

MIDWESTERN MISCELLANY XII

*being a variety of essays on the
works of Sherwood Anderson
by members of*

The Society for the Study of
Midwestern Literature

edited by
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in honor of
Harriette Simpson Arnow

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PREFACE

For the first time an entire issue of *Midwestern Miscellany* contains essays devoted to a single Midwestern writer, one who devoted his life to a search for the meaning of the American experience in the region from which he had come and that provided the substance of his best work. From the early short stories published in *Harper's*, *The Little Review*, and *Masses* to *Home Town*, the last work published in his lifetime, and the posthumous *Memoirs*, Sherwood Anderson returned again and again in fiction and fancy to the Clyde, Ohio, of his youth, convinced that if he understood those experiences, the meaning of America and of American life in his time and ours would become clear. In that search he influenced the course and language of American literature in this century.

"Sherwood was such a Midwesterner," Eleanor Copenhaver Anderson, herself a staunch mountain Virginian, has told me in conversation, and as members of the Society continue to explore the dimensions of the expression of that fact in his work, they explore, too, what is perhaps the truest expression of the Midwest in literature that we shall know.

To dedicate this volume to Harriette Simpson Arnow, winner of the Society's Mark Twain Award for 1983, is thus most appropriate, as she, like Anderson, seeks out the universal in the local experience that she knows so well and defines so completely.

DAVID D. ANDERSON

October, 1984

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"I WANT TO KNOW WHY" AS BIOGRAPHY AND FICTION

WALTER B. RIDEOUT

Sherwood Anderson's tale, "I Want to Know Why," written in August, 1919, had, as it were, a past, a present, and a future. For its past it reached back not only to Anderson's own boyhood, but to Mark Twain's great novel, *Huckleberry Finn*. For its present it incorporated a surprising amount of Anderson's 1919 experience. For its future it not only would have an immediate offspring in Ernest Hemingway's "My Old Man," but, in combination with *Winesburg, Ohio* and various other Anderson stories, would decisively influence later American fiction. "I Want to Know Why" helps to validate William Faulkner's generous and acute assessment of Sherwood Anderson as "the father of my generation of American writers and the tradition of American writing which our successors will carry on." In this paper I shall emphasize how "I Want to Know Why" incorporates Anderson's situation and attitudes in 1919, but I shall occasionally refer to the story's past and shall in conclusion suggest very briefly something of its future.

On May 8, 1919, the day *Winesburg, Ohio* was published, Anderson was leaving or about to leave Chicago on a business trip to Owensboro, Kentucky, going by way of Louisville, where at Churchill Downs on May 10 he watched the thoroughbred Sir Barton run a muddy track to victory in the Kentucky Derby. Over the next few weeks, as Anderson worked out an advertising campaign for the Owensboro Ditcher & Grader Company and then, back in Chicago, labored resentfully at his copywriting in the Critchfield office, Sir Barton went on to win the Preakness and the Belmont Stakes, thus becoming the first thoroughbred in his-

tory to win all three top races, a feat for which in 1950 he would be posthumously named the first Triple Crown Winner. My point here is not to show off my expertise on thoroughbreds, obtained, I confess, from three days research in a library, but rather to suggest that the newspaper reports of Sir Barton's extraordinary performance would have helped keep Anderson actively aware of horse racing during the spring and summer of 1919.

July brought a respite from the daily selling of his brains to various Critchfield clients. During most of that month he and his wife, Tennessee Mitchell, who had been in ill health for nearly a year, regained strength in the little resort town of Ephraim, Wisconsin, on the Green Bay side of the Door County peninsula. One afternoon late in July he climbed a cliff to a moss-covered ledge overlooking Green Bay. He felt renewed and at rest and wished that he could stay on at Ephraim alone for months, but almost symbolically factory smoke from a town miles across the Bay faintly discolored the sky. If he could only "give up the superficial battle for a living," he wrote a friend that evening, he would have the strength this coming year "to do things more subtle and difficult than anything I have ever done."

Chicago when he returned on August 1 made him psychically ill by contrast with the woods, hills, and harbor at Ephraim. The city people, even the children, looked old and weary to him; the lines of the buildings were ugly. For the five days just preceding, Chicago had in fact been convulsed with race riots during which gangs of marauding whites had invaded the Black Belt and thirty-three people, twenty black and thirteen white, had been killed and over three hundred injured. Even on this first day of sullen calm Anderson sensed tension and hatred still thick in the air. It remained risky for blacks to be in white neighborhoods, especially at night, and Sherwood, who had become acquainted with several black men who worked nearby, now out of revulsion at white violence gave them a key to his small apartment so that for some nights they could sleep on the floor of his living room, uncomfortable but at least safe. He had become acutely sensitized to pain by Tennessee's illness and even at Ephraim had seen pain "in the fishes taken from the sea, in the writhing of the worms by which the fishes were caught, in the eyes of cattle in the field, tortured

by flies." Returning to the hate-filled city and to the demands of business was like being afflicted with a terrible disease.

Fortunately the practical demands on his time brought him through his initial days of shock; and as so often happened, he was able to snatch a few hours here and there for his writing, even when he was most harried by business, if some outer event or inner fancy precipitated a story. Such an event would seem to have been the news in the sports pages of August 10 that on the previous day the thoroughbred Sun Briar had won the Champlain Handicap at the races at Saratoga Springs, New York, and had set a new track record. Around the record-breaking winning of Saratoga's "Mullford Handicap" by a stallion named Sunstreak began to accrete in Anderson's mind one of his finest stories. It was to be told in the first person as a reminiscence by a fifteen-year-old boy from a small Kentucky town who, though the son of a lawyer, was crazy about race horses and had perhaps picked up from the people who worked with them, people outside conventional middle-class society, a mode of speech rather like Huck Finn's. The narrator recalls how the previous summer he and some other boys had stolen off by freight train to see the races at Saratoga, in the "East," had been taken care of there by a black race track cook named Bildad Johnson from their home town of Beckersville, had seen Sunstreak and the gelding Middlestride, both horses from farms around Beckersville, come in first and second in the Handicap, and had returned home to take the expected punishment from their parents, though the Boy's father understood his love of horses and barely scolded him. As the Boy is telling his adventure the following spring, however, he is still troubled by something he alone saw at Saratoga, the one thing he didn't tell even his father.

So with many digressions about his joy at watching thoroughbreds being worked out at the Beckersville training track early on spring mornings, about the beauty, honesty, and courage of the horses, about the superior decency of "niggers" over most white men where boys are concerned—digressions that both build up a world of rapture and reveal the Boy's reluctance to get to the event that destroyed it for him—after these digressions he tells how, with his gift for intuiting whether a horse is going to win, he

watches Sunstreak being saddled for the Handicap, catches the eye of Jerry Tillford, the horse's trainer, and loves the man as much as the horse because he knows from Jerry's look that the trainer too has sensed Sunstreak's resolve to win. After Sunstreak's victory the Boy wants to stay close to Jerry and secretly follows him and some of the other men from Beckersville to a farmhouse where, he discovers, there are "ugly mean-looking women." Watching through an open window, he hears Jerry brag that Sunstreak had won only because he had trained him. Then when Jerry looks at one hard-mouthing whore in the same way he had looked at the Boy and Sunstreak at the saddling and kisses her, the Boy is enraged, creeps away, and persuades his friends to leave Saratoga for home. The repulsive fact that Jerry could watch Sunstreak run and could kiss a bad woman the same day has stuck in the Boy's mind for months and is now spoiling his joy in a new spring, in the laughter of the track Negroes, in the morning run of the thoroughbreds. Why, he wants to know, should such things have to be?

"I Want to Know Why" has been read in many ways—as a variation on the Genesis myth of the fall from innocence to experience, as a representation of the ambiguity of good and evil in the world, as a psychological study of a young male's concern over sexuality—but in the context of Anderson's emotional situation at the time he was writing the story in mid-August of 1919 an immediate, personal reading also emerges. Part of what he was transmuting into this fiction was his direct experience of the race track milieu, and bits of that assimilated reality stand out. Very possibly he had seen the thoroughbreds race at Saratoga in the August of 1916 or of 1917 when he was not far away at Chateaugay Lake; but certainly he had learned all he needed to know about "Beckersville" from his occasional visits to Harrodsburg, Kentucky, where two other of his clients, David and Hanley Bohon, sons of a local banker, had become rich in the mail order business through schemes Anderson had suggested to them. Both Beckersville and Harrodsburg are near Lexington in the Blue Grass region, and in both there is, or was, a "Banker Bohon." For the lyrical descriptions of the morning sights, smells, and sounds of the training track Anderson had only to recall nostalgically his boyhood mornings at the track at the Clyde fairgrounds. The

names and characteristics of the thoroughbreds required little invention. "Sun Briar" was readily converted into "Sunstreak," of course; and he could draw on his recent memory of watching Sir Barton's five-length win over Billy Kelly at the 1919 Derby for his conception of a horse that before a race was outwardly composed but was "a raging torrent inside." Yet he may have drawn as well on reports concerning a new two-year-old, Man o' War, who was driving the Saratoga fans wild that August with his speed, stamina, and utter will to win; for just as Sunstreak is owned by "Mr. Van Riddle of New York" who has "the biggest farm we've got in our country," so Man o' War was owned by Mr. Sam (Samuel D.) Riddle, a wealthy Pennsylvania textile manufacturer who had both the Glen Riddle Farm near Philadelphia and the huge Faraway Farm near Lexington. As for the awkward-looking but powerful gelding "Middlestride," Anderson had seen him win at Churchill Downs in 1918 under his real name Exterminator, a gelding well-known for his many victories and his gaunt, unprepossessing appearance, which gave him the affectionate nickname of "Old Bones." (Incidentally, Anderson may have adapted the name Middlestride from Midway, a thoroughbred who, the newspapers reported, had won the Kentucky Handicap at Churchill Downs back in late May, 1919.)

Horses and Negroes would have been much on Anderson's mind in August of 1919, that month not only of the Saratoga thoroughbred meets but also of the Grand Circuit harness races that were moving from Ohio to the East and back to Ohio, carrying with them an intense rivalry among three great drivers—Walter Cox, Tom Murphy, and Anderson's long-time favorite, Pop Geers, the Silent Man from Tennessee, who unlike Jerry Tillford never boasted that it was he, not his trotter or pacer, who won a race. The horses themselves one could depend on; they were embodiments of beautiful motion, courage, a clean honest devotion to the challenge of the race. One could depend too on some, if not all, of the men who worked with the thoroughbreds and hence took on their best qualities. Especially one could depend on the track "niggers" like Bildad Johnson, who intuitively understood horses and horse-crazy boys, and of whom one could say, comparing them with whites: "You can trust them. They are squarer with kids." When "I Want to Know Why" was published in H. L.

Mencken's *The Smart Set* in November, 1919, after the terrible summer of race riots in several American cities, it was as though Anderson were declaring publicly which side he had been on.

The praise of blacks might also have been prompted by some memory of Burt, the black groom Sherwood had known in Clyde; but the chances are good that Bildad was in part suggested by Jim in *Huck Finn*, for Huck would have been on Anderson's mind that August also. Off and on for over a year he had been talking and corresponding about Twain and his masterpiece with Van Wyck Brooks, who was at the moment writing about that Westerner's ordeal in the East. A *Huck Finn* cast to the Boy's speech—why else his use of the odd word "fantods"?—would be fitting, given a Bildad Johnson who, though allowed only to cook at the tracks for the white men, is as admirable a figure as Huck's black friend, and given too the picaresque atmosphere of the race track world, which is as much a refuge from conventional society as was the raft on the Mississippi River. As much and no more, for just as life on the raft was vulnerable to invasion by all sorts of human ugliness, so is life at the track. Only a few weeks earlier in Ephraim, Anderson had temporarily planned a group of children's tales, not the usual "asinine sentimental nonsense," as Anderson put it and Twain might have, but pictures of actual "country life at the edge of a middle-western town"; and "I Want to Know Why," concerned with a boy only a little beyond childhood, was not conceived as sentimental nonsense either. Like Huck Finn of St. Petersburg, Missouri, the fifteen-year-old Boy from Beckersville, Kentucky, is no innocent. He knows a good deal about adult nastiness already—a horse can be "pulled" in a race by a crooked jockey, one can hear "rotten talk" around a livery stable, a "bad woman house" can be found near any race track—but he can submerge such knowledge in his sheer joy at the thoroughbreds and the aura of dedication, beauty, and sensuous delight they cast around themselves. He can submerge it up to the point, that is, that the world of corruption breaks massively in on him.

