

THE
Sherwood
Anderson
READER

*Edited, with an Introduction,
by Paul Rosenfeld*

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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY · BOSTON

The Riverside Press Cambridge

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In Memory of
A Muse-Like Woman
LAURA LOU COPENHAVER

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Contents

| | The Editor | Page viii | Page viii |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Introduction | | | |
| I. A CONTRAST | | | |
| Nobody Laughed | 1939 Unpublished | 2 | 2 |
| Blackfoot's Masterpiece | 1916 Magazine Publication | 12 | 12 |
| II. THE BURIED LIFE | | | |
| Paper Pills | 1918 Winesburg, Ohio | 18 | 18 |
| Hands | 1916 Winesburg, Ohio | 21 | 21 |
| Tandy | 1918 Winesburg, Ohio | 27 | 27 |
| The Untold Lie | 1916 Winesburg, Ohio | 30 | 30 |
| Unlighted Lamps | 1921 The Triumph of the Egg | 36 | 36 |
| III. REGIONAL | | | |
| The New Englander | 1919 The Triumph of the Egg | 54 | 54 |
| Chicago | 1917 Mid-American Chants | 70 | 70 |
| Song of the Soul of Chicago | 1918 Mid-American Chants | 71 | 71 |
| Chicago Again | 1938 Memoirs | 72 | 72 |
| IV. THE WONDERS OF CHAOS | | | |
| The Egg | 1920 The Triumph of the Egg | 76 | 76 |
| I Want to Know Why | 1921 The Triumph of the Egg | 86 | 86 |
| The Contract | 1921 Magazine Publication | 95 | 95 |
| The Sad Horn-Blowers | 1924 Horses and Men | 102 | 102 |
| The Man Who Became a Woman | 1924 Horses and Men | 128 | 128 |
| Out of Nowhere into Nothing | 1921 The Triumph of the Egg | 157 | 157 |
| V. LYRICAL | | | |
| The Man with the Trumpet | 1921 The Triumph of the Egg | 212 | 212 |
| The Lame One | 1925 A New Testament | 213 | 213 |
| The Dumb Man | 1921 The Triumph of the Egg | 215 | 215 |
| Brothers | 1920 The Triumph of the Egg | 218 | 218 |

CONTENTS

| | | |
|--------------|---------------------------|-----|
| One Throat | 1929 Memoirs | 226 |
| When We Care | 1936 Magazine Publication | 229 |

VI. THE LIFE OF ART

| | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----|
| Song of Theodore | 1918 Mid-American Chants | 236 |
| The Book of the Grotesque | 1918 Winesburg, Ohio | 239 |
| Alfred Szegelesz | 1919 Notebook | 242 |
| Foreword | 1924 Horses and Men | 247 |
| The Man's Story | 1923 Horses and Men | 248 |
| Milk-Bottles | 1924 Horses and Men | 266 |
| A Meeting South | 1924 Notebook | 274 |
| The Return | 1924 Death in the Woods | 285 |
| Meeting Ring Lardner | 1933 No Swank | 301 |
| Brother Death | 1933 Death in the Woods | 306 |
| A Part of Earth | 1936 Unpublished | 321 |
| The Yellow Gown | 1938 Magazine Publication | 329 |
| A Writer's Conception of Realism | 1939 Limited Publication | 337 |
| We Little Children of the Arts | 1940 Memoirs | 348 |
| The Sound of the Stream | 1940 Memoirs | 356 |

VII. PASTORAL

| | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----|
| Morning Roll-Call | 1940 Unpublished | 376 |
| I'm a Fool | 1922 Horses and Men | 380 |
| A Sentimental Journey | 1928 Hello Towns! | 391 |
| Justice | 1934 Magazine Publication | 398 |
| A Dead Dog | 1931 Magazine Publication | 404 |
| The Death of Bill Graves | 1934 Memoirs | 416 |
| Daughters | 1935 Unpublished | 422 |

VIII. FANTASY AND SYMBOL

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|-----|
| An Ohio Pagan | 1924 Horses and Men | 452 |
| The Man With a Scar | 1925 A Story-Teller's Story | 474 |
| River Journey | 1926 Dark Laughter | 481 |

IX. EDITORIAL

| | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|-----|
| Smythe County News | 1927 Combination from Hello Towns! | 490 |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|-----|

X. THE HERO

| | | | |
|---|------|-------------|-----|
| <i>Father Abraham: A Lincoln Fragment</i> | 1929 | Unpublished | 530 |
|---|------|-------------|-----|

XI. TOWARD DEMOCRACY

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|------|------------------------|-----|
| <i>Machine Song</i> | 1930 | <i>Perhaps Women</i> | 604 |
| <i>Loom Dance</i> | 1930 | <i>Perhaps Women</i> | 609 |
| <i>Mill Girls</i> | 1932 | <i>Beyond Desire</i> | 615 |
| <i>The TV.4</i> | 1935 | <i>Puzzled America</i> | 642 |
| <i>Tough Rabes in the Woods</i> | 1935 | <i>Puzzled America</i> | 649 |
| <i>'Please Let Me Explain'</i> | 1935 | <i>Puzzled America</i> | 657 |
| <i>Bud (As Kit Saw Him)</i> | 1936 | <i>Kit Brandon</i> | 663 |
| <i>Brown Rumber</i> | 1937 | Magazine Publication | 679 |

XII. SUMMARIES AND HARMONIES

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|------|----------------|-----|
| <i>Dedication of the Memoirs</i> | 1940 | <i>Memoirs</i> | 688 |
| <i>Introduction to the Memoirs</i> | 1940 | <i>Memoirs</i> | 691 |
| <i>Discovery of a Father</i> | 1939 | <i>Memoirs</i> | 698 |
| <i>Girl by the Stove</i> | 1940 | <i>Memoirs</i> | 704 |
| <i>White Spot</i> | 1939 | Unpublished | 708 |
| <i>All Will Be Free</i> | 1939 | <i>Memoirs</i> | 713 |
| <i>I Build a House</i> | 1939 | <i>Memoirs</i> | 719 |

XIII. TOWNS, HO!

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------|-----|
| <i>The American Small Town</i> | 1940 | Unabridged Ms. for <i>Home Town</i> | 740 |
|--------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------|-----|

