood's name. In fact, she scrupulously avoided any mention of his name³⁰ and it was to get his permission that she wrote him that last letter in the fall of 1929, a gesture which was really not necessary. Since she was found dead shortly after seeing him, it is tempting to assume that he was in some way connected, even if it was thoughts of him that kept her in the nervous state which prevented sleep.³¹ What Anderson said about that last visit in Chicago pretty well sums up the entire relationship: "In spite of a certain crudeness of approach she really wanted from me there a little love and comradeship and I didn't give it to her."³²

Notes

¹A helpful collection of material--facts, observations about Tennessee from her friends, and some useful insights--is contained in William Sutton, "Sherwood Anderson's Second Wife," Ball State University Forum, VII (Spring, 1966), 39-46.

²Letter to Bernardine Szold, 1926.

³These letters are in the Newberry collection but I was unable to get the exact texts.

⁴Letter to Jerry and Lucille Blum, April 2, 1921.

⁵The dating of this letter may not be exact. It could be 1922.

⁶Letter to Waldo Frank, early February, 1920.

⁷Letter to Karl Anderson, late March, 1920.

⁸Letter to Lucille and Jerry Blum, September 20, 1920.

⁹Letter to Waldo Frank, November 18, 1921.

¹⁰"Sherwood Anderson's Second Wife," p. 44.

¹¹Letter to Jerry Blum, November 12, 1920.

¹²Letter to Ferdinand Schevill, December 16, 1923.

¹³Letter to Karl Anderson, April, 1922.

¹⁴Letter to Hart Crane, May 9, 1922.

¹⁵Letter to Gertrude Stein, August 14, 1922.

¹⁶Letter to Helen Anderson, fall, 1922.

¹⁷Letter to Lucille Swan Blum, Autumn, 1922.

¹⁸Letter to Marietta Finley, January, 1923.

¹⁹Letter to Marietta Finley, February, 1923.

²⁰Letter to Otto Liveright, July, 1923

²¹Letter to Alfred Stieglitz, October 18, 1923.

- ²²Letter to Ferdinand Schevill, December 7, 1923.
- ²³Letter to Julius Friend, April, 1924.
- ²⁴Letter to Ferdinand Schevill, January 27, 1924.
- ²⁵Some of Tennessee's clay heads were used as illustration in the front of The Triumph of the Egg (1921).
- ²⁶Letter to Bernardine Szold, October, 1925.
- ²⁷Letter to Bernardine Szold, 1926.
- ²⁸Letter to Bernardine Szold, September 4, 1926.
- ²⁹She maintained close contact with Cornelia and her children right up to her death. Among the things found in her apartment were gifts for the Anderson children.
- ³⁰Sherwood's name is conspicuously absent in the Chicagoan article.
- ³¹For an account of her death and funeral, see Kramer, pp. 339-342.
- ³²Letter to Ferdinand and Clara Schevill, December 31, 1929.

This article from The Chicagoan (November 3, 1928) provides some impressions of Tennessee Mitchell's character, activities, and reputation. Note the careful absence of Sherwood's name.

CHICAGOANS

Tennessee Mitchell Anderson

By MARIAN MAXWELL GOSS

IT started, perhaps, when a mother named an infant daughter Tennessee on a dare.

For when the Mitchell baby was born, someone challenged its mother to call the girl Tennessee, after the mother's friend and a then startling feminist, Tennessee Clafin. Tennessee Mitchell it was, and later Tennessee Mitchell Anderson. A revolt to begin with.

At a prodigy of six, young Miss Tennessee had her first quarrel with the

best of all possible worlds. She played violin in a children's orchestra. After a concert she found that someone had soaped the bow; she had played along very earnestly, the whole time not making a sound. Her absorption had prevented her noticing an adult joke. Promptly she renounced the fiddle and took to literature.

EVEN literature for a child of six had its adult vexations. Principally its teachers in the grades.

Tennessee hit on a policy of reprisal for the atrocities of learning directed at her; she refused to learn. In this open warfare she was aided by Col. Robert G. Ingersoll, a brave sword against convention, who, as a friend of the family, used to dangle the young rebel on his knee. Inevitably, she grew up to be a free-thinker. And to this day her conservative friends regard her as a dangerous radical while her radical friends look on her as a menacing conservative. Also, in the early days, she wrote her name Tennis C. because her school-mates giggled and nobody could ever spell it.

Soon enough, came the end of school days and the beginning of a step-mother. And again, revolt. Not so easy this time. A lone girl in Chicago, without money, without specialized education or experience, without very good health. Tennessee began her career. That is she began tuning pianos for a living. It was man's work but she did it until it became too nerve-racking for her health. Without a teacher's certificate she somehow became an instructor in a well known music school. Quite as unaccountably she became the best instructor with the institution.

Her name became Tennessee Mitchell Anderson.

Accidentally, Tennessee became a sculptor. On a vacation in Alabama she toyed with vari-colored clays in an unknown gully by a roadside. Shaped them idly. "Jacques Copeau," hailed an onlooker, for so indeed it was. The likeness of a Parisian friend, lately her guest in Chicago.