Such a point is reached, of course, with Jerry Tillford's betrayal of Sunstreak and the communion which the horse created between Jerry and the Boy. The betrayal occurs in a sexual context; yet as happens so often in the Winesburg tales, something does not

symbolize sex, sex symbolizes something. Fundamentally the Boy is right to question why things are as they disgustingly are. What he protests against is not adulthood, sexual or otherwise, not even moral ambiguity as the condition of existence. He (and his creator) already knows that some adults are "good," others "bad," most are a mixture of both. Although the father of one of the boys is a professional gambler, he alone refuses to enter the "rummy-looking farmhouse" where the women are as unbeautiful as they are unvirtuous; although the Boy's own father is middle-class by professional status, he understands his son and allows him his low-life associations. Rather, the Boy despairingly protests the degradation of a shared moment which, though he would not himself see the analogy, is equivalent in intensity and function to the artist's imaginative creation of an art work and to the observer's imaginative experience of it.

Such degradation, as Anderson knew on his pulses, comes from two directions. There is the corruption always threatened by the conventional world, represented here neither by the Boy's father nor by the professional gambler, but by those minor characters, some of them Beckersville citizens, all of them, incidentally, white, who follow the thoroughbreds but cannot intuit their inner natures and who view the racetrack as a milieu licensing the satisfaction of their lusts, for money or for sex, in no matter how squalid a fashion. One such person, to take a real-life example, might be Dave Bohon, businessman son of Banker Bohon of Harrodsburg, whose visits to Chicago required of Anderson and other Critchfield employees that they pander their brains for his advertising needs while Dave alternated an evening at the Chicago Symphony with sordid debauches of drink and women. More terrible even than the corruption from the outer world, however, is that which threatens degradation from within the self. Jerry Tillford shares the moment of communion at the saddling, yet debases it doubly—not so much through sex as through ugly sex, and not by ugly sex alone but specifically through speaking slander. He uses words to defame Sunstreak, the ultimate source of the shared moment; he uses words to lie with—as indeed Anderson with self-loathing felt himself doing daily in his advertising work and thereby defiling the material with which he should be building his art. Instead, words should be used as the Boy uses them, to tell truths

no matter how bitter the truth or how embittering the telling of it—as indeed Anderson used words in this story. The personal meaning of “I Want to Know Why,” then, is that it affirms the value of intuition and communion, which Anderson saw as the very ground and function of both art and life, but it simultaneously acknowledges the almost overwhelming destructive forces arrayed against them. The extreme unhappiness of the Boy is a measure of how, “more than ever before,” as Anderson wrote his friend Marietta Finley, he felt and understood in that August of 1919 “the reality of pain.”

As conclusion I suggest three aspects of what I called the future of this and other Anderson tales, their effect, that is, on later American writers. In the case of “I Want to Know Why” there is first the *voice* of the Boy narrator—a voice using common speech to convey intensity of feeling and, like *Huck Finn*, directing American fiction away from 19th-Century formal style. There is second the underlying *theme*—the pitting of the self by a sensitive person, and author, *against* encroaching ugliness and *for* some kind of intuitive human communion, a theme echoed in the education of Nick Adams and the repudiation of the McCaslin land by Uncle Ike, in such more recent works as Saul Bellow’s *Seize the Day* and Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*, and in surely hundreds of fictions to be published from 1984 onwards, if we have an onwards. There is third the *form*—the way the Boy’s long delaying digressions at the beginning of “I Want to Know Why” reveal an author creating a structure to carry meaning rather than imposing on his fiction some currently favored formula. *Voice, theme, form*—Anderson’s new way of using them in 1919 was his bequest to American writers then, now, and to come.

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MANY MARRIAGES AS A POSTMODERN NOVEL

DAVID STOUCK

In *The Torrents of Spring* (1926) Hemingway parodied what he considered to be the bizarre stylistic mannerisms and thematic weaknesses of Sherwood Anderson’s fiction, as manifested particularly in *Many Marriages* (1923) and the commercially successful *Dark Laughter* (1925). *The Torrents of Spring* mocks the cult of primitivism that Anderson espoused from reading D. H. Lawrence and deliberately lacks the economy and emotional restraint that Hemingway strove for in his own work.¹ However, though Hemingway wrote his book to dispel the anxiety of influence he felt in relation to his literary mentor, he in fact highlighted aspects of Anderson’s work which have become highly valued features of the contemporary postmodern novel: unreal, far fetched scenes, farcical comedy, ludicrous symbolism, myriad author’s notes discussing the progress of the book with the reader.

Hemingway opens his novel with Scripps O’Neill, a writer hard up for plots, who in turn introduces us to a series of scenes and characters which constitute a satire on the liberal life style of the 1920s and particularly Anderson’s vision of the arts transforming the lives of all men and women. For example, there is a scene in a beanery in which a laborer and two waitresses discuss the fiction of Henry James; another in which the protagonist, Yogi Johnson, is expelled from an exclusive native Indian literary club. Johnson is seen near the close of the book walking north in the snow with an Indian woman; both of them are naked. Hemingway suggests the strained, comic absurdity of Anderson’s symbolism by a bird that Scripps carries everywhere under his jacket. But what Hemingway seems to have considered most gauche in

Anderson's writings are those pauses in the narrative where he addresses the reader directly, those invitations for reader participation which have become a convention of much modern fiction. Hemingway breaks the narrative in *The Torrents of Spring* to wonder who the printer of the book will be, promises the reader to move faster in the next chapter, apologizes for moving backward in time. At another point he invites the reader to send him things he or she has written, says he has just been interrupted by F. Scott Fitzgerald, and confesses he does not know where the story is going. One wonders what Hemingway would have thought of Barth's *The Floating Opera* with its rambling, apologetic narrator, or Barthelme's *Snow White* with its questionnaire for the reader to fill out half way through the book! Hemingway's novel is exaggerated but it does point to an impulse in Anderson's writing toward experimental form, lyricism, and fantasy which constituted a sharp break from the dominant mode of realism in the American novel. It was this impulse which led Anderson to writing several works of fiction which have been traditionally viewed as incoherent failures, fumbling experiments at best.

Anderson's "failures" are rooted in his dissatisfaction with realism, the idea of the story or novel as an accurate representation of life. The letters exchanged between Sherwood Anderson and Gertrude Stein focus on their mutual concern for the priority of form over content and for fiction (or art) as separate from life. In one of the first letters Stein wrote to Anderson she says that most realistic American fiction is like translated Zola (elsewhere she calls it an attempt to photograph life), but that his writing in *The Triumph of the Egg* has "style conception."² By this she seems to mean that Anderson exhibits in his work an interest in words and sentences for themselves. In his "Preface" to Stein's *Geography and Plays* (1922) Anderson asserts that in fact she made him intimately aware of individual words, their shape, texture and sound.³ And in *A Story Teller's Story* he explains that Stein made him aware of words separated from sense, like colors a painter uses.⁴ These ideas are explained in more detail by Anderson in his defence of Stein published in the *American Spectator* in 1934. There he dissociates art from reality, insisting that a work of art exists in its own world:

As I write I am outside the world of reality. Here is a confusion many minds seem unable to get past. The world of art, of any art, is never the real world. The world of the novel, of the story, is not the world of reality. There is a world outside of reality being created. The object is not to be true to the world of reality but to the world outside reality. You want color—word color—that brings vitality into that world . . . Word is laid against word as carefully and always instinctively as any painter would lay one color against another.⁵

Anderson's fullest statement of this artistic credo is found in his 1937 public address titled "The Writer's Conception of Realism," where he calls realistic writing another form of journalism. The true artist, he says, works out of his imagination; he gets hints, suggestions from real life but once a story is begun his characters "no longer live in the world of reality . . . but must live and move within the scope of the story." This story will never be a picture of life but rather a "trip through the world of the [author's] fancy."⁶ What is significant in these excerpts is Anderson's idea that a work of art is its own self-contained world apart from the real world, that it has a form and purpose independent of history and fact. When we consider Anderson's writing we are often aware of a prose style that draws attention to itself through certain elements of abstraction and repetition. Further we experience a fictional world where reality and fantasy often become indistinguishable, where the author creates for his characters extreme situations to dramatize not only the unsatisfactory nature of the real world but as well the promise of release and fulfillment in a world ordered according to the imagination.⁷

Anderson's imaginative vision, his techniques, and stylistic mannerisms anticipate the work of a number of contemporary mainstream writers of fiction. I refer particularly to that group of non-realist fiction writers loosely classed as postmodern: Barth, Barthelme, Coover, Vonnegut, Pynchon. The premise behind their work is that reality (that set of assumptions about life that we negotiate communally on a day to day basis) is so unsatisfactory or so absurd that conventional mimesis is no longer adequate to convey the essence of that world. Their deepest certainty is that life itself is a fiction, a wholly contingent arrangement, so that

paradoxically the only realistic narrative is one which continually draws the reader's attention to the fact that everything is fictional. Hence the philosophical legitimacy of merging the living and the dead in Vonnegut's work, the pervading entropy in Pynchon, the idea of imminent apocalypse in a book like Barth's *Giles Goat-boy*. The preoccupation of these writers with new forms to confirm the fictional nature of reality is a logical extension of Stein's and Anderson's concern that a work of art create its own world with its own laws and purpose.

An Anderson novel which gains immensely from being read in the light of contemporary fiction is *Many Marriages*, the story of John Webster who makes such elaborate preparations to leave his wife and daughter and start a new life with his stenographer. In a "Foreword" Anderson addresses the reader, putting him in the position of the novel's protagonist about to depart and he asks whether the reader is himself sane or insane. The question of reality and sanity hangs over the whole narrative, most of which takes place during the night and early morning of John Webster's departure. Webster, in fact, is attempting to realize his deepest fantasy and enter a world where everything connects, where people live within each other's bodies, and where love will some day sweep like a great fire over the whole city in which he lives.

The book is conceived not so much as a novel as a fable about the deadliness of American material life. The opening line, "There was a man named Webster lived in a town . . ." carries a formal echo of "Once upon a time," which is compounded in the second sentence when we are told he had "a wife named Mary and a daughter named Jane." The fabulous mode evoked in these opening lines is sustained throughout the book by its expressionist techniques, particularly the use of extensive monologues and the poetic rendering of scenes without specific detail or causality. As Malcolm Bradbury suggests, Anderson's achievement in *Many Marriages* is comparable to poetic avant garde works like E. E. Cummings's *The Enormous Room* (1922) or William Carlos Williams's *The Great American Novel* (1923).⁸

Anderson's attempt to find new forms for art was an attempt to find new forms for existence. This is conveyed in *Many Marriages* through a merging of the real and the fantastic in the pro-

tagonist's mind. His estimate of the conformist, puritanical business world in which he lives with his family is conveyed in his fantasy of Death as a great general assembling an army of men and women who unwittingly go about their business thinking they are still alive. He sees his neighbours and business associates as among the living dead. Trying to come closer to his fellow men, he imagines being able to enter other people's houses at night and to walk intimately among the sleepers, like the narrator of Whitman's poem. But most of his fantasies are concerned with an apocalypse of desire which will transform human relations. He pictures new cities where men and women will approach each other wholly through the wisdom of their bodies:

"She comes toward you and her hand, that holds before her slender young body a golden tray, trembles a little. On the tray there is a box, small and cunningly wrought, and within it is a jewel, a talisman, that is for you. You are to take the jewel, set in a golden ring, out of the box and put it on your finger. It is nothing. The strange and beautiful woman has but brought it to you as a sign, before all the others, that she lays herself at your feet."⁹

Such people transformed from the living dead will also develop many new physical senses and Webster imagines a golden mantle of smells (the smell of wood violets, pine trees, strong animal smells, and maidens' hair) covering the earth. In his relationship with his secretary, Webster attempts to realize his deepest desires in this same stylized, sensual manner. There is no realistic exchange of dialogue between the two lovers; they move toward each other atavistically, the woman bathing, Webster putting his head in her lap.