XIV. LAST STORIES

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|------|----------------------|-----|
| <i>The Corn-Planting</i> | 1934 | Magazine Publication | 812 |
| <i>A Walk in the Moonlight</i> | 1934 | Magazine Publication | 817 |
| <i>His Chest of Drawers</i> | 1939 | Magazine Publication | 831 |
| <i>Not Sixteen</i> | 1940 | Magazine Publication | 836 |
| <i>Tim and General Grant</i> | 1940 | Unpublished | 846 |

BOOKS BY SHERWOOD ANDERSON

| |
|------------------------------|
| WINDY McPHERSON'S SON |
| MARCHING MEN |
| MID-AMERICAN CHANTS |
| WINESBURG, OHIO |
| POOR WHITE |
| THE TRIUMPH OF THE EGG |
| MANY MARRIAGES |
| HORSES AND MEN |
| A STORY-TELLER'S STORY |
| DARK LAUGHTER |
| THE MODERN WRITER |
| TAR |
| SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S NOTEBOOK |
| A NEW TESTAMENT |
| HELLO TOWNS! |
| PERHAPS WOMEN |
| BEYOND DESIRE |
| DEATH IN THE WOODS |
| NO SWANK |
| PUZZLED AMERICA |
| KIT BRANDON |
| WINESBURG AND OTHER PLAYS |
| HOME TOWN |
| SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S MEMOIRS |
| THE SHERWOOD ANDERSON READER |

Introduction

Sherwood Anderson's work resembles field-flowers.

SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S WORK resembles field-flowers. Flowing rhythmically as it does, made like them with zest, it has the freshness of clover, buttercups, black-eyed Susans. It has their modesty, their innocence. No personal interest, neither desire for display or prestige, money or applause, motivated these writings. They are the uninduced, naive consequences of a simple need for understanding and the communication of that understanding, fulfilled by an extraordinary imagination.

Life to Anderson was chaos: a pellmell of bitter and sweet, loveliness and ugliness, comic but with more than touches of the terrible; the predestination of all creatures even under the rarely fortunate circumstance to incompleteness, solitude, twisting hunger. However life also was curiously wonderful to him, an ingenious constantly resourceful disorder the author of unexpected sometimes miraculous events and shapes. Struggling to adjust himself to it he sought to discover its spirit, laws of motion, the heaven in its depths; went about with eyes mainly directed on his own inwardness, but with fraternal feeling towards the world.

Human faces, semi-consciously noticed, and picked up by his mind, rose into it with mute significance during states of intense emotion and the intoxication of creation. Or human figures making mysterious gestures or performing inexplicable actions. During semi-waking hours certain of these figures and faces assembled about themselves settings as imaginary as they: vital circumstances, motives, dramas, experiences, to which they stood in clear and logical relationships. The tiny worlds or systems now before the dreamer showed forth the secrets he wished to learn. His understanding and the emotion to which it gave birth temporarily relieved the ache of separateness, by creating a participation of the fragment in the whole of life. The business of communicating prolonged the state. . . .

viii

inexplicable

assembled about themselves

INTRODUCTION

ix

In a striking way Anderson's work also possesses the field-flowers' crudeness and delicacy. The style sometimes is careless, tends to loquacity, makes insufficient distinctions between the unimportant and the important. In instances it quite lacks concision and methodical disposition and structure. One also finds smiling indulgent palpations of banal or coarse situations, a simplicity almost bizarre, and ideas insufficiently pondered or incomplete. At the same time the writings please with their fineness. Often they make deeply significant points, sometimes with great irony, and subtly release tension. Their psychological intuitions are exquisite. Then, too, we come upon original, accurate metaphors, the play of rich moods, an uncanny sense of the interaction of individual and community, and on fresh air, tenderness, pathos, fullness and rarity of meaning, and a tense form, of Anderson's invention: an impressionistic form curiously akin to that in certain paintings by the young Renoir. Out of blobs of color, scatterings of color-dots and small eddies of events connected by invisible filaments, it composes shapes that grow solid to the distant eye. . . .

Probably a resemblance of Anderson's work to little living things also flows from the fact that as a whole and in representative cases it is so complex. (So is all life, be it called Earthly, Devilish, or Divine. 'Nothing living is a One / Ever 'tis a Many' sang Goethe.) One means not only that with simplest materials the man arrived at great contrasts in his novels and autobiographies, his tales and lyrical and general pieces; not only that these simultaneously say 'No' and 'Yes' to things. One means that the mass of his work is the result of the joint operation of several very different impulses of art and methods of experience hitherto infrequently co-operative, rarely in such equal proportions, almost never we are certain in prose fiction. Causing the old boundaries of the genres in which he worked to oscillate, to overlap one another, the joint operations of different impulses made these genres the masters of new effects and performances.

For a quarter-century, the length of Anderson's literary career, the freshness, innocence, fineness, steadily maintained themselves. So too did the complexity, in particular the uncommon manifold of methods and impulses. The latter fact, we think, requires emphasis.

Primarily we find naturalism. Anderson stands in the midst of the American sustainers of the movement of Zola. A critic, Francis Hackett,

perceived it immediately after the appearance of Anderson's first novels and first *Winesburg, Ohio* stories. He tagged the new Chicago author with the phrase which remains accurate at this very moment, when Anderson's work, saving only that portion of it thwarted by the accident of death, lies entire before us. The phrase was 'a naturalist with a skirl of music.'

Possibly our fresh insistence on the Zolaesque aspect of his work might have startled Anderson. His first lights in fiction, to be sure, had been Bennett and Dreiser. His early novels, including *Poor White*, were cast in the scenic, occasionally pamphletary form he derived through them from Zola. But later he used to laugh when people even called his fictions realistic: despite the fact that he knew his stories introduced readers to a world in which they felt at home; made poetry with reference to the everyday, humble, or anonymous; presented characters who seem true to nature and almost universally have been taken for expressions of American peasants or small-townsmen. And naturalism is or is supposed to be the intensification of realism, the strenuous impulse towards the poetry of reality.

Possibly, too, our insistence on the naturalism of his narratives may startle many of his enthusiasts. We can see them wondering what the ground for it conceivably can be; asking where in all Anderson, for example, one finds scientifically observed detail worked up into reconstructions of entire social *milieux*, of the sort usual in Zolaesque fictions from Zola's own to Dreiser's and Thomas Mann's? Or massive material patently long-reserved by the mind and methodically disposed? Or cyclopean proportions and cyclic treatment of themes?

Their questions without a doubt are valid. The thought of Sherwood Anderson fortifying himself with physiological studies, or experimentally applying scientific theories to the sources of character and behavior, in the manner of the naturalists, is inconceivable! And everything in his work suggests improvisation, sudden ideas, caprice, and material accommodable to small designs. Anderson was distinctly a miniaturist; achieving unity of impression most frequently in the dramatic tale and short story or in the lyrical expression of mood. In his very novels he was happiest when incrustating them with short-story-like episodes. Sometimes he achieved unity in his novels, certainly in *Poor White*, but even there with his loose, impressionistic method.

One can hear his enthusiasts also protesting that Anderson had a chuckling humor and child-terribleness. And what naturalist other than the

Irishman George Moore ever was humorous? No, we can hear them say, possibly an association of the work of the great Gypsy of American literature with the realistic movement may be necessary! There are reasons why it might appear to be so — Anderson's superficial faithfulness to aspects of ordinary American life, for example; his predilection for homely color; or the fact that his laughter, when people called his work realistic, was meant only to convey the truth that he never copied actuality, that if he sought to imitate anything actual, it was merely the spirit creative in things. But though the association is unavoidable, they will conclude, let it be made not with the art of those late-nineteenth-century and twentieth-century realists, the naturalists, but rather with that of their mid-nineteenth-century predecessors, realists like Dickens, Gogol, and Gottfried Keller! The spiritual mobility beneath Anderson's writings certainly resembles Dickens's, Gogol's, Keller's. His fund of pathos similarly resembles theirs, and the kindling quality of much of his detail; his tone, too, pitched as it is in the middle register of the human voice — intimate, friendly, and warm; and his amenity, and the breadth and leisuredness of his tempo, andante-like for all the tension. Again, like the mid-nineteenth-century realists, but unlike Zola and his wake, he had a feeling for character and loved his personages. (Humanitarian and socialistic though they were, the naturalists never created their personages in any feeling warmer than pity.) Anderson, however, embraced his people. No doubt the majority of them are grotesques, once dignified and insignificant, obstinate or without volition, comic or unbalanced. The unprecedented and unprepared actions through which they reveal themselves are awkward, abrupt, paroxysmic often. None of these figures is quite equal to life. Yet not one is unsympathetic or devoid of dignity. Each is stoical and decent in his sense of his defeat. Each is sweet; as their author himself said, 'like gnarled little russets rejected by the apple-pickers in the fall in the American countryside, clinging late to the bare trees.'

In the face of this laughter and these protests we dare affirm the complete accuracy of Francis Hackett's phrase! What of it all was naturalism; the ideal and practice formulated by Zola? In answer, it was the omission of everything not founded on and limited by actual experience, the negation of fancy (i.e., fantasy), the exclusion of 'the ideal.' Of novelists, in other words, there was required the antithesis both of classical and of romantic literature; of classical literature which exploits traditional material in attitudes imposed by authority, and of romantic, which, if it

deals with experience, does so in a spirit uncontrolled by any sense of the events through which the novelist himself has lived. Sheer experience alone was wanted; only the writer's actual enjoyment and suffering, delivered in complete sincerity; only the veritable effects produced by direct and objective perception upon his feeling and his judgment, and a treatment of material strictly controlled by the spirit of events. And few American novelists, if indeed any, have been at greater pains than Anderson always was to set down in complete sincerity only their veritable enjoyment and suffering, only the effects really produced on their feeling and judgment by personal and direct perceptions. Visionary though he was, he steadily made the effort to 'treat material in utter truthfulness'—the phrase of W. D. Howells at the time he was naturalism's American herald. The adjuration, 'never sell out your characters,' often on his lips, was always in Anderson's heart. What though he did not permit himself to be limited by the actual; honored and cultivated his fantasy; made subject-matter and symbols to an exceptional degree of his own fantasizing and that of his personages? He demarcated fantasy; was always definite in distinguishing what in his own mind and in theirs harmonized with 'the world of fact,' what with the world of 'fancy,' as he called dream. Never in the manner of the romanticists or the surrealists did he confound the two substances or attempt their confusion. Thus, to demarcate fantasy was to treat events in the spirit of those through which he himself had lived.

Naturalism in the second place demanded the dissipation of genteel, conventional ideas of human psychology; the presentation of psychological truth in its totality. No experienced trait in its eyes was unworthy of literature. Anderson's fiction, again, not only provided a consciousness of an unexplored psychology, that of those demi-poets the advertising men, and contributed to understanding of the Artist's experiences during the creative process and the curious interaction of his life with his art and of his life with woman, as in *The Man Who Became a Woman*. It extended his predecessors' audacious grasp for pushing vital forces and yearning, emotionally starved people. Beginning with *Winesburg* it penetrated the buried life, the unconscious psyche—that seat of touch, source of energies, desires, sentience, and the power of love and unity. The real scene of his dramas frequently is the subliminal, and in the appropriate, mysterious sometimes but always snappy, he illuminated this hidden realm by relating normal-abnormal behavior, and personal protests and over-determinations to their

origins in erotic wounds and catastrophes. One thinks of *The Sad Horn-Blowers*. He also took as his themes subjects hitherto as obscure as the history of puberty—in *An Ohio Pagan*, for example—or the shocks of adolescence—in *The Man Who Became a Woman*, say; or the abrupt erotic impulses of solitaries who spasmodically transcend their isolation; and states of connection occurring as nervously and fitfully as sunlight in spring weather. Significantly the typical genteel persecution of the naturalist, which at various times sought out Flaubert, the Goncourts, Zola, Moore, Dreiser, also directed itself against Anderson. Librarians cast out some of his books. Boston banned *Winesburg*. Letters to him, mainly from ladies, mostly unsigned, reproached him for filthiness and the mentality of adolescence at its ugliest.

Naturalism, moreover, asked of the literary man that in combination with the true artist's full earnestness and sincerity, he possess first and foremost an irony, a skepticism equally remote from classic dogmatism and romantic Byronism, fanaticism, posturing. Already in introducing *Winesburg*, Anderson with characteristic playfulness wrote out the thought

'that in the beginning when the world was young there were a great many thoughts but no such thing as a truth. Man made the truths himself and each truth was a composite of a great many vague thoughts. All about in the world were the truths and they were beautiful. . . . And then the people came along. Each as he appeared snatched up one of the truths and some who were quite strong snatched up a dozen of them. . . . It was the truths that made the people grotesques. The moment one of them took one of the truths to himself, called it his truth and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood.'

And an unclassic and unromantic, almost Nietzschean, skepticism and irony tempers every bit of writing by the always earnest, never 'adolescent' or 'unsophisticated,' Anderson. It expressed itself in the continual gentle suspensions of judgment, the continual smiling self-questionings, the continual question of the coherent and consistent things which men consider themselves and their actions to be.

II

The very fact of his frequent exploitation of fantasy in itself might apprise us that Anderson's fiction is not regularly naturalistic; and inspec-

tion of his stories reveals that, naturalistic in point of symbol though all of them are, many indeed of them in their narrative method simultaneously do carry forward and illustrate another very dissimilar kind of fiction. It is the one usually called lyrical. Specimens of this kind on the one hand are extremely musical, filled as they are with effects of melody, rhythm and harmony; on the other, liquidly and immediately expressive of the feelings or 'subjects' of the personages, which often have a singing substance; at times of those of the very author. They really are lyrics with epic characteristics, lyrics narrative of events. A sort of forerunner of them may be thought to exist in the *Decameron*, in the shape of the Prologue to the stories of the Fourth Day. There, speaking in his own person, Boccaccio begins a lyrical address to all ladies which unexpectedly becomes narrative of a story. After concluding the narrative he reverts to oratorical lyricism in the manner of the start.

Entire little stories, to say nothing of passage of narrative, giving poem-like expression to the mood of author or personage in a style sometimes approaching music in point of undulance, mysterious suggestiveness, infinity, survive in the work of the German romanticists about 1800, notably in Jean Paul's. More realistic variants, pantheistic in feeling, occur in the work of Stifter, in stories by him such as *The Timber Woods*; and variants even more realistic, soberly colored, in that of Turgenev, in sketches like *An Excursion to the Forest Belt*. All of them contain the singing expression of the effects of the life of things upon the authors' dreaming selves. Where rhythm became insistent in the lyric story was in the variant form of it, produced shortly before Anderson began writing, by Gertrude Stein. Stories such as *Ada*, *Miss Furr and Miss Skeene*, and *A Family of Perhaps Three*—all studies for *The Making of Americans*—convey the drama and the author's meanings definitely and almost exclusively through the sheer sound and movement of language-masses. The constant reiteration of a deliberately limited vocabulary and the scarcely perceptible variation of monotonous, sonorous, rhythmic patterns convey the states of feminine fixation, of a practically immobile libido and its scarcely perceptible displacements. (The jerky final acceleration in *Miss Furr and Miss Skeene* projects the growing inner 'freedom,' the demoralization, of the cultivated Miss Skeene. The stately crescendo and pathos at the close of *A Family of Perhaps Three* points the ultimate sublimation of libido in the aging, maternal elder of the two entangled sisters.)

Anderson's inclusion among the authors of the lyric story for its part

flows first of all from the fact that, using the language of actuality, he nonetheless invariably wrings sonority and cadence from it; unobtrusively indeed, without transcending the easy pitch of familiar prose, but with a definiteness greater than any requisite to the sheer formation of style. He sustains tones broadly with assonances and with repeated or echoing words and phrases. He creates accent-patterns and even stanza-like paragraphs with the periodic repetition or alternation of features such as syllables, sounds, words, phrases, entire periods; lengthily maintains levels of vibration. Open any of his volumes, any of his stories:

'For one thing the man was too big. There was about him an unnatural bigness. It was in his hands, his arms, his shoulders, his body, his head, a bigness like you might see in trees and bushes in a tropical country perhaps. I've never been in a tropical country but I've seen pictures. Only his eyes were small. In his big head they looked like the eyes of a bird.'

Or:

'The rain stopped and he went silently out of the barn, towards a small apple orchard that lay beside the farm house, but when he came to a fence and was about to climb over, he stopped. "If Jesus is there he will not want me to find him," he thought. As he turned again toward the barn, he could see, across a field, a low grass-covered hill. He decided that Jesus was not after all in the orchard. The long slanting rays of the evening sun fell on the crest of the hill and touched with light the grass stalks, heavy with drops of rain, and for a moment the hill was crowned as with a crown of jewels. A million tiny drops of water, reflecting the light, made the hilltop sparkle as though set with gems. "Jesus is there," muttered the boy. "He lies on his belly in the grass. He is looking at me over the edge of the hill."'

Again: because of sudden elevations of the pitch and tension, the creation of a definite expectancy of rhythm, the prose sometimes delivers impassioned ariosos:

'I sat watching, drunk with this as I have seldom been drunk. Long, long I had felt something of the soil in the Negro I wanted in myself too. I mean a sense of earth and skies and trees and rivers, not as a thing thought about but as a thing in me. I wanted earth

in me and skies and fields and rivers and people. I wanted these things to come out of me, as song, as singing prose, as poetry even. What else have I ever cared for as I have cared to have this happen, what woman, what possessions, what promise of life after death, all that? I have wanted this unity of things, this song, this earth, this sky, this human brotherhood.

Sometimes too Anderson's story-telling not only in his prose poems but in his straight prose strangely has the quality of the narratives formerly combined with song and instrumental effects, the folk-songs and ballads. One feels it in stories like *Tandy, Paper Pills, Brothers*. Noticeably they share the legendary tone, the repetitions of slow rhythms and the loose joints of these artless pieces. — Meanwhile the very characters in the stories themselves are vocal, clamorous: the most humble, anonymous ones. Here is the language of a fifteen-year-old vagrant:

'When the racing season comes and the horses go to the races and there is all the talk on the streets in the evenings about the new colts, and everyone says when they are going over to Lexington or to the spring meeting at Churchill Downs or to Latonia, and the horsemen that have been down to New Orleans or maybe at the winter meeting at Havana in Cuba come home to spend a week before they start out again, at such a time when everything talked about in Beckersville is just horses and nothing else and the outfits start out and horse racing is in every breath of air you breathe, Bildad shows up with a job as cook for some outfit. Often when I think about it, his always going all season to the races and working in the livery barn in the winter where horses are and where men like to come and talk about horses, I wish I was a nigger. It's a foolish thing to say, but that's the way I am about being around horses, just crazy.'

And how often he introduces not only the 'subjects' and feelings of his personages but the personal note, at least that of the self which said 'I' through him, and not only in the manner of the epic authors as the impersonal narrator of rhapsode—but in that of the lyric poet! How frequently do his sonorities convey his personal sentiment; the 'stir he heard, often during the creative process in listening to his dreaming 'subject'; the feeling that rose from the region between his conscious and unconscious minds. In fine, again and again through the whole, the vocal personages

and all, one feels, nay, hears, a singing state of soul, an inwardness filled with the mysterious melody of things.

Incidentally, the sonorities and cadences deliberately and sapiently wrung by him from language constitute his prime and economical means of depiction; to the degree that the reader insensible of them cannot quite gather his meanings, cannot clearly see the objects, the symbols present to Anderson's mind, the featureless personages tagged by him with undistinguished names, and their mid-American circumstance. These objects, no less than the other meanings, are fully realized. The featureless personages are corporally present to the mind, and behind them, like a physical presence, there stretches the land of the long straight turnpikes, rolling fields of corn, dark-blue, well-nigh blue-black patches of woods; the land with the clusters of small farmhouses and big silos and barns; the shapeless little towns of brick factories, Main Streets with parked autos, shading maples, and all sorts and conditions of dwellings. But these evocations are not principally the work of the descriptions and the other exploitations of the sign-power in the language. The descriptions and the signs in fact are sketchy, almost rudimentary. Similes occur infrequently. It is not even the result of the homely phraseology and charming colloquialisms. 'The farmer had planted his field to apple and pear,' for example, or 'There has been a new pattern being made.' No; the evocation is the result of the fact that the sound and rhythm are twin to the descriptions—collateral, emphatic reflections of the quality of the objects present to the writer's mind and indicated by him; sonorous equivalents of the sensations that these objects rouse, thus giving rise in us to sensations and feelings similar to those which these objects, were they present to us, independently, would excite. Assisted by the sign-power of the language in this way they powerfully communicate the author's sense. — Casual illustrations must suffice. Here is the interior of an automobile factory:

'The "belt"—is a big steel conveyor, a kind of moving sidewalk, waist-high. It is a great river running down through the plant. Various tributary streams come into the main stream, the main belt. They bring tires, they bring headlights, horns, bumpers for cars. They flow into the main stream. The main stream has its source at the freight cars, where the parts are unloaded, and it flows out to the other end of the factory and into other freight cars.'

However if mid-America lies as densely as it does about these stories it is also because as a whole their prose is one of those happy media which not only with their peculiar accent but their flavor and entire quality mysteriously represent special regions and entire lands. Anderson's prose is as American as that of Mark Twain, from which indubitably it was descended; an embodiment of the Western earth like Whitman's verse, Sullivan's architecture, the painting of Homer Martin or of Marin.

It is impossible to believe that such a writer could not but have received a suggestion of his method from certain previous specimens of the lyric story-kind. The thought that Anderson knew the work of the German romantics is not of course to be entertained; the German romantics, whose remote blood-connection he may conceivably have been — for there is evidence that his mother's mother, Grandma Myers, who 'populated half the state of Indiana' was a native of Hesse-Darmstadt; the romantic whose tricks such as concentrating interest upon the very machinery of illusion and toying with that machinery, he unconsciously repeated in passages like the River-Scene in *Dark Laughter*. And it is probable he never observed the Prologue to the Fourth Day, in the *Decameron*, so like in scheme to his own *When We Care*. But it is plain that he knew his Turgenev and Gertrude Stein. *Memoirs of a Sportsman* was a steady favorite of his: 'The sweetest thing in all literature,' he called the revolutionary book in a letter to one friend; and in another found it 'like low fine music'; and in autobiographic fragment depicted himself sitting in a Chicago restaurant

'reading of the peasant proprietor, Ovsyanikov, far away out there on the Russian steppe. Who but Turgenev could make you feel the way sunlight comes down among trees in the forest, or a field after summer rain, or the strange sweet smell of a river going across a plain when evening comes? Or reading about Yermolai and the Miller's wife, Bielyuk the forester, Bielyuk the wolf. Turgenev thou sweet man, thou sweetest of all prosemen, gentlemen strong. Thou of the aristocracy — so alive to common men!'

From the year of the re-impression of *Three Lives* — it was 1915 — and the publication of *Tender Buttons*, those playful pieces in which communication is attempted exclusively through the sound and essential color of words selected from the common vocabulary, and their rhythmic array, he had begun reading Gertrude Stein; thought that *Three Lives* 'con-

tained some of the best writing ever done by an American'; in 1922 introduced *Geography and Plays*, the volume of *Ada, Miss Furr and Miss Skene*, and *A Family of Perhaps Three* with the words, 'Since Miss Stein's work was first brought to my attention I have been thinking of it as the most important pioneer work done in the field of letters in my time.'

However it is equally impossible to believe that, if he did take a hint of his method from Turgenev and Gertrude Stein, more than a slight one was necessary. He was prepared for the lyrical form by the fact that, quite as much as an observer he was an auditor; always a listener and one who achieved connection with the nature of things through his auditory imagination. He was — a singer. Emotion must continually have suffused his consciousness. As such he undoubtedly figures in the imaginations of the mass of his readers: a warbler, a celebrant persistently of his own sorrow and delight. — As for his own specimens of the lyric story-kind, they have 'inner form' like Gertrude Stein's, but their rhythms are livelier, longer, more self-completive than those of the somnolent lady-Buddha of the *rue de Fleurus*. While wanting the suavity of expression in Turgenev's lyric tales, Anderson's share the warmly singing tone of the Russian's, surpass them of course in point of tension, and have the Andersonian qualities of subtlety of attack and humorous and acute feeling, perceptions of the essential in the singular, glamour over the commonplace, boldness of image . . . Wonderfully they 'stay by us.'

III

The art of the naturalists and that of the lyrists however are not the only literary bodies beside which Anderson's work ranges itself. Impulses still other than lyricism, as foreign to naturalism as this is, interplayed with the naturalistic impulse in his work. Indeed we feel the joint operation of an entire group of antithetic reactions.