STILL, Tennessee refused to take her new found accomplishment seriously. She did not attend art school. Rather she worked along her own plans as she made them; she sensed and worked out sculpturing problems for herself. Not that she scorned art school, but she preferred to teach herself.

A minute observer, with a lively and intelligent interest in people, the tyro sculptor came along rapidly. She built up a gallery of American types: Chick-

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 23]



A Favorite Portrait of Tennessee Mitchell Anderson, by Rudolph Weisenborn

Chicagoans

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19)

en Farmer, School Teacher, Labor Leader, Well Fed, In a Street Car, Pope's Flapper, At the Opera, Club President, etc. Tennessee didn't and doesn't give a whoop for criticism. She sculps what she sees. Including portraits of notable Chicago people including Arthur T. Aldis, Sam Putnam, William Hollingsworth and the late Jacob Bauer. Generally speaking her art is discerning and satirical; it is not cruel, but shrewd and amusing; caricature and yet good-natured mimicry; she is, the writer would say, a sympathetic satirist. Yet she is allied with the Arts Club, the Romany Club, and the Chicago No-Jury. Not too strongly a believer, nevertheless she aids current strivings.

And aids them very efficiently indeed. Count here a Negro theatre, the Moscow Art Theatre (in its first Chicago season), Bertha Oschner and La Chorale Francaise. A few efforts which prospered under her management.

TENNESSEE is interested, too, in realistic phases of pictures, books, dancing, theatre; she likes Sandburg's "Lincoln," The Swedish Ballet, The Moscow Art Theatre, Emil Jannings and (let it not be breathed in Tenn.) Negroes. Mrs. Anderson delights in African naivete; it is strong, spontaneous—challenges her expression. She has recently done "Hallelujah" and "Negro Madonna," and both have merited comment.

In addition, Tennessee Anderson goes for unique jewelry—particularly earrings. She has a large collection. She wears identical rings side by side, too. These on her fingers. Yet she dresses conservatively. And uses any good brand of perfume given to her.

Also, she has spent time and effort in furnishing her Erie street apartment. A long, narrow room with two fire places side by side, a grand piano by the windows, Chinese chairs, an Empire sofa, early American tables, a desk made of an old melodeon, original drawings, by Kuhn, Mauer, Bateman and Remahl—all these blend magically into a harmonious ensemble.

Further, Mrs. Anderson has not written a book, though she has been told she could write. A volume, autobiographical in tone, may some day go to the press. Certainly she delights

in asfounding solid business people by frightening them into anticipations of her immediate insanity, the violent kind, by inventing realistic and highly incredible dialogues which she delivers in their company. She should write. She has a nose for news. For instance, she once told an earnest interviewer that she was an illegitimate child, thinking it might help the fellow a bit in writing his story. It did. The revelation, to be sure, would have scandalized Tennessee's very legitimate parents. But it was a good story. She realized the drama of a situation.

Undoubtedly she could write.

JOURNALISTIC JOURNEYS

Success Made Pleasant

By FRANCIS C. COUGHLIN

AT seven-fifteen people have begun to wander into Orchestra Hall. A few people. Rather uneasy people. Not like the confident folk who stride the boulevard outside, comfortably disposed toward dinner and after-dinner theatre. But a bit diffident, a little hopeful. Wistful, imbued somehow with a capacity for believing and vaguely at odds with the imposing, matter-of-fact boulevard world.

Tonight at eight, Mr. G. E. Marchand will talk (free) on "Cashing In on Your Ability." The crowd grows denser; moves down aisles.

A quarter-of-eight and the pipe organ stirs into sound, a chant of tall pipes, secure and truthful music carrying conviction, perhaps through association with religious services. At each interlude a churchly, expectant silence.

ONE examines the stage carefully. Instead of pulpit or speaker's stand one sees an office desk, impeccably arranged.

The desks obviously of a high executive. Wall pennants are adorned with the name National University Society, sealed with the likeness of the bald American eagle over the national coat of arms set gracefully into a fruited tree—the tree, one guesses, of knowledge.

A silence and a stir. An inconspicuous on-stage door opens. Mr. Marchand? No. A blonde young woman. A secretarial young woman carrying a sheaf of papers. She arranges these papers on the executive desk and faces her audience. Her voice is sweet, just a trifle husky. She speaks of Mr. Marchand in the manner of a religious devotee giving testimony. Her hearers lean forward. Once again she arranges the imposing desk. Leaves through the small door.