The longest section of this essentially plotless novel concerns the realization of Webster's most urgent fantasy—his parting from his wife and daughter. On the night he leaves his family Webster lights two candles in his bedroom on either side of a picture of the Virgin Mary and, for a time wearing no clothes, he explains to the two women in a long monologue why he must leave. The ritualized, fantastic nature of this long sequence (it occupies more than half of the book) is extended by numerous flashbacks within Webster's mind; he recalls particularly how he and his wife met

for the first time, both in the nude. This long sequence is also enhanced by the shift in Webster's physical position from lying on the floor at his daughter's feet, like an embryo, to standing upright—a drama of physical rebirth. This is the novel's main action, the candlelit bedroom its chief setting. We are told that the story takes place in a Wisconsin town but otherwise there is no realistic description (no "solidity of specification" to use James's phrase); nor is there a controlling sequence of cause and effect to explain the characters' actions. They all live in fantasy worlds that are more coherent and urgent than the real one.

Postmodern fiction invariably directs the reader to the activity of the artist, so that part of the story is the achieving of form. In Barth's "Lost in the Funhouse," for example, the activity of the author telling the story is a central action and contains the largest meanings of the fiction. In *Many Marriages* Anderson underscores the fantastic and fictional quality of his narrative by addressing the reader directly, breaking any illusion of realistic representation. He is frequently concerned that at certain points we pause to grasp the deeper significance of the character's struggle and he anxiously interjects with "you see," "as I have said," and "you will remember." The presence of the story teller becomes more pronounced when he creates hypothetical gestures for the protagonist: "There he was . . . in his room, let us say, fixing his tie pin in his necktie."¹⁰ This is followed by a sequence wherein the narrator steps in and suggests different possible interpretations of John Webster—that he has become insane (we are reminded of the proposition to the reader in the "Foreword"), that the world he lives in makes no sense, or that he is simply a middle aged man enamoured of his secretary and that his defection is not forgivable. As readers we are directly invited to participate in the assessment of John Webster and his actions.

When Anderson's prose style reminds us of Gertrude Stein's (usually through patterning of phrases and repetition of words) two things happen: we are made aware first of the limited accessibility to meaning in the prose, and secondly we are reminded that this is a very stylized, self-reflexive writing where words have something akin to a plastic function. Consider the following passage from *Many Marriages* describing Webster's daughter:

There was pain in the palm of her right hand. Something hurt her and the sense of hurting was refreshing. It brought life back. There was consciousness of self in the realization of bodily pain. One's mind could start back along the road from some dark far place to which it had run crazily off. One's mind could take hold of the thought of the little hurt place in the soft flesh of the palm of the hand. There was something there, something hard and sharp that cut into the flesh of the palm when one's finger pressed down rigid and tense upon it.¹¹

There is a rhythmic repetition of sentence structure and phrasing; the words "something," "pain," "palm," and "hurt" are repeated three times, the latter with a cluster of assonant words—"hand," "hold," "hard." The idea in this paragraph can easily be reduced to one statement—namely, that when the young woman pressed her finger into the palm of her hand, the pain brought her back to her senses. But Anderson through monosyllabic, non-literary words creates the experience itself happening with all its physical immediacy. He is not probing the young woman's psychology but presenting rather her physical experience of pain. Further he is making us aware of language, the sounds of words, their shapes and textures: blunt words like "hurt" and "cut," soft words like "pain," "palm," and "flesh." This paragraph is as much about words and sentences as about meaning—like Barthelme's "collage" short stories.

This essay has not been written to claim *Many Marriages* an unacknowledged classic. David D. Anderson's account of the book still stands: *Many Marriages*, he writes, is not a good book, but not bad enough to be permanently assigned to critical oblivion.¹² That judgment can be extended to other novels by Anderson, for in the light of contemporary fiction we can see more clearly the value and lasting significance of his fictional experiments. Anderson remains a curiously seminal figure; in his experiments with fantasy, expressionist symbolism, and the self-conscious narrative voice he provides an important link between modernism of the first quarter of this century and American writing today.

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NOTES

1. For a detailed study of Hemingway's parody see Delbert E. Wylder, "The *Torrents of Spring*," *South Dakota Review* 5 (Winter 1967-68), pp. 23-35.
2. See Ray Lewis White, ed., *Sherwood Anderson / Gertrude Stein: Correspondence and Personal Essays* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), p. 12.
3. *Ibid.* p. 16.
4. Sherwood Anderson, *A Story-Teller's Story: A Critical Text*, ed. Ray Lewis White (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1968), p. 263.
5. "Gertrude Stein," *American Spectator* 2 (April 1934) reprinted by Ray Lewis White, ed., *Sherwood Anderson / Gertrude Stein, op. cit.*, p. 82.
6. "The Writer's Conception of Realism," in *The Sherwood Anderson Reader*, ed. by Paul Rosenfeld (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), pp. 344-46.
7. Walter B. Rideout in his "Introduction" to *Sherwood Anderson: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974), p. 4, suggests that Anderson's strong attractions to fantasy resulted from his belief "that what his characters and people in general imagine about themselves constitutes part of their 'reality'."
8. Malcolm Bradbury, *The Modern American Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 50-51. This book contains an important evaluation of Anderson's contribution to American fiction; see pp. 46-51.
9. Sherwood Anderson, *Many Marriages* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1923), pp. 126-27.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 234.
12. David D. Anderson, *Sherwood Anderson: An Introduction and Interpretation* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), p. 68.

THE REVISIONS IN WINDY McPHERSON'S SON,
SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S FIRST NOVEL

RAY LEWIS WHITE

When Sherwood Anderson in 1913, at thirty-six, gladly left the respectable small-town-Ohio business world for the excitement of the Chicago literary renaissance, he carried along several novels in manuscript or typescript that he had labored over while his family and his firm slowly collapsed. A self-taught would-be author of fiction, Anderson in Chicago continued to toil over his novels, occasionally reading to friends from them or enlisting well-connected associates to have the novels published. Encouraged by Theodore Dreiser and H. L. Mencken and directly aided by Floyd Dell, Anderson eventually found a publisher in the British company of John Lane, which in September, 1916, published *Windy McPherson's Son*, Anderson's first novel, from the New York office.

The first readers of *Windy McPherson's Son* were promised by the dust-wrapper "an American novel" about "sacrificing the individual to the race": "The hero of the story, who begins life as a newspaper boy in a small town of the Middle West, has within him the makings of a great financier. In order to accomplish his ambitions he rides roughshod over the hearts of those who love him. His wife is one of the victims of his greed. Success begins to pall upon him after a time; then he sets out to seek Truth and the quest brings him round in circuitous ways to where he had discarded Love. Then only does he realize the true meaning of Success." Success for Anderson's protagonist meant producing numerous beautiful and healthy children.

Reviewers of *Windy McPherson's Son* in 1916 found the novel generally exciting, epical, thoughtful, and realistic; but almost no reviewer liked Anderson's conclusion to the quest of Sam McPherson for Truth after Success *via* Love. Having left his hopelessly childless marriage for several years of laboring, agitating, drinking, and fighting, the millionaire Sam McPherson relieves a St. Louis woman of her three children and brings them to his wife, ready to find happiness with her in borrowed fecundity. This conclusion to Anderson's novel struck reviewers as "the most unconvincing incident of all";¹ "the one episode that is *made* and *insincere*";² and "an ending according to the dictates of tawdry contemporary fiction."³ One reviewer predicted for Sherwood Anderson: "Some day his decided natural gifts will ripen; he will not only see things in their proportion, he will be able to draw them according to scale; and he will read many pages of this work with a smile."⁴

Whether Anderson ever smiled at re-reading *Windy McPherson's Son* is uncertain, but the author did seize the earliest opportunity to revise this novel for re-publication. After issuing *Marching Men* (1917) and *Mid-American Chants* (1918) with the John Lane Company, Anderson changed his publisher to B. W. Huebsch, Inc., who published *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), *Poor White* (1920), and *The Triumph of the Egg* (1921). The success of these three books encouraged Huebsch to accede to Anderson's wish that he buy from Lane rights to three early Anderson volumes. Of the three works only *Windy McPherson's Son* was by 1921 out-of-print and hence re-published under the Huebsch name, enabling Anderson in mid-1921 to revise those last pages of his first novel that had so displeased the reviewers of 1916... and the author himself.

Anderson worked over the revised conclusion to *Windy McPherson's Son* in May and June of 1921; and on 22 November of that year Huebsch, sending Anderson a complete set of page proofs of the new edition, expressed his pleasure with the revised last chapter that Anderson had submitted: "Your new last chapter is excellent, I think. No more interesting comparison can be made than that between the original concluding chapter and the present one, which, in a way, is a sort of fulfillment." Despite

Huebsch's statement that these proofs were "merely to show you that progress is being made on the corrections of *Windy McPherson's Son*," Anderson warned his publisher that further corrections to the proofs would be forthcoming, to which news Huebsch on 28 November 1921 replied: "You say that you are going to send corrections for *Windy*, but I did not send you the proof for that purpose because we are already going ahead with the reprint according to the proof, in which, by the way, there are a few small typographical errors which we detected, but did not note on the proof that you had. If there is anything terribly important, wire me at once to stop work." Frustrated by his inability further to revise *Windy McPherson's Son* in proof, Anderson let the novel stand for re-publication in February, 1922, when Huebsch's dust-wrapper for the new edition proclaimed: "Revised, with a new last chapter—the novel that made Sherwood Anderson famous. . . Some admirers of his work still think that this is Anderson's best book."

Bibliographers have always known of Anderson's revised edition of *Windy McPherson's Son* with a new last chapter, but apparently no one has before questioned whether the two editions might differ in more than the last few pages. To determine whether the seemingly unaltered first 334 pages of the two editions are actually identical, I have collated the 1916 and the 1922 versions of Anderson's novel on the Hinman machine and have found a surprising number of variants—enough variants to raise the question of attribution.

First, collation reveals that three brief passages of the text were re-set without emendation: 73.9-12, 192.29-31, and 327.17-19. I have no explanation for these three instances of re-setting. Second, collation reveals thirty-nine further occasions when the text was re-set for revision. Here, in full-sentence form and simple notation, are these newly discovered revisions in the first 334 pages of *Windy McPherson's Son*.

- 15.18 "[—There is [+There's] the seven forty-five," cried Telfer sharply.
- 16.28-29 "[—I will [+I'll] be even with you for this."
- 19.25-29 There was now and then a rebellious muttering that should have warned Windy [—, and that [+ It] had

- once burst into an open quarrel in which the victor of a hundred battles withdrew from the field.
- 34.20-24 To the boy, who had become a fourth member of the evening gatherings at the back of the grocery store [+,] they would not talk of God, answering the direct questions he sometimes asked by changing the subject. “[—I have [+I've] got my lesson. [—I have [+I've] got my lesson,” he muttered over and over as he went.
- 35.5-6 [—He imagined, with delight [+With delight he imagined] himself as dying and with his last breath tossing a round oath into the air of his death chamber.
- 40.26-29 He looked shyly at the ankles of women crossing the street, and listened eagerly when the crowd about the stove in Wildman's fell to telling [—risque [+smutty] stories.
- 41.5-7 [—“] Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like some Nicean bark of yore. [— ”]
- 62.11-12 Go sit around the lounging room of the most vapid [—city rich man's [rich man's city] club as I have done, and then sit among the workers of a factory at the noon hour.
- 78.29-31 The mind that has in it the love of the beautiful [+,] that stuff that makes our poets, artists, musicians, and actors, needs this turn for shrewd money getting or it will destroy itself,” he declared.
- 79.4-7 Instead she has been watching me as the old man watches his thermometer and [—Windy [+Father] has been the dog in her house chasing playthings.”
- 85.36-
86.2 No more did he walk with Telfer or Mary Underwood on country roads but [—he] sat, instead, by the bedside of the sick woman or, the night falling fair, helped her to an arm chair upon the grass plot at the front of the house.
- 86.13-17 [—Sam, sitting [+Sitting] before the fire in Mary Underwood's house, become, for the moment, a boy, facing a boy's problems, [+Sam] did not want to be such a man.
- 100.6-8 The girl, ashamed at having been caught in the pose, and furious because of the attack upon the authenticity

- of the portrait, had gone into a spasm of indignation, putting her hands to her ears and stamping [—upon [+on] the floor with her foot.
- 102.32-35 Mary Underwood ran through the rain to John Telfer's house and beat [—upon [+on] the door with her fist until Telfer, followed by Eleanor, holding a lamp above her head, appeared at the door.
- 108.15-21 One night when he had been late [—upon [+on] the road, loitering by fences, hearing the lonely barking of dogs at distant farmhouses, getting the smell of the new-ploughed ground into his nostrils, he came into town and sat down on a low iron fence that ran along by the platform of the railroad station, to wait for the midnight train north.
- 108.24-25 A man, with two bags in his hands, came [—upon [+on] the station platform followed by two women.
- 110.25-27 He went to his own house and, leaning [—upon [+on] the gate, stood looking at it and swearing meaninglessly.
- 113.15-20 The moon coming up, threw its light [—upon [+on] the fields that lay beside the road and brought out their early spring nakedness and he thought them dreary and hideous, like the faces of the women that had been marching through his mind.
- 116.4-5 The woman [—,] and the tall boy [+,] suddenly became a man, stood in thought.
- 118.19-20 [—Windy [+John] McPherson knows this is true, if he can be made to tell the truth.
- 119.12-14 In the store he heard news of Windy, who was laying close siege to the farmer's widow [—that] he later married [+,] and [+who] seldom appeared in Caxton.
- 120.11-15 Freedom sat in the wide old phaeton in the road before Valmore's shop as the blacksmith walked around the grey mare [+,] lifting her feet and looking at the shoes.
- 124.24-28 On Sunday afternoons they went to walk in the streets, or, taking two girl friends of Frank's who were also students at the medical school, [—upon [+on] their

- arms, they went to the park and sat upon benches under the trees.
- 126.32-36 Great masses of water moving swiftly and silently broke with a roar against wooden piles, backed by hills of stone and earth, and the spray from the broken waves fell upon Sam's face and [—upon [+on] his coat.
- 130.32-34 Prince [—rose [+arose]. "It is useless to waste time in persiflage," he began and then turning to Sam, "[—There [+there] is a place in Wisconsin," he said uncertainly.
- 131.30-33 From the bonfire in the woods and Sam's recital from the stump [+,] the three friends emerged again upon the road, and a belated farmer driving home half asleep [—upon [+on] the seat of his wagon caught their attention.
- 131.23-
132.1 "Lead us, [—oh [+O] man of the soil" he shouted, "Lead us to a gilded palace of sin!
- 133.6-13 Blue-shirted broad-shouldered teamsters from the tops of high piled wagons [—,] bawled at scurrying pedestrians. [—Upon [+On] the sidewalks in boxes, bags, and barrels, lay oranges from Florida and California, figs from Arabia, bananas from Jamaica, nuts from the hills of Spain and the plains of Africa, cabbages from Ohio, beans from Michigan, corn and potatoes from Iowa.
- 135.21-22 Broad-Shoulders had been a famous football player in his day and wore an iron brace [—upon [+on] his leg.
- 136.27-33 Broad-Shoulders, who had no business ability but who had married a rich woman, went on month after month taking half the profits brought in by the ability of his tall shrewd brother, and Narrow-Face, who had taken a liking [—to [+for] Sam and who occasionally stopped for a word with him, spoke of the matter often and eloquently.
- 161.18-20 With a smile [—upon [+on] his lips, Sam began trying to picture a woman's lying in his place and looking at the moon over the pulsating hill.
- 195.35-36 On the river he [—sunk [+sank] his paddle deep into the water, pulling against the current.

- 198.25-31 She, the daughter of Colonel Tom, the woman rich in her own right, to have [—come from there and make [+made] her friends among these people; she, who had been pronounced an enigma by the younger men of Chicago, to have been secretly all of these years the companion and fellow spirit of these campers by the lakes.
- 221.16-22 The stirring, forward-moving world called to him; he looked about him at the broad, significant movements in business and finance, at the new men coming into prominence and [+apparently] finding a way for the expression of new big ideas, and felt his youth stirring in him and his mind reaching out to new projects and new ambitions.
- 232.17-27 For two years he was out of the house at dawn for a long bracing walk in the fresh morning air, to be followed by eight, ten and even fifteen hours in the office and shops; hours in which he drove the Rainey Arms Company's organisation mercilessly and, taking openly every vestige of the management out of the hands of Colonel Tom, began the plans for the consolidation of [—The [+the] American firearms companies that later put his name on the front pages of the newspapers and got him the title of a Captain of Finance.
- 243.19-20 Do you [—not] suppose I do not know that?
- 248.20-22 Given the time, the inclination, the [—fear [+power] of the press, and the unscrupulousness, the thing that Sam McPherson and his followers did in Chicago is not difficult.
- 279.19-24 He had not wanted the free city for a free people, but [—for [+as] a work to be done by his own hand. He was McPherson, the money maker, the man who loved himself. [—That [+The] fact, not the sight of Jake hobnobbing with Bill or the timidity of the socialist, had blocked his way to work as a political reformer and builder.

In the absence of production materials for the 1922 edition of *Windy McPherson's Son* and with only the two texts for compari-

son, one must speculate on the authority for these thirty-nine re-settings in the pages from 1916. It is possible that Sherwood Anderson submitted to B. W. Huebsch more than a revised conclusion to his novel—that in fact he mailed either a list of other revisions or even marked-up pages showing revisions. Yet, given the author's thwarted ambition to revise in the late-1921 proof, it is unlikely that Anderson had earlier revised within the first 334 pages, having concentrated instead on changing that wearisome ending. On the other hand, Ben Huebsch, who was re-publishing *Windy McPherson's Son* more as a favor to Anderson than with the prospect of great sales, probably would not have sought more than an easy reproduction of the first 334 pages—not an extensive and expensive re-setting of type within these pages. Who, therefore, made the thirty-nine emendations?

Given the nature of the changes involved and their locations within the pages of *Windy McPherson's Son*, it is likely that Huebsch assigned some member of his staff to read through either the 1916 novel or the 1921 proofs to correct any egregious errors. Without changing the multitude of British spellings in the John Lane edition, this reader seems to have begun a personal tidying-up of Anderson's punctuation and diction. Four contractions were forged, six commas were changed, three phrases suffered transposition, two sentences were combined, one sentence was divided, one grammatical error was amended, *upon* was made into *on* twelve times, and ten reformations in word-choice were accomplished. All of these emendations come about on pages 15 through 279; no emendations occur on pages 280 through 334. Probably Ben Huebsch or a senior editor, learning of the minor nature and major number of the ambitious reader's (or readers') revisions, halted the procedure before expenses for changing the 1916 pages became exorbitant, thus accounting for the fifty-four pages completely unchanged in the 1922 edition.⁶

When contemplating the re-issuing of his first novel, Sherwood Anderson drafted but did not finish a letter to Ben Huebsch about his intentions in regard to revising the work: "The crudities of the book, the occasionally terrible sentences, the minor faults I am willing to let stand. They are the faults of a badly educated man struggling to tell a story to his own people in his own way." Anderson had come to understand the mistake he had made in the

ending of *Windy McPherson's Son*: "At the time the book was written, circumstances and false conception of what is due the reader of a novel led me into something like trickery in writing. . . . I am afraid I had come to novel writing through novel reading. I could not leave Sam in my reader's hands having achieved nothing but money and weariness." Planning a new conclusion, Anderson continued: "I want to take those three children back to their mother in St. Louis and to leave Sam facing what he and every American must face. . . ."⁶ Because the actual ending of the revised *Windy McPherson's Son* does not at all follow this early plan of Anderson as described to his publisher, it is certain that the author again found himself unable to end the novel with the required note of mature disillusionment and futility. Anderson presumably wrote such an improved ending but discarded it in exchange for the only extant revision, the published version.

Study of the two conclusions to *Windy McPherson's Son* requires that the reader be able easily to determine which passages Anderson excised from the first edition, which passages he added for the second edition, which passages he retained unrevised from 1916, and which passages he re-wrote for the 1922 edition. The following presentation of the complete texts facilitates such study. Beginning at 335.27, the 1916 text appears in regular type; the 1922 text appears in oblique type. Re-written passages appear in parallel format.

Sam had been standing against the wall by the door, his hat in his hand, looking at the three children sitting under the light. An odd feeling had hold of him. He felt as one might have felt who, after a long journey, comes again to the gate before his own house. Once when he worked for Joe in the threshing crew he had walked into a village on a Sunday evening and had been attracted by the sound of music coming from a house that stood back from the village street amid thick trees. He had gone into the yard and stood near the house to lean against a tree, and had seen a young girl dressed all in white standing by a piano and singing. Her clear young voice had brought tears to his eyes. She sang of love and of spring, and a number of children sat in chairs about the room listening. Now on this night in St. Louis, the scene in the village came back to his mind and he felt as he might have felt on that night had the young girl thrown open the window and invited him into the house to sit among the children.

Sam walked the woman across the room and up the stairs. She leaned heavily on his arm, laughing, and looking up into his face.

At the top of the stairway Sam stopped.

"We go in here," she said, pointing to a door.

He took her into the room. "You get to sleep," he said, and going out closed the door, leaving her sitting heavily on the edge of the bed.

Downstairs he found the two boys among the dishes in a tiny kitchen off the dining-room. The little girl still slept uneasily in the chair by the table, the hot lamp-light streaming down on her thin cheeks.

Sam stood in the kitchen door looking at the two boys, who looked back at him self-consciously.

"Which of you two puts Mary to bed?" he asked, and then, without waiting for an answer, turned to the taller of the two boys. "Let Tom do it," he said. "I will help you here."

Joe and Sam stood in the kitchen at work with the dishes; the boy, going busily about, showed the man where to put the clean dishes, and got him dry wiping towels. Sam's coat was off and his sleeves rolled to his elbows.

"What book was that you were reading to Tom?" he asked.

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Joe and Sam stood in the kitchen at work with the dishes; the boy, going busily about, showed the man where to put the clean dishes, and got him dry wiping towels. Sam's coat was off and his sleeves rolled up.

"About a walrus hunt," replied the boy, and then added hopefully, "Did you ever hunt walrus?"

Sam shook his head.

"No, but I have hunted lions and tigers and wild elephants, and when Tom comes back I will tell you about it if you want me to."

Joe danced up and down on the kitchen floor and running into the living-room shouted up the stairway to Tom.

"Hurry, Tom," he called excitedly, "we are going to hear about a lion hunt."

When the work was done the man and the two boys sat on the porch before the house looking down the face of the bluff at the grey line of the river, and Sam told of a hunt for a man-eating tiger in the jungles of India. At the crisis of the story the two boys grasped his arm and breathed with quick, short gasps. And then Sam walked with them to the foot of the stairs.

"Will you be here to-morrow?" asked Joe.

"I will be with you for keeps," said Sam and shook their hands, the boys putting out their hands awkwardly, hanging their heads and smiling.

The work went on in half awkward silence and a storm went on within Sam's breast. When the boy Joe looked shyly up at him it was as though the lash of a whip had cut down across flesh, suddenly grown tender. Old memories began to stir within him and he remembered his own childhood, his mother at work among other people's soiled clothes, his father Windy coming home drunk, and the chill in his mother's heart and in his own. There was something men and women owed to childhood, not because it was childhood but because it was new life springing up. Aside from any question of fatherhood or motherhood there was a debt to be paid.

In the little house on the bluff there was silence. Outside the house there was darkness and darkness lay over Sam's spirit. The boy Joe went quickly about, putting the dishes Sam had wiped on the shelves. Somewhere on the river, far below the house, a steamboat whistled. The backs of the hands of the boy were covered with freckles. How quick and competent the hands were. Here was new life, as yet clean, unsoiled, unshaken by life. Sam was shamed by the trembling of his own hands. He had always wanted quickness and firmness within his own body, the health of the body that is a temple for the health of the spirit. He was an American and down deep within himself was the

moral fervor that is American and that had become so strangely perverted in himself and others. As so often happened with him, when he was deeply stirred, an army of vagrant thoughts ran through his head. The thoughts had taken the place of the perpetual scheming and planning of his days as a man of affairs, but as yet all his thinking had brought him to nothing and had only left him more shaken and uncertain than ever.

The dishes were now all wiped and he went out of the kitchen glad to escape the shy silent presence of the boy. "Has life quite gone from me? Am I but a dead thing walking about?" he asked himself. The presence of the children had made him feel that he was himself but a child, a grown tired and shaken child. There was maturity and manhood somewhere abroad. Why could he not come to it? Why could it not come into him?

The boy Tom returned from having put his sister into bed and the two boys said good night to the strange man in their mother's house. Joe, the bolder of the two, stepped forward and offered his hand. Sam shook it solemnly and then the younger boy came forward.

"I'll be around here to-morrow I think," Sam said huskily.

Sam walked up and down the room. Of a sudden it seemed to him that the blood ran more freely through his body. He was restless as though about to start on a journey and half unconsciously began running his hands over his body wishing it strong and hard as when he tramped the road. As on the day when he had walked out of the Chicago Club bound on his hunt for Truth, he let his mind go so that it played freely over his past life, reviewing and analysing.

For hours he sat on the porch or walked up and down in the long room where the lamp still burned brightly. Again the smoke from his pipe tasted good on his

The boys were gone, into the silence of the house, and Sam walked up and down in the little room. He was restless as though about to start on a new journey and half unconsciously began running his hands over his body wishing it strong and hard as when he tramped the road. As on the day when he had walked out of the Chicago Club bound on his hunt for Truth, he let his mind go so that it played freely over his past life, reviewing and analysing.

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tongue and all the night air had a sweetness that brought back to him the walk beside the bridle path in Jackson Park when Sue had given him herself, and with herself a new impulse in life.

It was two o'clock when he lay down upon a couch in the living-room and blew out the light. He did not undress, but threw his shoes upon the floor and lay looking at a wide path of moonlight that came through the open door. In the darkness it seemed that his mind worked more rapidly and that the events and motives of his restless years went streaming past like living things upon the floor.

Suddenly he sat up and listened. The voice of one of the boys, heavy with sleep, ran through the upper part of the house.

"Mother! O Mother!" called the sleepy voice, and Sam thought he could hear the little body moving restlessly in bed.

Silence followed. He sat upon the edge of the couch, waiting. It seemed to him that he was coming to something; that his brain that had for hours been working more and more rapidly was about to produce the thing for which he waited. He felt as he had felt that night as he waited in the corridor of the hospital.

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And then it came. Running in his stocking feet out through the door he laughed and beat with his hands upon the railing beside the steps. His voice rang along the little street. "Of course! Of course!" he cried joyfully. "Why didn't I think? Why didn't Sue think? They all cry out to us. Man wants children—not his own children—any children.

Through the rest of the night he sat on the porch or walked up and down in the little street. He could not go indoors. He was supremely and overwhelmingly happy.

"You fool! Of course! Of course!" he kept saying, slapping his knees and laughing. "Won't Sue jump? Won't she take hold?"

He looked at his round figure and held his fat hands before his eyes.

"It will go now," he said, waving his hand toward the distant city, "all of that and this!" He slapped his paunch. "I shall find work to drive you away."

Once during the night he began thinking of the black-haired woman upstairs asleep and of the plumber who had shed tears and run away, and for a moment he shook his head in doubt.

"Bad blood," he muttered, and then laughed so that his voice again rang through the night. "This from you. This from the son of Windy McPherson."

In the morning the three children came down the stairs and finished dressing in the long room, the little girl coming last, carrying her shoes and stockings and rubbing her eyes with the back of her hand. Sam sat in a chair holding her on his lap and buttoning her dress as he talked to the three of their work in school. A cool morning wind blew up from the river and through the open screened doors as he and Joe cooked breakfast, and later as the four of them sat at the table Sam tried to talk but did not make much progress. His tongue was heavy and the children seemed looking at him with strange questioning eyes. "Why are you here?" their eyes asked.

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For a week Sam stayed in the city, coming daily to the house of the children. With them he talked as he had not talked for years, giving himself to them. He was testing himself, waiting. He thought that not again should he find himself on a false trail and compelled to turn back with that old hunger in his heart.

For a week Sam stayed in the city, coming daily to the house. With the children he talked a little, and in the evening, when the mother had gone away, the little girl came to him. He carried her to a chair on the porch outside and while the boys sat reading under the lamp inside she went to sleep in his arms. Her body was warm and the breath came softly and sweetly from between her lips. Sam looked down the bluffside and saw the country and the river far below, sweet in the moonlight. Tears came into his eyes. Was a new sweet purpose growing within him or were the tears but evidence of self pity. He wondered.

One night the black-haired woman again came home far gone in drink, and again Sam led her up the stairs to see her fall muttering and babbling upon the bed. Her companion, a little flashily dressed man with a beard, had run off at the sight of Sam standing in the living-room under the lamp. The two boys, to whom he had been reading, said nothing, looking self-consciously at the book upon the table and occasionally out of the corner of their eyes at their new friend. In a few minutes they too went up the stairs, and as on that first night, they put out their hands awkwardly.

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Through the night Sam again sat in the darkness outside or lay wide awake upon the couch. He was building now and did not grow excited, but smoked his pipe and occasionally struck his hands together, laughing softly.

When the children had gone to school the next morning, Sam took a car and went into the city, going first to a bank to have a large draft cashed. Then he spent many busy hours going from store to store and buying clothes, caps, soft underwear, suit cases, dresses, night clothes and books. Last of all he bought a large dressed doll. All of these things he sent to his room at the hotel, leaving a man there to pack the trunks and suit cases, and get them to the station. A large motherly looking woman, an employé of the hotel, who passed through the hall, offered to help with the packing.

After another visit or two Sam got back upon the car and went again to the house. In his pockets he had several thousands of dollars in large bills. He had remembered the power of cash in deals he had made in the past.

"I shall see what it will do here," he thought.

In the house Sam found the black-haired woman lying on a couch in the living-room. As he

Through the night Sam again sat in the darkness outside or lay awake on the couch. "I will make a new try, adopt a new purpose in life now," he said to himself.

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In the house Sam found the black-haired woman lying on a couch in the living-room. As he

came in at the door she arose unsteadily and looked at him.

"There's a bottle in the cupboard in the kitchen," she said. "Get me a drink. Why do you hang about here?"

Sam brought the bottle and poured her a drink, pretending to drink with her by putting the bottle to his lips and throwing back his head.

"What was your husband like?" he asked.

"Who? Jack?" she said. "Oh, he was all right. He was stuck on me. He stood for anything until I brought men home here. Then he got crazy and went away."

She looked at Sam and laughed.

"I didn't care much for him," she added. "He couldn't make money enough for a live woman."

Sam began talking of the saloon she intended buying.

"The children will be a bother, eh?" he said.

"I have an offer for the house," she said. "I wish I didn't have the kids. They are a nuisance."

"I have been figuring that out," Sam told her. "I know a woman in the east who would take them and raise them. She is wild about kids. I should like to do something to help you. I might take them to her."

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"In the name of Heaven, man, lead them away," she laughed, and took another drink from the bottle.

Sam drew from his pocket a paper he had secured from a downtown attorney.

"Get a neighbour in here to witness this," he said. "The woman will want things regular. It releases you from all responsibility for the kids and puts it on her."

She looked at him suspiciously. "What's the graft? Who gets stuck for the fares down east?

Sam laughed and going to the back door shouted to a man who sat under a tree back of the next house smoking a pipe.

"Sign here," he said, putting the paper before her. "Here is your neighbour to sign as witness. You do not get stuck for a cent."

When she had signed and had taken another drink from the bottle she lay down again upon the couch.

"If any one wakes me up for the next six hours they will get killed," she declared.

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"Sign here," he said, putting the paper before her. "Here is your neighbour to sign as witness. You do not get stuck for a cent."

The woman, half drunk, signed the paper, after a long doubtful look at Sam, and when she had signed and had taken another drink from the bottle lay down again on the couch.

"If any one wakes me up for the next six hours they will get killed," she declared. It was evident she knew little of what she had done, but at the moment Sam did not care. He was again a bargainer, ready to take an advantage. Vaguely he felt that

he might be bargaining for an end in life, for purpose to come into his own life.

Sam went quietly down the stone steps and along the little street at the brow of the hill to the car tracks, and at noon was waiting in an automobile outside the door of the schoolhouse when the children came out.

He drove across the city to the Union Station, the three children accepting him and all he did without question. At the station they found the man from the hotel with the trunks and with three bright new suit cases. Sam went to the express office and putting several bills into an envelope sealed and sent it to the woman while the three children walked up and down in the train shed carrying the cases, aglow with the pride of them.

At two o'clock Sam, with the little girl in his arms and with one of the boys seated on either side of him, sat in a stateroom of a New York flyer reading aloud the story of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn—bound for Sue.

CHAPTER II

SAM MCPHERSON is a living American. He is a rich man, but his money, that he spent so many years and so much of his energy acquiring, does not mean much to him. What is true of him is true of more wealthy Americans than is commonly believed. Something has happened to him that has happened to the others also, to how many of

the others? Men of courage, with strong bodies and quick brains, men who have come of a strong race, have taken up what they had thought to be the banner of life and carried it forward. Growing weary they have stopped in a road that climbs a long hill and have leaned the banner against a tree. Tight brains have loosened a little. Strong convictions have become weak. Old gods are dying.

"It is only when you are torn from your mooring and drift like a rudderless ship I am able to come near to you."

The banner has been carried forward by a strong daring man filled with determination.

What is inscribed on it?

It would perhaps be dangerous to inquire too closely. We Americans have believed that life must have point and purpose. We have called ourselves Christians but the sweet Christian philosophy of failure has been unknown among us. To say of one of us that he has failed is to take life and courage away. For so long we have had to push blindly forward. Roads had to be cut through our forests, great towns must be built. What in Europe has been slowly building itself out of the fibre of the generations we must build now, in a lifetime.

In our father's day, at night in the forests of Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky and on the wide prairies, wolves howled. There was fear in our fathers and mothers, pushing their way forward, making the new land. When the land was conquered fear remained, the fear of failure. Deep in our American souls the wolves still howl.

There were moments after Sam came back to Sue, bringing the three children, when he thought he had snatched success out of the very jaws of failure.

But the thing from which he had all his life been fleeing was still there. It hid itself in the branches of the trees that lined the New England roads where he went to walk with the two boys. At night it looked down at him from the stars.

Perhaps life wanted acceptance from him but he could not accept. Perhaps his story and his life ended with the home-coming, perhaps it began then.

The home-coming was not in itself a completely happy event. There was a house with a fire at night and the voices of the children. In Sam's breast there was a feeling of something alive, growing.

CHAPTER II

SAM found Sue sitting on the steps of her house among elm trees in the village on the Hudson. He walked up the gravel path to the house, little Mary in his arms, Tom and Joe walking beside him. It was late afternoon and crickets sang in the grass as they had when he had talked closely and intimately to her that evening by the bridle path in Jackson Park. Sue had grown older. Her figure was still trim and slender, but there was a firmness about the lines of her face and a quiet light in her eyes that was new, and her hair was streaked with grey. Sam thought her beautiful, and as she rose to greet him the fear that had been lurking in his heart as he sat in the train with the three children left him. He went to her filled with confidence and happiness, and the two boys, hanging their heads and putting their hands awkwardly into their pockets, followed self-consciously.

"You have come back, Sam," she said, the tears standing in her eyes.

Sam looked at the boys.

"They will want something to eat," he said.

They went into the house, Sue taking the two boys by the hand.

"She will be your mother now," said Sam.

Sue was generous but she was not now the Sue of the bridle path in Jackson Park in Chicago or the Sue who had tried to remake the world by raising fallen women. On his arrival at her house, on a summer night, coming in suddenly and strangely with the three strange children—a little inclined toward tears and homesickness—she was flustered and nervous.

Darkness was coming on when he walked up the gravel path from the gate to the house door with the child Mary in his arms and the two boys, Joe and Tom, walking soberly and solemnly beside him. Sue had just come out at the front door and stood regarding them, startled and a little frightened. Her hair was becoming grey, but as she stood there Sam thought her figure almost boyish in its slenderness.

With quick generosity she threw aside the inclination in herself to ask many questions but there was the suggestion of a taunt in the question she did ask.

"Have you decided to come back to me and is this your home-coming?" she asked, stepping down into the path and looking, not at Sam but at the children.

Along the walls of the room into which they went ran row after row of books, and at one end was a long table covered with books and writing material. An open door looked into a vine-covered porch with tall plants growing in boxes along the sides. A huge black negro woman came in.

"This is Mr. McPherson with our children, Mack," said Sue, looking shyly at Sam. "The boys will be wanting bread and milk for supper."

They went into a low cool dining-room with a glass end looking into a well-ordered garden where an old negro man with a sprinkling can was watering the plots of vegetables. The boys walked awkwardly and uncertainly on the polished floors.

While they and little Mary ate, Sam and Sue stood back of their chairs watching, Sam's arm about Sue's shoulder, tears running down her cheeks.

When the children had finished eating they went with Sue and Mack to the upper end of the house.

"I shall wait for you on the porch," said Sam, "and we will have our talk."

The evening was got through, blunderingly by himself, Sam thought, and very nobly by Sue.

There was the mother hunger still alive in her. He had shrewdly counted on that. It blinded her eyes to other things and then a notion

Sam did not answer at once and little Mary began to cry. That was a help.

"They will all be wanting something to eat and a place to sleep," he said, as though coming back to a wife, long neglected, and bringing with him three strange children were an everyday affair.

Although she was puzzled and afraid, Sue smiled and led the way into the house. Lamps were lighted and the five human beings, so abruptly brought together, stood looking at each other. The two boys clung to each other and little Mary put her arms about Sam's neck and hid her face on his shoulder. He unloosened her clutching hands and put her boldly into Sue's arms. "She will be your mother now," he said defiantly, not looking at Sue.

had come into her head and there seemed the possibility of doing a peculiarly romantic act. Before that notion was destroyed, later in the evening, both Sam and the children had been installed in the house.

A tall strong negress came into the room and Sue gave her instructions regarding food for the children. "They will want bread and milk and beds must be found for them," she said, and then, although her mind was still filled with the romantic notion that they were Sam's children by some other woman, she took her plunge. "This is Mr. McPherson, my husband, and these are our three children," she announced to the puzzled and smiling servant.

They went into a low-ceilinged room whose windows looked into a garden. In the garden an old negro with a sprinkling can was watering flowers. A little light yet remained. Both Sam and Sue were glad there was no more. "Don't bring lamps, a candle will do," Sue said, and she went to stand near the door beside her husband. The three children were on the point of breaking forth into sobs, but the negro woman with a quick intuitive sense of the situation began to chatter, striving to make the children feel at home. She awoke wonder and hope in the breasts of the boys. "There is a barn with horses and cows. To-morrow old Ben will show you everything," she said smiling at them.

A thick grove of elms and tall maples stood just before the house and at the side a little stream ran down over stones toward a small lake, the falling water making a persistent, quiet note in the stillness. In the trees birds stirred about, calling to each other, settling for the night. A little breeze sprang up and shook the branches of the trees. Darkness came on. Two bats circled in the space between the trees and the house, diving and pitching in the uncertain light. Sam filled his pipe and smoked, thinking of the story he had to

A thick grove of elm and maple trees stood between Sue's house and a road that went down a hill into a New England village, and while Sue and the negro woman put the children to bed, Sam went there to wait. In the feeble light the trunks of trees could be dimly seen, but the thick branches overhead made a wall between him and the sky. He went back into the darkness of the grove and then returned toward the open space before the house.

tell Sue. It seemed unbelievable that years had passed while he had been away from her, and he felt like one just returned to his house after a long and eventful day. Even the house seemed in some vague way familiar, as though he had lived in it before. That, he decided, was the influence of Sue.

He was nervous and distraught and two Sam McPhersons seemed struggling for possession of his person.

There was the man he had been taught by the life about him to bring always to the surface, the shrewd capable man who got his own way, trampled people underfoot, went plunging forward, always he hoped forward, the man of achievement.

And then there was another personality, a quite different being altogether, buried away within him, long neglected, often forgotten, a timid, shy, destructive Sam who had never really breathed or lived or walked before men.

What of him? The life Sam had led had not taken the shy destructive thing within into account. Still it was powerful. Had it not torn him out of his place in life, made of him a homeless wanderer? How many times it had tried to speak its own word, take entire possession of him.

It was trying again now, and again and from old habit Sam fought against it, thrusting it back into the dark inner caves of himself, back into darkness.

He kept whispering to himself. Perhaps now the test of his life had come. There was a way to approach life and love. There was Sue. A basis for love and understanding might be found with her. Later the impulse could be carried on and into the lives of the children he had found and brought to her.

A vision of himself as a truly humble man, kneeling before life, kneeling before the intricate wonder of life, came to him, but he was again afraid. When he saw Sue's figure, dressed in white, a dim, pale, flashing thing, coming down steps toward him, he wanted to run away, to hide himself in the darkness.

And he wanted also to run toward her, to kneel at her feet, not because she was Sue but because she was human and like himself filled with human perplexities.

He did neither of the two things. The boy of Caxton was still alive within him. With a boyish lift of the head he went boldly to her. "Nothing but boldness will answer now," he kept saying to himself.

When she came down the stairs and out onto the porch Sue was dressed all in white. In the uncertain light her trim figure looked slight and graceful like a girl's.

"The black-haired boy was homesick," she said. "He cried himself to sleep."

"Tom would," said Sam. "He has temperament. We shall have to be making an artist of Tom. He will be all right. It is only the newness and the strangeness. What did Joe do?"

"Sat on the edge of the bed and told Mack how to care for little Mary," she said, laughing softly.

And then Sam began the telling of his story to Sue. He told it from the day when, breaking his word to her, he had voted her stock for the fire-arms merger. He did not tell her all of it. There was a part of the story he wanted to think about and to tell her only after he had got it digested in his own mind, and there were other things that he did not tell because he was ashamed, things that he had already begun to push back out of his own sight, the meanness and coarseness that is a part of every man as hardness and cruelty is a secret hidden part of woman. He tried not to spare himself. There was, he felt, no need of that. He had no fear of her.

She sat beside him, her hand lying in his, her body trembling with suppressed excitement. A shaft of light streaming out at the window fell just across her feet, and when Sam had finished the story of his wandering she sat turning her foot about in the light and looking at it.

"And through all of these years of seeking and being defeated I have been sitting here at home reading books and waiting like a sailor's wife," she said, a break in her voice. "I have been doing what I called perfecting myself. I have even written articles about life and conduct and had them published in magazines, and to-night, upstairs, as the boys were getting into bed, I thought with pride that I should have them to show you for my waiting. A woman does not get much hold of life sitting at home. Sam, I am ashamed of the pettiness of my life."

They got up and walked arm in arm along the gravel path under the trees. There was something yet to be said and they walked in silence, waiting each for the other. The huge black woman came to the door and called:

"Dinner is waiting."

On the steps before the house the husband and wife stopped and stood looking at each other. A quiet puzzled look came into Sue's eyes. Suddenly she threw back her head and laughed.

"Of course," she exclaimed, laughing hysterically, "they can't be your children. Why, Joe must be fourteen. I have been thinking they were your children."

"I have been waiting to tell you of them," Sam said eagerly. "I got them from the drunken wife of a St. Louis plumber. I want you to take them and me."

Sue threw her arms about his neck.

"Take them, Sam," she cried, "I have taken them, and I never did let you go."

She put her head down, burying her face in his shoulder.

"I thought they were your children by another woman and still I had taken them. When I saw them upstairs there to-night, their little heads on the pillows, I knew that I would never give them up."

They walked in the gravel path before the house and he tried lamely to tell his story, the story of his wanderings, of his seeking. When he came to the tale of the finding of the children she stopped in the path and stood listening, pale and tense in the half light.

Then she threw back her head and laughed, nervously, half hysterically. "I have taken them and you, of course," she said, after he had stepped to her and had put his arm about her waist. "My life alone hasn't turned out to be a very inspiring affair. I had made up my mind to take them and you, in the house there. The two years you have been gone have seemed like an age. What a foolish mistake my mind has made. I thought they must be your own children by some other woman, some woman you had found to take my place. It was an odd notion. Why, the older of the two must be nearly fourteen."

Into the house they went where the negro woman had re-spread the table for them.

At the door Sam stopped for a moment and, excusing himself, stepped out again upon the porch. With uncovered head, he stood for a moment alone in the darkness, wondering if he had found the way or if life with Sue and the children would become petty as the big life of affairs had become brutal. A shudder ran through his body and he had the impulse to run away into the darkness, to begin again, seeking. Instead he turned and going through the door, walked across the lighted room to sit again with Sue at his own table and to try to force himself back into the ranks of life.

THE END⁷

With the pulling of the shades darkness dropped down over the figure of the man standing just within the grove of trees and darkness dropped down over the inner man also. The struggle within him became more intense.

Could he surrender to others, live for others? There was the house darkly seen before him. It was a symbol. Within the house was the woman, Sue, ready and willing to begin the task of rebuilding their lives together. Upstairs in the house now were the three children, three children who must begin life as he had once done, who must listen to his voice, the voice of Sue and all the other voices they would hear speaking words in the world. They would grow up and thrust out into a world of people as he had done.

To what end?

There was an end. Sam believed that stoutly. "To shift the load to the shoulders of children is cowardice," he whispered to himself.

They went toward the house, the negro woman having, at Sue's command, found food for Sam and respread the table, but at the door he stopped and excusing himself stepped again into the darkness under the trees.

In the house lamps had been lighted and he could see Sue's figure going through a room at the front of the house toward the dining-room. Presently she returned and pulled the shades at the front windows. A place was being prepared for him inside there, a shut-in place in which he was to live what was left of his life.

An almost overpowering desire to turn and run away from the house, from Sue who had so generously received him and from the three new lives into which he had thrust himself and in which in the future he would have to be concerned took hold of him. His body shook with the strength of it, but he stood still under the trees. "I cannot run away from life. I must face it. I must begin to try to understand these other lives, to love," he told himself. The buried inner thing in him thrust itself up.

How still the night had become. In the tree beneath which he stood a bird moved on some slender branch and there was a faint rustling of leaves. The darkness before and behind was a wall through which he must in some way manage to thrust himself into the light. With his hand before him, as though trying to push aside some dark blinding mass, he moved out of the grove and thus moving stumbled up the steps and into the house.

THE END⁷

These texts reveal the exact method that Sherwood Anderson used to revise the ending of *Windy McPherson's Son*. Taking two copies of the 1916 version and cutting from recto and verso pages the passages that were to be retained unchanged or very lightly changed, Anderson pasted these excisions onto sheets of newly composed copy, probably in his own typing. The typesetters for B. W. Huebsch then removed from the 1916 pages the many parts that Anderson had dropped, retained the passages that would not be re-set, and matched new portions exactly with the old excerpts. The 1922 *Windy McPherson's Son* thus became two pages longer than the 1916 edition, but the new version differs in more than length.

First, Anderson deleted from his novel several passages involving Sam McPherson's relationship to the three children and then to his wife. Sam no longer recalls gratuitously some children being serenaded; he no longer tells the present children tales of tiger-hunting in India; and he no longer strides ecstatically through a dark St. Louis street, loving all the world's children in a transport of rapture. Returned to Sue McPherson, Sam no longer feels immediately at ease with his long-deserted wife; and this wife no longer instantly accepts Sam and his three children. Gone

is Sue's "perfecting" of herself in Sam's absence for some higher role in life—presumably, mothering.

Second, within the passages that Anderson retained from 1916 are revisions that greatly affect the 1922 work. In St. Louis the children take longer to trust Sam McPherson, who is less immediately and blissfully converted to his new purpose; and no longer present is the literary tug of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn on the reader's sensibility. More realistic is the reunion of Sue McPherson and Sam McPherson in the revised work. She is no longer either docile or reformatory; she is now uncertain, nervous, even assertive. She does not promptly and unbelievably say, "This is Mr. McPherson with our children. . . ." Neither husband nor wife finds easy tears at this meeting; the children, instead, crying from fright, hunger, and exhaustion, objectify the adults' emotions. Sue does, however, finally accept Sam (and Tom and Joe and Mary), admitting that her life alone has not been "a very inspiring affair."

Third, it is in the passages that Anderson wrote for the new *Windy McPherson's Son* that the major changes occur—and these changes have to do with Sam McPherson himself more than with the three children adopted or the wife re-discovered. In St. Louis, Sam, unsatisfied in his quest, decides to force an end to his sterile existence and a lack of "maturity and manhood" by re-entering the mainstream of life, still ambivalent toward freedom and responsibility but ready, Anderson says, to accept that the struggle for meaning, even if it leads to failure, is the goal. The homecoming is now less joyous, less immediate, and less romantic. Sam walks in darkness among his wife's trees, fearing the trap of settled life that the lights in her house represent. Sam's two aspects—"the man of achievement" and the "timid, shy, destructive Sam"—war for control; and he must repress the rebellious self in order to become "a humble man, kneeling before life" and ready to walk from outside darkness toward inward light.

Thus Sam McPherson comes in 1922 to the conclusion that imperfection and ambiguity are the emblems of life, and thus Sherwood Anderson revised his first novel toward the better work that *Windy McPherson's Son* was intended to be.

NOTES

1. "Windy McPherson's Son." *Times Literary Supplement* (9 November 1916), p. 536.
2. Waldo Frank, "Emerging Greatness," *Seven Arts* 1 (November 1916), p. 76.
3. D. L. M., "From Newsboy Upward," *Boston Evening Transcript* (25 November 1916), p. 6.
4. William Lyon Phelps, "Three Not of a Kind," *Dial*, 61 (21 September 1916), p. 197.
5. Whoever read proof in 1916 and again in 1921 nevertheless missed two misspellings: *friedship* (60.2) and *fir clad hunter* (199.22). A reprint of *Windy McPherson's Son*, reset from the 1922 edition and published in 1965 by The University of Chicago Press, is of no bibliographical consequence to the present study.
6. *Letters of Sherwood Anderson*, edited by Howard Mumford Jones and Walter B. Rideout (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), pp. 81-82. Comments from unpublished letters by Anderson and Huebsch are from The Sherwood Anderson Papers, The Newberry Library, Chicago.
7. The 1916 conclusion of *Windy McPherson's Son* is "Copyright 1916 by John Lane Company. Copyright renewed 1944 by Eleanor Copenhaver Anderson. Reprinted by permission of Harold Ober Associates Incorporated." For permission to reprint the 1922 conclusion to *Windy McPherson's Son* I am grateful to The University of Chicago Press.

SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S GROTESQUES
AND MODERN AMERICAN FICTION

DAVID D. ANDERSON

In 1919 Sherwood Anderson, at forty-three the author of two earlier novels and a book of verse, published the work that continues to provide the enduring foundation of his literary reputation, in spite of the vagaries of literary fashion, in season and out. This was, of course, *Winesburg, Ohio*, a book that has never been out of print since its publication, a title that has become synonymous with the mythological Midwestern American small town, and a work that reconstructed the form of the short story and rewrote the language of literature for this century.

Nearly four decades later, in an essay called "The Purity and Cunning of Sherwood Anderson," Herbert Gold, then just beginning his own career as a novelist, perceptively noted another debt to Anderson when he wrote that Sherwood Anderson "has helped to create the image we have of ourselves as Americans. Curtis Hartman, George Willard, Enoch Robinson, all of the people of Winesburg, haunt us as do our neighbors, our friends, our own secret selves which we first met one springtime in childhood."¹

If the people of Winesburg, fifty years in time and ninety miles west on U.S. 20 from Gold's boyhood Lakewood, Ohio, haunt Gold's memory and the people in his best fiction, especially in *Fathers, The Prospect Before Us*, and the short fictions set in the old neighborhood and the old town before he took his people and his art to New York and then to San Francisco, they haunt, too, much of the literature of our time. Gold recognized, as have novelists before him and since, that Sherwood Anderson occupies a central position in the evolution of American literature in this century.

Gold's tribute to the haunting permanence of Anderson's work and his people in our memories, our work, and the literature of our time was one of a long series of such comments. In 1936, in a review of *Kit Brandon*, Hamilton Basso, then also beginning his writing career, wrote:

. . . we are reminded how much we owe this man and how deeply he has influenced our literature. Hemingway (who repudiated his master in "The Torrents of Spring"), Faulkner (whom Anderson discovered and whose first book was written under his immediate guidance), Caldwell, Thomas Wolfe, George Milburn—all these, among others, have been affected by him. . . . I think it might be wise for us to remember that he was one of the headmasters at the school where so many of us learned our ABC's.²

Hemingway had indeed repudiated Anderson as a master and a man in misguided if not misbegotten satire, in letters, and finally in his posthumous *A Moveable Feast*. But in the same volume he commented, too, that "I liked some of his short stories very much. They were simply written and sometimes beautifully written and he knew the people he was writing about and cared deeply for them."³

Faulkner, too, had come close to repudiating Anderson as master. They had become close friends in New Orleans in the mid-twenties, and Anderson wrote a tribute to that friendship in "A Meeting South." They remained friends through the publication of Faulkner's *Soldier's Pay*, the publication of which Anderson had recommended to his publisher. But then Faulkner satirized Anderson good-humoredly in *Mosquitoes*, his second novel, and again, with William Spratling's cartoons, in the privately-printed *Sherwood Anderson and Other Famous Creoles*, and they drifted apart, to meet only once more in Anderson's lifetime. Faulkner later remembered their lost friendship in his version of the publication of *Soldier's Pay*—that Anderson would recommend that Horace Liveright publish it if Faulkner did not insist that Anderson read it, a circumstance apparently at odds with the facts although perpetuated in Faulkner's "Sherwood Anderson: An Appreciation,"⁴ an otherwise gracious memoir, in 1953.

But in 1956, in a *Paris Review* interview, Faulkner went beyond anything he had said before. In response to the interview-

er's request for his assessment of Anderson as a writer, he replied:

He was the father of my generation of American writers and the tradition of American writing which our successors will carry on. He has never received his proper evaluation. Dreiser is his older brother and Mark Twain the father of them both.⁵

Anderson, Faulkner said, had given him the advice that saved his work from the fashionable post-World War I malaise of *Soldier's Pay* and the pseudo-sophistication of *Mosquitoes*. "You're a country boy," Anderson told him. "All you know is that little patch up there in Mississippi where you started from. . . ." In turning to that "little patch in Mississippi" in *Sartoris* (1929), his third novel, Faulkner re-discovered, as Anderson had before him, the place and the people who were to give substance to the work that followed.

In re-discovering the land, the town, and the people of what became his Yoknapatawpha County, the place he liked to call "a kind of keystone of the universe,"⁷ Faulkner was to become an artistic father—and Anderson a literary grandfather—for a new generation of Southern writers who were to dig deep into the earth and people of their region. But Carson McCullers's sad cafe might as well have been on Trunnion Pike just outside of Winesburg, and Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood* set in Bidwell, Ohio, as it became an industrial city.

What Anderson had most obviously done for these writers and for others was to re-establish in the mainstream of American literature the vernacular tradition and the subject matter that had come out of the Old West with Mark Twain and Huckleberry Finn two generations earlier, only to fall by the northeastern American wayside, pushed aside by the formidable realistic gentility of Howells, Anderson's fellow Ohioan, whose Western impulses were transformed to nostalgia, and of Henry James, the first great American literary expatriate. Perhaps Anderson himself came closer than we know to genteel rejection by the heirs of Howells and James; although his first published short story, the pseudo-sophisticated "The Rabbit-Pen," appeared in *Harper's* in July, 1914, he never again published fiction in that journal, nor did he ever publish fiction in *The Atlantic*, the journals upon which the northeastern sensibility was most firmly imprinted.

If, as so many of his contemporaries and successors have commented, Anderson contributed, through *Winesburg, Ohio* and the superb stories in *Horses and Men*, *The Triumph of the Egg*, and *Death in the Woods*, both the form that recognizes, in Anderson's words, the fact that there are no plots in human life, and the easy rhythmic vernacular of the Midwestern heartland to the mainstream of American literature, he contributed, too, the subject matter of commonplace people, those whom he called grotesques. This latter contribution is more durable and more significant than the form, the language, or the compassionate concern for the innocent and simple that so profoundly affected young writers coming of age in the twenties and thirties.

This contribution, in my opinion Anderson's greatest accomplishment in *Winesburg, Ohio* and the short works that follow, is Anderson's concern not only with time and place and the language of literature but his concern with people, with those who entered his work from his youth in Clyde, Ohio, from his service in the volunteer Army in the Spanish-American War, from his Elyria years, from his travels as an advertising writer-salesman, and from the Chicago rooming house where he first attempted to define his people on paper. These were the people who, like the gnarled apples overlooked by the pickers in the orchards around Winesburg, have been twisted by life into a peculiar sweetness, those who, like Alice Hindman, must learn to live and die alone, even in Winesburg, those who make clear to Dr. Parcival and to a George Willard slowly becoming sensitized to the natures and needs of others that "everyone in the world is Christ and they are all crucified."⁸

These are the people with whom Anderson concerned himself in his fiction from the writing of "Sister," published in *The Little Review* in December, 1915, to "Brother Death" the capstone story in *Death in the Woods*, his last great collection of stories, published in 1933. He was so concerned with these people that in the preface to *Winesburg, Ohio*, which he called "The Book of the Grotesque," he attempted to transmute his people into myth. In it he describes an old writer, living alone, who imagines that all the people he had ever known pass before his eyes, that each, he realizes, is a grotesque, that

. . . they were not all horrible. Some were amusing, some almost beautiful, and one, a woman all drawn and out of shape, hurt the old man by her grotesqueness. When she passed she made a noise like a small dog whimpering . . .⁹

So the old man began to write in the attempt to define what he saw, completing the text of a never-published book called "The Book of the Grotesque." In it he defined the origin of the people's grotesqueness: that in the beginning there were no truths in the world but a great many thoughts; people made truths out of them, and each was beautiful, but as each person took one of the truths as his or her own and tried to live by it, each became a grotesque and the truth became a falsehood.

This mythical vision was important to Anderson because it parallels what he said was the origin of "Hands," the story of Wing Biddlebaum, the first story in *Winesburg, Ohio*. "Hands," according to Anderson, was written after watching an old man pass his Chicago boarding house window. Suddenly Anderson saw the essence, the truth, of the man lying beyond his appearance, and he wrote the story in a frenzy, with the other stories following in the next few weeks. The insight so fascinated Anderson that he had originally titled the book "The Book of the Grotesque," changing it to *Winesburg, Ohio* at the instigation of his publisher, Ben Huebsch.

Whether this story of the origin of "Hands," told in several versions in letters and in Anderson's *Memoirs*, is true or not is irrelevant, as is the origin of his concept of the grotesque. Earlier critics insisted that he had derived it from Poe's *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, but more likely it was the result of mutual intellectual cross-fertilization in the nights of talk in Chicago in 1914 and 1915 that resulted in Cloyd Head's one-act play "Grotesques, a Decoration in Black and White," presented by the Chicago Little Theatre in November 1915, Arthur Davison Ficke's "Ten Grotesques," published in *Poetry* in March 1915, and the first story in which Anderson uses a grotesque as its central character, "Sister," published in *The Little Review* in December 1915.¹⁰

Anderson's grotesques are those whose lives and dreams fuse in alienation, isolation, and frustration, the essence of which is revealed by Anderson in a moment of intuitive insight in each of

the stories. Their grotesqueness, it is clear, may or may not be manifested in their physical appearance, as it is in the case of Wing Biddlebaum, but in each case its psychological dimension is clear: each of the grotesques, Anderson comments, must ultimately come to the realization that "people must live and die alone, even in Winesburg,"¹¹ that, although each attempts to articulate, often desperately, his or her dream, each inevitably, humanly fails. In the compassion of his definition he created a new insight into American character and values, and his people, the grotesques of Winesburg and America, took on the dimensions of an authentic American myth.

In his perception and definition of the people of Winesburg, of those of the disintegrating community of an urbanized and industrialized Bidwell, and later of a confused South, torn between its myth-ridden past and the demand that it become new, Anderson has made his most permanent contribution to the literature of our time. But his contribution is not merely that of a character-type, one destroyed by the myths of his or her culture; it is a new perception of the human predicament and a new insight into those distorted and destroyed by that predicament, those who desperately try to articulate what they cannot understand to listeners, indeed to a society, that cannot understand. It is also a clear if ultimately unresolvable insight into those people who are determined to rise above grotesqueness, above the pronouncements and promises that, Anderson, advertising man, knew can only deprive us of our humanity. These are the people — Sam McPherson, Beaut McGregor, Hugh McVey, George Webster of *Many Marriages*, Bruce Dudley of *Dark Laughter*, and ultimately Kit Brandon—who learn to recognize the lies and begin the never-ending search for the truth that will restore them.

These people, the protagonists of Anderson's novels, are no less Anderson's grotesques than Wash Williams of Winesburg, Joe Wainsworth, the displaced harness maker of Bidwell, Ohio, Sponge Martin, the craftsman of Old Harbor, Indiana, in *Dark Laughter*, the frustrated father of "The Egg," or old Mrs. Grimes, who dies alone in the woods. But the protagonists of the longer fictions learn to reject the thought become truth become falsehood that had come close to destroying them, and each, in turn, begins

the search for communion, for understanding, for love, and each, as the novels end, finds, at least momentarily, as had George Willard in "Sophistication," "the thing that makes the mature life of men and women in the modern world possible."¹²

But, as Anderson found it necessary to rewrite the ending of *Windy McPherson's Son*, as Beaut McGregor concludes that he can only resist what he cannot overcome, as the whistles echo mockingly in *Poor White*, as the blacks laugh knowingly in *Dark Laughter*, it is evident that Anderson knows the values that threaten fulfillment can be transcended only in moments of insight and acceptance, and that the self-knowledge that comes through knowledge of another is the means rather than the end of life.

This dimension of Anderson's most enduring contribution to modern American fiction, a contribution that came out of Clyde, Ohio, by way of Chicago in the second decade of this century, has had no more faithful perpetrator than an American writer who came to Chicago in 1924, just as Anderson was rejecting that city forever in *Dark Laughter*. This was Saul Bellow, our most recent authentic American Nobel laureate. Bellow had come from his birthplace in Lachine, outside of Montreal, with his Russian-Jewish parents at nine, to discover, in the Humboldt Park neighborhood, as Anderson, who had come to Clyde at nine had discovered, the dimensions and values of a newer, larger, more complex world. And Bellow, born Solomon, became "Solly" and a street and park kid, as Anderson had become "Jobby" and later "Swatty" and a familiar figure on Main Street in Clyde. Anderson later remembered "I read . . . any books I could get my hands on"¹³ in a town and time that had comparatively few; Bellow, having discovered the public library branch, that "I took home Dreiser and Sherwood Anderson. I didn't bring home the wisdom of Maimonides."¹⁴

However, such parallels are deceptive. Anderson had barely a year of high school in Clyde, while Bellow graduated from Tuly High School, attended the University of Chicago, and graduated from Northwestern; Anderson, out of nineteenth century American Midwestern stock and nondescript Protestantism, became imbued with the values of the Gilded Age and the Horatio Alger

myth as they filtered into the town. Bellow, product of a reasonably Orthodox Jewish family and an urban multi-ethnic, socially mobile twentieth century neighborhood, knew in high school that he wanted to be a famous writer. Anderson came late to literature, publishing his first story in *Harper's* at 38; Bellow published his first story in *The Partisan Review* at 26.

Nevertheless, although Bellow has commented several times that *The Adventures of Augie March* is his novel most indebted to Anderson, a relationship he felt got out of hand in the last third of the novel,¹⁵ he has never repudiated the debt. Bellow's first novel, *Dangling Man* (1944), a better novel than Bellow remembers, most clearly demonstrates that he had already absorbed what Anderson had to teach him about the individual American in the twentieth century. The South-Side Chicago rooming house in which it is set is Bellow's Winesburg—perhaps inspired by Anderson's frequent comment that many of the people of *Winesburg, Ohio* were inspired by residents of his own Chicago rooming house; its inhabitants, like those of the city beyond, are no less twisted, no less out-reaching, no less defeated than Anderson's people; its protagonist, Joseph, is Anderson's George Willard, older, married, but no more mature, no less determined to learn whatever it is "that makes the mature life of men and women in the modern world possible."¹⁶

Nor is the structure of the novel any less episodic than *Winesburg, Ohio*. Written in diary form covering a period between December 15, 1942, and April 9, 1943, it records the encounters between Joseph and the people around him—his wife, Iva, who, typical of Bellow's and Anderson's earlier women, is only significant as she relates to Joseph, with family, friends, strangers, the other roomers, and most significantly with himself. In the background are the greater worlds of the city and the war, and Joseph, in the room that is both refuge and prison, awaits his long-delayed induction into the Army.

Joseph dangles between two realities, as most of Bellow's later protagonists were to do and as George Willard had dangled in the town, Sam McPherson in his wandering, Beau McGregor in Chicago, George Webster in his assault on convention, Bruce Dudley in the town along the river. Simultaneously Joseph, like An-

derson's *alter egos*, rejects what is behind him while he searches for whatever meaning he is convinced must lie beyond.

Joseph ruminates and records in his room, pondering the encounters beyond that frighten and alienate him, while he goes through the unvarying days of his routine, simultaneously free from the people around him and imprisoned by his perception of them. At the same time the grotesques of the rooming house and the city and season, all imbued with the unmitigated gloom of time and place, function as a chorus that mocks him. Mr. Vanaker, like Wash Williams of Winesburg, Joseph sees as "a queer annoying creature"¹⁷ whose petty thievery, obnoxious bathroom habits, and noisy coughing are designed solely to provoke him; Mrs. Kiefer, the landlady, blind, nearly bald, slowly dying, projects her condition and her presence beyond the walls of her room; her daughter, the officious Mrs. Briggs and her pseudo-military Quartermaster Corps husband, arbiters of their narrowly-conceived order, annoy him; Marie, the black maid, in aloof uncommunicativeness, disturbs him with her disapproval; the others, shadows rather than human beings, come and go.

But the rooming house is not Winesburg, and Joseph is not George Willard, and although his life in the room is dominated by these people, there is no community among the isolated rooms. Joseph seeks no communication with them, nor does he seek to learn from them. With neither George Willard's growing compassion nor his empathy, Joseph avoids his fellow inhabitants of the rooming house. He is unable to admit to himself that their lives parallel his own. A devotee of *le genre humain*, as he insists he is, trying "continually to find clear signs of their common humanity"¹⁸ he rejects Vanaker and the others, each of whom, like the people of Winesburg, reaches out in the only inarticulate, misguided manner possible; like Alice Hindman and the others they cannot admit, even to themselves, that they must live and die in their separate rooms, tied together only by a common bathroom.

Joseph is equally aloof from his family, friends, and casual acquaintances, not only because he fears their idle curiosity, their questioning of his continued dangling, and their real or imagined condescension, but because he despises their values, their misunderstanding, their superficiality, their materialism. For Joseph,

the truth that he seeks, that he ultimately approaches alone in the room, can be found, not in community or love or understanding, in closeness with others, the ultimate goal of each of Anderson's protagonists, but in the self-realization, the self-knowledge, the sense of identity that has become the ultimate fulfillment promised by our own age.

Bellow's Joseph suffers as Anderson's protagonists do. If for no other reason, Joseph welcomes his induction into the Army as a temporary suspension of the suffering that he knows, and Anderson's people learn, is inherent in their lack of understanding. Neither can they understand the world of which they are a part nor can they understand what it does to them or to the others who share that world with them. And ultimately neither can they understand themselves.

But whereas Joseph ignores, resents, and avoids the grotesques of the boarding house and beyond, George Willard seeks out those of Winesburg and attempts to learn from them, thus pointing to important differences in the perception of their creators. Anderson would transcend that world and its values and penetrate to the essence of the selfhood of others, convinced that only then, in moments of mutual understanding, can come understanding of self, and his sensitive protagonists—Sam McPherson, George Willard, Bruce Dudley, Kit Brandon—learn to seek out those moments. In this sense Anderson and his people are of the nineteenth century, attempting to find their way in the twentieth, seeking once more the community, the mutually-fulfilling experience of a past rapidly becoming myth, and ultimately they must reject the new age before they can find what they seek.

It is no accident that Anderson's life paralleled what he had learned in his fictions. After rejecting Chicago, as had in turn, each of his younger colleagues in the artistic renaissance in that city, he tried New York, but remained an outsider in the *Seven Arts* group; he tried Paris, not to stay but to see; he followed the nineteenth-century path of destiny and escape down the Mississippi. Then, ultimately, by chance rather than design, he found the place, the role, and the identity that he sought in Marion, Virginia, in the hill country where the new age had not yet penetrated, where community was an attainable reality. In his life as

in his fiction there was at least the promise of a happy ending, however unlikely it might be as the factories and the cities loom in the distance, as echoes of whistles are heard faintly in the hills.

But Bellow and his people are of the twentieth century, an age that denies community and love; its reality is the city, its mood the violence of its age, the barriers between people beyond penetration or transcendence, its values those of power and money, its narcotics things and sex. In such a time and place Bellow's people seek not communication and love; they seek an intellectual understanding of the island of self. But if the factory whistles echo mockingly in Anderson's fiction, George Willard goes confidently to the city and Sam McPherson and the others find love. Joseph goes reluctantly but willingly to war and the reality of his age. Bellow's other protagonists, like Joseph, ultimately confront the same reality, in essence if not in fact. Tommy Wilhelm stands weeping at the corpse of a stranger, Henderson runs off into the Arctic silence, Herzog finally has nothing to say, Albert Corde, after peering momentarily at a frigid but beautiful universe, comes reluctantly back to earth, Dr. Shawmut in the recent novella "Him With His Foot In His Mouth" tries compulsively to explain himself. Of all Bellow's protagonists, only Augie March, exuberant to the last, knows that somewhere beyond him lie the territories, the America of the spirit.

And Bellow, like Anderson, tried New York and found it wanting, as he remained in but not of the *Partisan Review* group, and he returned, as he always does, to Chicago, with, like Albert Corde, the lake before him and the city, Chicago, always looming behind. But his Chicago is not Anderson's, nor is it Dreiser's; it is both the metaphor and the reality of our time, our place, our predicament, as the town had been Anderson's, the county, Faulkner's, the elusiveness of American heroic masculinity, Hemingway's.

While Anderson lost critical favor in his last years, Bellow has gone on to literary celebration. Anderson ultimately failed, according to his critical contemporaries, because he had begun to repeat himself instead of manning the proletarian literary barricades of the 1930s, and according to more recent critics, that he had become somehow irrelevant in an age that foreshadows the

end of humanism and perhaps of humanity, that he looked to a limited and limiting American past for his purpose and justification as well as his art. Conversely, much of Bellow's continued critical approval emphasizes that he has placed his people firmly in the midst of the intellectual and social ferment of American and world history in our time.

Yet the shadows and the demands of immediate historical necessity are no less evident in Anderson's work than in Bellow's and ultimately Anderson's people and Bellow's continue to seek the perception, the insight, the acceptance that circumstance denies them.

In an obituary remark Edmund Wilson wrote that Sherwood Anderson "died prematurely, depriving us of a freshening and an exhilarating influence that had been felt by us as principles of life and leaving a sad sense of work uncompleted. Though Anderson was in his sixties," he went on, "it was impossible to think of him as aging, and though he had published a score of books, he seemed always still making his way toward some further self-realization."¹⁹ Bellow, too, is in his sixties, and although his people, unlike Anderson's, age perceptively, and Albert Corde returns reluctantly from his glimpse of the heavens, the reality of late twentieth century America still awaits him. And Bellow, in a recent interview, commented, in terms reminiscent of Wilson's,

"You remember when you took elementary chemistry? You were handed a lump of stuff and the professor said, 'By the end of the semester I want you to tell me what's in this.' And you had to sweat over it in the lab for what elements were in it. Well," said the author with an unfinished smile, "I haven't gotten to the bottom of my lump."²⁰

Or, as Sherwood Anderson said in another context, in a remark that memorializes him, "Life not death is the great adventure." And Bellow, too, will continue to seek a way toward that further self-realization.

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NOTES

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- Hamilton Basso in a review of Kit Brandon, *The New Republic*, 88 (October 21, 1936), p. 318, reprinted in *Ibid.*, p. 57.
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- William Faulkner quoted in Laurence Thompson, *William Faulkner* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), p. 6.
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- Ibid.*, p. 23.
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- Ibid.*, p. 18.
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