Look if you will at Anderson's heroes, in particular those of his novels: Sam McPherson, 'Beaut' McGregor, Hugh McVey, Kit Brandon, say. All are in battle with reality. They preserve an independence to their milieu. At some time in their careers we see them endeavoring to withdraw from the influences of the living as well as the dead environments and seeking new paths and exits. All of them, Hugh McVey conspicuously, are inventors and reformers. This struggle in itself gives them a stature supe-

rior to the average one, and another circumstance increases it to the point of heroism. All represent society, American society. The scene of their struggle in some way is the total American one, in some way is within the American soul. In fact they are American Heroes, among the only truly living ones, with Phelps Putnam's abortive 'Bill,' whom contemporary American literature has produced. One lays the promptness with which Waldo Frank perceived the heroism of Sam McPherson immensely to the credit of that writer; the perspicacity with which he related and compared that clumsily questing figure to its passive, indolent, half-animal predecessor, Huckleberry Finn. (Even certain of the grotesques in Anderson's tragi-comic short stories possess supernormal stature, the saloon-keeper in *The Egg*, for example. He is the American seeking to solve all life's problems by means of gadgets.) This superhumanity is the achievement of Heroic feeling. Plainly, within the naturalistic framework, we face an impulse as foreign to naturalism, almost as contradictory to it, as is the old mythical, hero-making one; the impulse to feel out the destiny of a people and affirm it in creating the ideal citizen.

In association with this, we find yet another, equally opposed to the realistic impulse and apparently also to the Heroic one, though in the past it frequently has been found in association with the latter. It is the bucolic, idyllic reaction: the impulse to escape imaginatively from time into a world smaller, stiller, less hurtful than the actual historical one; into the small-town, the rural or the mountain milieu and even farther, towards the inevitable natural form of existence and the elemental being without an historical consciousness, withdrawn as it were from the stream of time. Anderson made this escape in tales of the American small town and countryside bringing into play the rural attitudes, the very country spirit itself—it speaks in stories such *I'm A Fool*; setting in motion types of the timeless unhistorical human creature and the inevitable natural forms of life, hunger for earth and home, Pan of the shepherds. The attainment of this goal of course constitutes the idyl or the pastoral; not, as the dictionaries pretend, the fact of pictures of shepherds and shepherdesses, descriptions of rustic life, pastoral settings. (That at least was Goethe's opinion.) Anderson attained this goal, again and again; for the traits to clothe these types outside the stream of time Anderson actually had to search no farther than his Chicago lodging-house. There indeed he found the traits of the timeless people of *Winesburg*, since the average American is the unhistorical being *par excellence*, coming 'out of nowhere,' going

'into nothing.' Anderson's prevalently fatalistic feeling of life to be sure made certain of his idyls unorthodox not only in the sense of less than jocund, but in the sense of tragi-comical: *Daughters*, for example, that dramatization of gynarchy. But then, who can deny the truthfulness of such pictures to the elemental state?

Last, likewise at the octave from naturalism, we encounter symbolism and mysticism: because of Anderson's singularly intense conviction that experience is more important than action, that the great events of life are connected not with external circumstances but with the development of consciousness; because he eminently was a man to whom interior world ever was more real than the visible one. His great stories are enveloped by an atmosphere of ideality: filled with suggestions of the immaterial and intangible, the general truth, the nature common to all his personages but always outside them. The best naturalistic novels do of course possess something of the atmospheric envelope of ideality and have the power to give impressions of ideas with images. Zola's themselves possess symbolistic aspects even in their crassest passages: the final passage in *La Terre*, for example, the depiction of the peasant lad's rape of his grandmother. We grasp the human creature's savage approach to his ancestress, the Earth. But in Anderson the symbolism, the suggestion of the general truth, is almost constant. His language for one thing continually possesses concentrative depth. That new species of awkward persons he presents resemble the featureless, widely applicable quasi-human outlines in cubist paintings; resemble voices even. Through the gestures, acts and backgrounds of these persons, the houses they inhabit, the streets through which they pass, there transpires an entirely inner and psychic world, composed not only of the roots of character, of bents of temperament, attitudes and motives oftentimes semi or entirely unconscious, but of states of energy, objects of the libido, the direction of its interest. We face and participate in conditions of apathy, disconnection, solitude; conditions spasmodically transformed into those of vitality and sentience. We overhear dialogues eternal in the human substance, born of eternally conflicting human attitudes towards woman, love, marriage, and much besides. Almost, it seems, we touch an absolute existence, a curious semi-animal, semi-divine life. Its chronic state is banality, prostration, dismemberment, unconsciousness; tensivity with indefinite yearning and infinitely stretching desire. Its manifestation: the non-community of cranky or otherwise asocial solitaires, dispersed, impotent and imprisoned amid interior walls arising from acute

differences in feeling, culture, opinion; arising also from insentience, from mendacious attitudes, from socially-dangerous incommunicable wishes. Its wonders—the wonders of its chaos—are fugitive heroes and heroines mutilated like the dismembered Osiris, the dismembered Dionysus. Painfully the absolute comes to itself in consciousness of universal dispersion and helplessness. Barriers have fallen. It realizes itself as feeling, sincerity, understanding, as connection and unity; sometimes almost at the cost of the death of its creatures. It triumphs in any one aware of its existence even in its sullen state. The moment of realization is tragically brief. Feeling, understanding, unity pass. The divine life sinks back again, dismembered and unconscious.

IV

Inevitably the manifold of impulses at this work's roots and its fusions of lyricism and visionary fiction refers us to a charming passage in *The Birth of Tragedy* by Nietzsche, the one seeking to explain the source of lyric poetry. For this passage describes the origin of metaphysical pictures, drawn in a lyrical and musical style, with resemblances to those of the story-teller Sherwood Anderson; and thus might be thought to cast light on the origins of Anderson's characteristic work. The lyricist, says Nietzsche, as a Dionysiac artist at first is united with the primordial, the ground of things, with its pain and basic contradictions, and produces an image of this pain, these contradictions, as music and the expression of what erroneously he takes to be his personal 'I.' In the process of the Apollonian dream however his music grows *visible* to him in parabolic pictures. That, Nietzsche continues, is what the Greeks meant by their depictions of Archilochus the intoxicated enthusiast who represented lyric poetry to them. They show him sunk in sleep while Appollo touches him with his laurel-bough. The sleeper's dionysiac-musical intoxication now casts picture-sparks about him which in their most evolved forms are Tragedies and Dithyrambic Poems.—The applicability of Nietzsche's theory flows of course not only from the resemblance of these picture-sparks to Anderson's fictions, but from a curious resemblance between the self-observing Anderson, the author of countless fugitive and divided personages, and the Archilochus of the Greek *trameos*. This is a consequence of the fact that Anderson composed in states of rapture like the little figure's, which, indubitably helped on by a few drinks nonetheless essentially were natural,

nervous intoxicants. We have his word for it in his *Memoirs* and in the piece *A Part of Earth*.

If finally we turn from this suggestive page, it is that Anderson was not a pure lyric poet in the sense of the Greeks and Nietzsche. We are obliged to call him a special realization of the Writer in several of his faculties. Meanwhile there exists a scientific hypothesis regarding the cause of this special realization. We think it worth a statement. It is that Anderson harmoniously combined within himself the two great basic temperaments, and that the combination was the source of the teamwork of reactions in his art.

Everybody nowadays is familiar with the theory of these fundamental human temperaments, respectively called tough-minded and tender-minded by William James, one of their students; extraverted and introverted by another, Carl Jung; cyclothemic and schizoid by Ernst Kretschmer; syntononic and schizoid by still others, Bleuler and A. A. Brill. More antithetical than masculinity and femininity, both temperaments are said also to some degree to be of the essence of every human being and in most beings to remain at loggerheads. One of them, by a combination of character and circumstances, often suffers ruinous suppression in the other's favor.

In the last decades some of these students have made extended inquiries into the creative reactions and methods of the two temperaments.¹ Kretschmer for example refers the reactions of realism and humor, and of naturalism to a degree, to the cyclothemic or syntononic temperament. To the schizoid he refers those of lyricism, the heroic, the idyllic, and mysticism. While Brill does not see eye to eye with Kretschmer, and leans to finding naturalists like Zola in the schizoid camp, lyricists like Whitman and Nietzsche in the syntononic, he has been sufficiently impressed by Kretschmer's schematization to draw it emphatically to the attention of his own study's readers.

Now Anderson, in whose work we find interplay of three of the reactions which we are bidden to refer to the cyclothemic or syntononic temperament and four of those we are bidden to refer to the schizoid: Anderson was a man who again and again stressed his consciousness of the presence of two, sometimes conflicting, sometimes harmonious, dispositions,

¹ Readers are referred to Kretschmer's epoch-making *Koerperbau und Charakter* and to Brill's study *Schizoid and Syntononic Factors in Neuroses and Psychoses* in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* for 1925.

almost separate *dramatis personae*, in his own psyche. The first was called by him 'the slick fellow,' the other, 'the Artist.' On the surface of Anderson's pair might appear to be the individuality and the personality—the latter being of course the fusion of the individuality and the vocation. The contest between them might appear the struggle between the interestedness of the former and the latter's disinterestedness. But on inspection 'the slick fellow' looks to us merely like someone whose soul thoroughly is in accord with his actual environment; who readily approaches objects; whose feelings, ever influenced by the outer world, in turn influence his thought and action; who possesses a rapid eye for opportunity, and sociability, realism, friendliness and an infinite adjustability. The 'Artist' for his part has the look of a person who hesitates before the object; follows out his own aims; forever seeks new paths and exits; adapts himself to reality through inventions which transform it for his own ends; possesses a distinct feeling for doing good. While frequently turning inwardly to himself, he has the power to analyze himself and others.

Now mark! To an astounding degree each of these *personae* of Anderson's resembles one of the two basic human temperaments as their scientific students describe them, in particular as they are described by Kretschmer, Bleuler and Brill. Listen, if but a moment, to the recital of a few of the traits attributed by Kretschmer to the cyclothemic temperament. They are the power to work, and spontaneity, audacity, amiability, adaptability and astuteness in the matter of handling other people; balanced by superficiality and tactlessness and inconstancy. What else are these than the business and journalistic traits lumped together as 'slickness' by Anderson? Listen again to a recital of a few of the hallmarks of the schizoid as seen by Brill. 'A true psychologist' who 'because he can strive against his own primitive feelings—acquires the ability to express them in literature and art'; 'refinement and differentiation in expression greater than the syntonic's'; 'aversion to reality—that produces a desire to change it or to turn inwardly to the self'; 'the refusal of facile discharges of feeling, effecting not only a gain in power but the opportunity and time for reflection and modification'; 'disharmony with the environment, contributing to making a reformer or inventor or prophet of the subject.' What traits are these but those of Anderson's 'Artist'?

It is also significant that Brill places in the ranks of the rare cases of the harmonious combination of the two temperaments the leader who was one of Anderson's lifelong heroes, Abraham Lincoln: Lincoln who more-

over provided Anderson with the model for the agonist of the heroic fragment we present among his posthumous pieces.

Thus, there presses itself upon us the hypothesis that Anderson's work derived its form from the circumstance that, stubbornly, irreducibly, the two great human temperaments and their reactions existed side by side in his psyche. Through others who similarly were medleys there often sounded the voices of one temperament. The voices of the other temperament were suppressed. Anderson on the contrary caused all of them to move contrapuntally. This in turn may well have been the cause of his distinguishing ability to combine various points of view in his stories, and of his liberal attitude toward the world. . . . Independently too a circumstance other than the peculiar complexity of his art-work and the psycho-analytic theories also moves us to the conclusion that an incorporation and harmonization of the two prime temperaments was Anderson's secret. This, is the ultimate magic of his work: its radiation of the American ethos, our social group's distinguishing tone. Anderson, the reflector of the yearning of the American Middle West, whose finest younger son he was, is nothing if not the reflector of the communal good-will of the American Middle West; of the benevolence happily so largely, so savingly, the habitual attitude of all our folk. Our ethos glints in his love of his fictive characters. It glances in his revelation through them of life's inalienable core of sweetness; in his many discoveries of the relationships between a myriad of hitherto apparently unrelated human characteristics. One sees it in his unwillingness to let any odd-fellow go, in his refusal to see him perish, in his effort towards a sympathetic understanding of his secret; in his very warm, bantering, winning way of writing. Our national 'fanaticism' even generates itself through him, fatalist though he was and a maker of grotesques. If the man himself as has been said was like a bonfire, warming hearts and hands, his expression's total effect is the substitution for 'feeling less kind and less needful for the well-being of mankind' of those that are 'kinder and more needful to that end.' Removing the sense of individual guilt and responsibility for insufficiency and failure, that poisoned spring, he transmutes it to the source of a miracle—reconciliation with the fellow-citizen, with existence, with oneself. The very continual attitude of mysticism is a stimulus to democratic feeling, which takes nourishment from, indeed cannot survive without, the sense of the existence of an absolute life.)

So rich a radiation of this conciliatory tone, this sympathetic attitude,

characteristic of the American people, we think to have been possible only to an individual who, biologically a complex alloy and synthesis, himself was a microcosm of the American macrocosm; an inner harmony of temperaments; a tiny but complete, active, friendly Humanity. For we more than suspect the sympathetic attitude of the American community to have been born of its inclusion within itself of all sorts of humanity and all manner of temperaments—from the extremely syntonic one of the Negro to the extremely schizoid of the Amerindian—and of its effort to bring these into working relationship and order.—Feeling besides corroborates our reasoning about Anderson. Critics have long been telling us that the writers treasured by humanity as its very own are timeless for the reason that they brought to the making of their art the unity and totality of Man. And feeling tells us that Anderson will survive with these writers: artists in many cases of a versatility and workmanship, a scope, power of evocation and vision vastly transcending his. Feeling that is to say has an intuition that he too brought to his art—so like a miniature universal art made of music and picture, realism and lyricism, naturalism, the heroic, the idyllic, the mystical—much of the force brought by them to theirs.

v

Through its very form, the classificatory arrangements of the selections, this anthology seeks to represent the essential complexity of Anderson's work. Oh, it seeks to symbolize other elements no less, the literary power, say, which for twenty-five years maintained itself at a single high pitch while assimilating fresh themes! (Thus the order not only is classificatory but chronological, and a handful of his last stories have been given final position, that they may indicate the projected quality of the new short-story collection on which he was at work when he died.) Mainly nonetheless its object is the display of the complex basic impulses. This is not easily feasible. These reactions as has been said regularly arose in pairs, in groups; took form in a homogeneous body of work that bridges the boundaries of the recognized categories and really created a number of new categories calling for barbarous compound names and the ability to bestow them. And we do not possess the singular talent of Polonius. What alone seemed possible was the indication of dominant impulses, directly in some cases and in others through emphasis of the type of material peculiarly connected with them.

What also may require explanation is the inclusion, in an anthology made up from Anderson's shorter work, of a few excerpts from his novels and autobiographies. But these excerpts are episodic enough to be able to function independently. Anderson himself published *Mill-Girls* from *Beyond Desire* as a novelette; and we have used nothing that suffers from isolation from its context.—And our reason for including the story of 1916, *Blackfoot's Masterpiece*, in a volume intended as a collection of the best of Anderson's shorter work in the forms in which it manifested itself? The author had rejected the story. No doubt it is brutal. Our motive for the inclusion was this: since our anthology represents an evolution, some picture of the commencement of this process of development was necessary to it, and among Anderson's early short work this piece admirably provides just that picture. With the brutality one feels in it the force and conviction of the Chicago School; the qualities reborn to American literature by that School.—The School's regional consciousness, the region's sensuous self-imagery and expression of the basis for its self-consciousness, meanwhile is represented by *The New Englander*, which was read to the present writer as early as the Christmas of 1919, in a version afterwards only very slightly altered.

As to the origins of certain of the posthumous pieces.—*Father Abraham* came to light in 1943 when a box of Anderson's manuscripts stored by him in the print-shop of his Marion, Virginia, newspapers was turned over to his executrix by his friend, David Greear. The box and its contents had been in the shop at least since 1929 and possibly for an even longer period. There is a possibility that the manuscript was a castoff. Whether or not, certainly it was a first draft, probably that of the work on Lincoln which Anderson had adumbrated to Roger Sergel in a letter of 1925 from Reno. Partly in typescript but mainly in handwriting, the fragmentary but strangely integral piece fell into two not quite perfectly related portions and along with seven complete chapters included several unplaced episodes and a few unfinished passages. The probability would seem to be that it had merely been put aside for later continuation. What makes one think so, is the fact that in recent years Anderson often referred to his entertainment of a project to write a book about Lincoln. One had the impression that it was to provide a place for some of his numerous, often extremely refreshing, ideas about the Civil War and the leaders on both sides.

The business of meshing the two portions of the manuscript, placing

the floating episodes, connecting the inconclusive passages, was not difficult. While it has been considered obligatory here and there to edit bits of the piece, the paraphrases have been few and are represented chiefly by a slight extension of the meaning in one paragraph and the transference of the tenses in one passage from the past into the pluperfect.

A Part of Earth is a variant treatment of the topic of Chapter Eleven of *The Robin's Egg Renaissance* book of the *Memoirs*, but not to be considered a rejected variant. The probability is too great that it was intended for inclusion in the unfinished omnibus volume which Anderson got under way about 1929 under the title *A Book of Days*, and in a pocket-notebook later on entitled *My Journal*. — *Daughters* was found in a typescript including the first chapter of one of Anderson's unfinished novels. The *Daughters* portion of the script had been corrected in ink by its author and there is reason for supposing that this internally taut piece of storytelling was intended for inclusion in the projected short-story volume. — The idyllic social study *The American Small Town* is the very lightly edited original of the last continuous piece of work carried toward completion by Anderson, the text for the volume *Home Town* in the illustrated series *The Face of America*. Only half of the original was accommodated in the volume. The manuscript bore the title *The American Small Town*.

PAUL ROSENFELD

About Sherwood Anderson

SHERWOOD ANDERSON WAS BORN in the town of Camden, Ohio, in 1876, the third of a family of seven children. His father, a Southerner, who had fought in the Union armies and lived romantic adventures in a world of fantasy, was a house-painter and not always able to support his family. Anderson's mother, who had been a bound-girl in her youth, sometimes got the bread by washing clothes. Her mother was an immigrant; some say, from Italy, others, from Hesse-Darmstadt. Anderson spent his boyhood in a succession of small Ohio towns and continued to attend high school until his eighteenth year, working at hours in the fields of the farmers of his vicinity, at county fairs with race-horses, at harvest time with threshing crews, and for a while in a bicycle factory. He was a laborer in Chicago at the time of the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, and volunteering, was sent to Cuba. Afterward he attended Wittenberg College, drifted thence into advertising work in Chicago, entered into marriage and later went into manufacturing and set up a factory in Ellyria, Ohio. Before 1912, he was trying to write, and on a day of that year walked out of his shop never to return. Again in Chicago, Anderson supported himself by composing advertisements for Critchfield and Company and worked on novels, poems in prose, short stories. Mainly through the influence of Theodore Dreiser his novel *Windy McPherson's Son* was published in 1916, while *The Little Review*, *The Seven Arts*, *The Forum* and *The Masses* began the presentation of his shorter work. Others of his books rapidly followed: in 1918 *Marching Men*, one of the first American novels about the labor movement; and in 1920 *Winesburg, Ohio*, the volume of short stories that