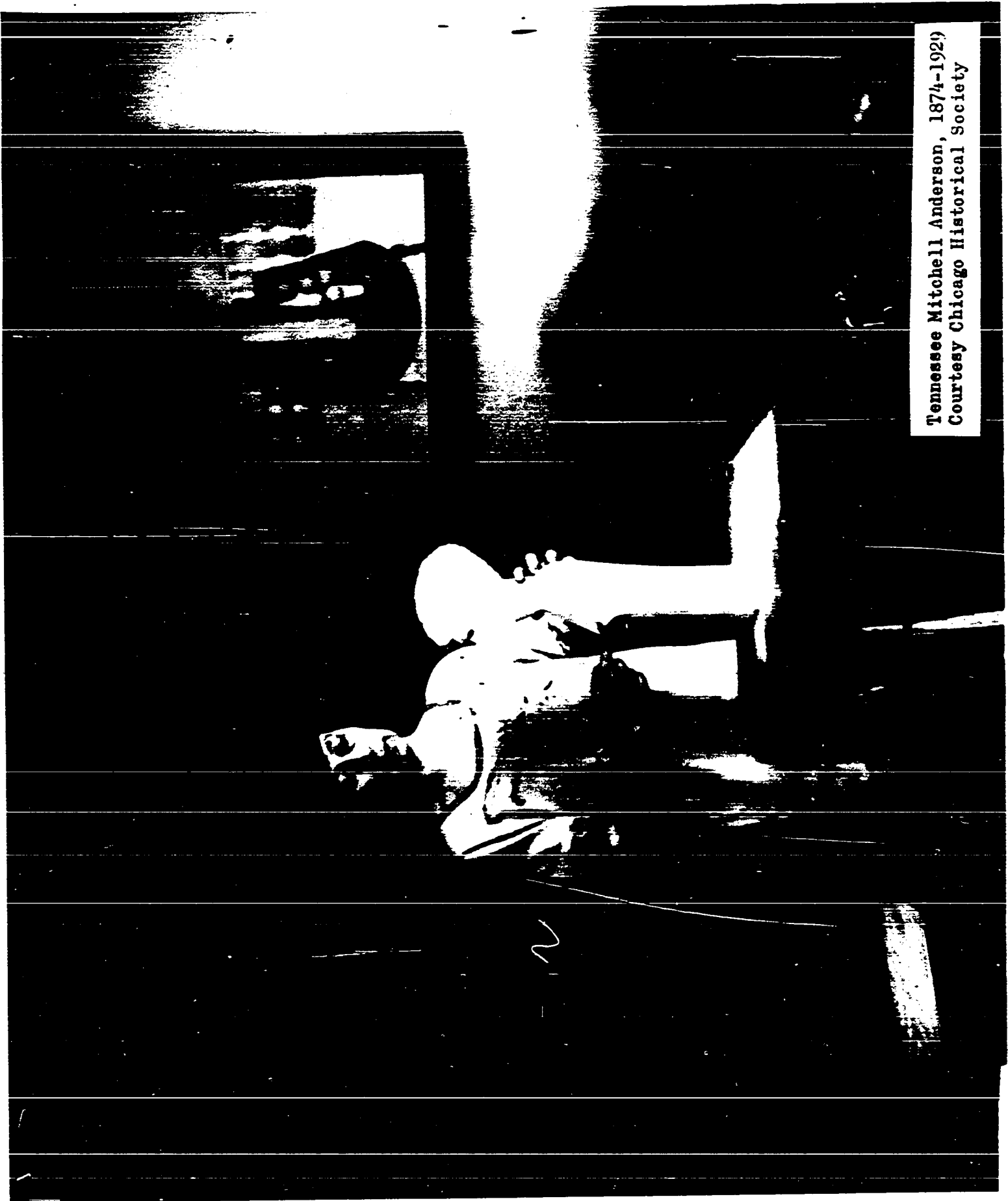
Mr. Marchand enters right. A trim, brisk figure. A neat, dark moustache. He draws near to the symbol of his desk. Five hundred years ago, as symbols change, that desk would have been a baron's chair in a manor court. A thousand years, a Viking throne in a shield hall. Fifteen hundred years, a Tribune's seat.

BUT no humbug, old-stuff foolishness about G. E. Marchand. He speaks straight from the shoulder. Naturally his first words have to do with skeptics. He is here, he says, to help common, ambitious people attain their unrealized possibilities. Of course, he is not here to help people who know it all. Know-it-alls wouldn't be here to begin with. And know-it-alls can't be helped anyway. Mr. Marchand hopes aloud that he doesn't know it all; that a surfeit of knowledge shall never choke out his openness of mind.

Having thus withered cynics and non-scientists, the speaker launches directly into his subject: "Cashing in on Your Ability" (pronounced Abilit-eh).

In so vital a presentation Mr. Marchand may be pardoned a personal reference. He was not always rich, successful, clear-sighted and able, America's foremost maker of successful men and women. He began life as a farm boy. He entered business by peddling red raspberries at five cents a quart. One day a steady customer, albeit a crochety old widow, refused his raspberries. That was a cruel cut. The young merchant departed heart-stricken. Not five minutes after the widow refused his merchandise, he saw





Tennessee Mitchell Anderson, 1874-1929
Courtesy Chicago Historical Society

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Robert George Kraft, the son of Christine J. and Joseph J. Kraft, was born on September 7, 1939 in Strasburg, North Dakota. He attended elementary school there and was graduated from St. John's Preparatory School, Collegeville, Minnesota, in 1957. He received the Bachelor of Arts degree from St. John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota, in 1961 and the Master of Arts degree from the University of Minnesota in 1964. He is Assistant Professor of English Language and Literature at Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan.