

The Context of Exile Motifs in Sherwood Anderson

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1

The relation of an individual to society as it is conceived by the subjective mind may find expression in varying degrees of tension. In theory that tension may range between two possible opposites of complete harmony at one extreme and utter rejection at the other extreme. Actually the tension would always point to a negative relation, a conflict. The conflict could be an internalized as well as manifest process. It may also involve shifting modes of perception from time to time. All the same it is always there. All creative works of literature necessarily touch upon this theme of social conflict in one way or another. And it becomes all the more important for those writers who are particularly concerned with the questions of social values of his time, especially those writers inclined to depict individuals who fail to come to terms with such values.

Sherwood Anderson (1876—1941), with his merits and demerits as a writer, belongs to this category of writers depicting such alienated individuals. The motif of estrangement from society is central in his life and work. Anderson's published works include eight novels, four collections of short stories, three volumes of autobiography, three books of poems and plays, and more than three hundred articles, reviews, and essays. Out of these, the present essay concentrates on the characteristic aspects of the writer's alienated individuals in *Winesburg, Ohio*, *Poor White*, *Dark Laughter*, and two autobiographies, *A Story Teller's Story* and the posthumous *Memoirs*. The typical Anderson character is considered to be an exile. This is so because his heroes, rejecting or rejected by society, are usually presented to yearn for a home they could belong to. The exiles are those who are estranged from society in spite of themselves. They are alienated individuals but their alienation is not absolute for they keep on longing for home. Anderson's alienated characters retain human warmth just for the reason that they are not existential outcasts but dreaming exiles. They are what Daniel Marder

called "exiles at home." (Marder 1973) Thus the focus of the essay will be on the exile theme of the author. Another important aspect of Anderson is that he was a great story-teller. We find him constantly telling stories about himself as well as others with minimum artistic pretension so that any sophisticated aesthete might feel disarmed in reading him. Taking up such a stylistic cue from the author, the present essay will depend a great deal upon plain rereading in building a total configuration.

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The formative years of Anderson's childhood left him a life-long impact. The small town of Ohio where Anderson was raised was to be also the home town of his literary imagination later. He was born in the village of Camden, Ohio, in 1876, the third child of Irwin and Emma Anderson described as the "most ordinary of parents" by one of his important editors. (White 1966: "Introduction") But his autobiographies created fantasy about them. They are described with greater piquancy. Irwin was irresponsible and romantic, and the suffering Emma was devoted and silent.

Father was made for romance. For him there was no such thing as a fact. It had fallen out that he, never having had the glorious opportunity to fret his little hour upon a greater stage, was intent on fretting his hour, as best as he could, in a money-saving prosperous corn-shipping cabbage-raising Ohio village. (Anderson 1968: 6)

Mother was tall and slender and had once been beautiful. She had been a bound girl in a farmer's family when she married father, the improvident young dandy. There was Italian blood in her veins and her origin was something of a mystery. (Anderson 1968: 8)

Irwin seemed to drink a lot and like to tell tall tales. For instance, he is reported to have said: "Can man live by bread alone? There is food on the table now. Eat! Stuff yourselves! . . . I am a man of faith. I tell you a sparrow shall not fall to the ground without my notice. I will make a tale of it." (Anderson 1968: 44) Such fanciful qualities of Irwin, imposed or factual, are related to Sherwood's understanding of man's plight in the machine age, for he knew that it was the age of industrial dawn in America for which he was making a wistful backward view. Excessive dreams are often symptomatic of homelessness. The nomadic life the Andersons led in Sherwood's earlier childhood was caused at least in part by the processes of industrialization in the late nineteenth century. The factory system was swallowing up self-styled crafts-

men, who were forced to lose independence. Irwin's failure as a "dealer in saddles and harness" was one such instance.

In 1884, the family moved to Clyde, Ohio, and managed to settle down there for long years until the mother's death in 1895. Most of the memories of Anderson's childhood in *A Story Teller's Story* concerns his experiences in this small town. Anderson quit the public school before graduation which he had attended quite irregularly. The family was not financially in a good state and the children had to work. Sherwood worked as a farm hand, a grocery delivery boy, a laborer in a bicycle factory, a newspaper boy, and a menial helper in various capacities in liveries and race-horse stables. He was nicknamed "Jobby" because of the willingness to take on odd jobs. It seems that he was running after every chance to earn money. But when he was out of a job, he liked to read and daydream, for which he was also called "Swatty." This is interesting because it is reminiscent of Anderson's later development of conflict: his attraction to business success and the simultaneous desire to be a writer at the expense of it.

Poverty seems to be the principal motif of Anderson's boyhood. William Sutton cites one of his interviewer's observation that the family was "aristocratically poor," and James Schevill suspects that they were not after all so helplessly poor as one might have the impression from the autobiographies. (Sutton 1967, Schevill 1951) Allowing for possible exaggerations, however, the accounts in the early parts of both *A Story* and *Memoirs* must be basically true. They convincingly explain Anderson's lack of formal education and odd-job experiences in boyhood. There are episodes of three boys sleeping in one bed because there were not enough bed clothes, Sherwood's bringing home neighbors' dirty clothes for Emma to wash, the mother triumphantly prodding the village children to attack her door with more cabbages in order to take them, and so forth. Anderson pretends indifference at one point:

If our family was poor, of what did our poverty consist? If our clothes were torn, the torn places only let in the sun and wind. In the winter we had no overcoats, but that only meant we ran rather than loitered. (Anderson 1968: 53)

Such indifference sharply contrasts with the following bitter remark in another moment:

Why is it that this one is born into life in a big house, with a carriage at the door, with no

thought of where food comes from, with warm clothes to wear, all of life to be lived in luxury, while we others, outside in the cold, often in ragged clothes, like little animals, are compelled to hunt our food from day to day? Why is it? Why is it? (Anderson 1969: 19)

The wave of urbanization in those days was absorbing people, especially young ones, to big cities where factories were flourishing. In 1896, at the threshold of adulthood, Sherwood went up to Chicago and worked as unskilled laborer in a cold-storage warehouse. The job consisted in the endless rolling of barrels which seemed meaningless. He hated the work he was doing but remained in Chicago for two more years, when he escaped the hardship by enlisting for the Spanish-American War. Later he expresses his reasons for antagonism against the machine and what it represents:

In many factories where I have worked most men talked vilely to their fellows, and long afterwards I was to begin to understand that a little. It is the impotent man who is vile. His very impotence has made him vile and in the end I was to understand that when you take from man the cunning of the hand, the opportunity to constantly create new forms in materials, you make him impotent. His maleness slips imperceptively from him and he can no longer give himself in love either to work or to women. "Standardization! Standardization! was to be the cry of my age and all standardization is necessarily a standardization in impotence. It is God's law.

(Anderson 1968: 187)

The machine represents the vile force for Anderson. It is the evil which displaces man from his home space. He may have been somehow naive when he sought for the saving counterpart in women and sexuality as he did in *Perhaps Women* and elsewhere, but he was obviously touching upon the heart of the problems of his time. His frequent emphasis on dreams and fancy becomes significant in this context.

Anderson's second Chicago period marks a remarkable success. It was occasioned by the good impression he could make on a Harry Simmons, advertising manager for a publishing company, with his commencement delivery in Wittenburg Academy, the high school he had attended after his discharge from the army. Now he had a position in the Chicago office of the *Woman's Home Companion* and wrote advertising copies. Anderson the successful advertising man compensated for Anderson the embittered laborer in the warehouse years before.

I now advance rapidly, I have twenty-five dollars a week, then thirty-five, forty, fifty, seventy-five, I buy new clothes, hats, shoes, socks, shirts. I walk freely on Michigan Boulevard in Chicago, go to drinking parties, meet bigger and bigger businessman. (Anderson 1969: 34)

His enthusiasm paid off in terms of reputation as well as money. He embraced the cant of success ethic and even became an ardent apologist for it for a while.

In 1904 Anderson married Cornelia Lane with a middle-class upbringing which he lacked. In 1906 he moved to Cleveland as head of a mail-order firm. In 1907 he again moved to the town of Elyria and headed his own "Anderson Manufacturing Company" for painting products. His prosperity continued and he posed as a business dandy:

I talked rapidly, rushed through the streets to my office, slammed doors, gave orders to my subordinates in sharp tones. I was merely trying to enact the part of the pushing, bright successful young American business man. (Anderson 1969: 37)

He also recalls in his *Memoirs* that he was then cultivating consciously what he called the "foxiness" and "slickness" of business trickery: "Talk a good deal about honesty but keep your eyes open and when the chance comes slip it over on them."

Deep in him, however, there was another undercurrent. From about 1909, he began writing novels in his attic at night. It soon became a known secret. His secretary testified that she had type-written his first two novels for him: *Windy McPherson's Son* and *Marching Men*, which concern the rejection of conventional society as a deliberate moral act of the heroes. Increasingly business itself grew troublesome. Tension deepened as he divided himself between two incompatible worlds. Then came the crisis dramatically. On November 27, 1911, the Thanksgiving Day, Anderson suddenly said to his secretary, "My feet are cold wet and heavy from long wading in a river. Now I shall go walk on dry land." (Anderson 1968: 306) As he remembers it, he walked out of the office and disappeared for four days and nights until he was found in Cleveland "dazed and unable to give his name or address." His case was diagnosed as "nerve exhaustion"

Anderson soon recovered from his amnesia, settled the troubled business, and by February the next year he went back to his old advertising business in Chicago. But this third Chicago period was definitely more of a literary than business nature. The so-called Chicago Renaissance was well under way when Anderson joined it in 1913. He associated with such writers as Carl Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters, Ben Hecht, Margaret Anderson, Harriet Monroe, etc., and saw his works published from 1916 on. The Elyria incident, then, was the turning point in the writer's career with all its legendary and romanticized aspects. In his mature age nearing forty he broke off with the business world and became a writer depreciating the materialistic values he

had once embraced with eagerness.

The Elyria incident is all the more significant for its symbolic import. For the materialistic values he rejected were the central disease of American society as he saw it. Anderson writes of his wandering in delirium (Anderson 1968, 308): "I went along a spur of railroad track, over a bridge, out of town, and out of that phase of my life." It is certain that "out of that phase" here also points by parallel to his moral rejection of materialistic society. He became an exile from that moment. His exile from society began with his exile from his past career he considered false. He had his family, friends, public acclaim sometimes, and more, to satisfy the need for belonging. He built himself his "Ripshin" in Virginia to settle down, was happy with his *Marion Democrat* for a while, wrote and lectured for the workers' cause with some heart in the thirties. But he never seem to find his permanent home space to rest his wandering mind and body. He constantly moved back and forth between small town and big city, between fancy and fact, between belief and doubt. After the great symbolic gesture in Elyria, he dreamed and groped as an exile. He dreamed of women, of the idyllic past, of a more primitive order of things. In his autobiographies and other writings Anderson frequently writes about his disbelief in facts and love of fancy.

In the life of fancy there is no such thing as good or bad. There are no Puritans in that life. The dry sisters of Philistia do not come in at the door... They would do better to stay in the world of facts—to spend their energy in catching bootleggers, inventing new machines... In the world of the fancy life separates itself with slow movements and with many graduations into the ugly and the beautiful.
(Anderson 1968: 59)

Such qualities of dream are certainly symptomatic of an exile, and Anderson remained one as long as he could not find or create the world that were to receive the dreaming rejector. No doubt his autobiographies from which we have drawn so far are themselves the product of artistic imagination, and we will see how Anderson created exiles in his fiction.

3

Winesburg, Ohio (1919) depicts characters of the small town who are disconnected from the community and unable to recover the normal human relationship in spite of their passionate longing for it. Each of the stories is independent but the whole book

achieves its unity through the common setting and recurrent characters. Especially George Willard appears in most of the stories, sometimes as the main character, sometimes as a witness. His appearances hold the characters and incidents together. The book progressively moves toward his departure in the end. Most of the characters are obsessed, suppressed, and isolated. Living in the town, they are not part of the town because of their incommunicability. Their pent-up emotions are discharged not to the open community but to George only as if in a subdued secret ritual. This may add to George's maturity education but does not resolve the social disconnection from which they suffer. Their isolation continues and they remain "grotesques."

In "Hands" and "Paper Pills" the theme is pathetically carried by symbolic symptoms. The lonely old man, Wing Biddlebaum, was literally banished from his former community in great disgrace after he was suspected of sexual indecencies. Ever since, he had been "forever frightened and beset by a ghostly band of doubts." Twenty years in Winesburg has not made him come any closer to the town. The nervous little hands of his are the pathetic symbol of his lost human interaction as well as his desire to recover it. The shy old man wants to keep them hidden away, but the hands sometimes become restless and active, "alarming their owner," like the "beating of the wings of an imprisoned bird." The hands had been the source of his misunderstanding. He was lovable, gentle, and affectionate. But his expression of affection toward his school children aroused the suspicion of homosexuality. The old man became timid and feared other people. Only in the presence of George, the only outlet of his emotion, they burst into great activity as if inspired. George is the "medium through which he expressed his love of man." In actuality, this is nothing more than wishful thinking. The momentary communion between the two is not carried out in the form of a dialogue. There is no mutual responsiveness. The impassioned old man simply pours out his tale, repeating his commanding "you must . . .," and the sympathetic boy keeps on listening. This is typical of George's relation with the grotesque characters. The comical Joe Welling in "A Man of Ideas" and the embittered Elmer Cowley in "Queer" are exemplary in their inability to listen to and embrace others. Their psychic tension is so great that they cannot choose but let it out and be relieved. Enoch Robinson in "Loneliness" is much like Biddlebaum in that he confesses of his inability to make himself understood by his wife. Like Biddlebaum's excitement, he also sprang to his feet and his voice shook with excitement while reporting to George how he, unable to

make his wife understand his importance, had sworn at her and brought their marriage to a sudden catastrophe. During the confession, the vexed old man was like a "man-boy" and George, a "boy-man." The reversed role does not heal anything; the lonely man remains, in the end, alone in the room which once was warm with his family.

"Paper Pills" philosophizes by parable the pitiable state of man's isolation. Dr. Reefy, a friendless old man, who once married a beautiful girl only to see her dead the next year, has the habit of writing down his thoughts on the scraps of paper, which he stuffs into his huge pocket. When they harden into balls and fill the pocket, he takes out and throws them away. Except the dead wife to whom he read "all of the odds and ends of thought" on the bits of paper, no one knows about his discarded thoughts. The unfulfilled communication is rendered sadly comical by Dr. Reefy's singular habit of thought-ball throwing. If the "pills" were ever taken by other people, they might cure, for communication is curative. There is a great sense of futility in his solipsism with his little truths "growing gigantic inside" like sweet-tasting "twisted apples" remaining on the tree unpicked.

The state of extreme loneliness and isolation brings a physical crisis to Alice Hindman in "Adventure." She falls in love with Ned and after he has gone to Cleveland for better chances in life, lives in the memory of him for seven years. But the memory of love cannot fulfill her. The desire to love and be loved increasingly becomes a physical necessity. Characteristically the reaction against her loneliness takes the form of sensual expressiveness. One dark night, while listening to the rainfall, "a mad desire to run naked through the streets took possession of her."

She thought that the rain would have some creative and wonderful effect on her body. Not for years had she felt so full of youth and courage. She wanted to leap and run, to cry out, to find some other lonely human and embrace him. On the brick sidewalk before the house a man stumbled homeward. Alice started to run. A wild desperate mood took possession of her. "What do I care who it is. He is alone, and I will go to him," she thought; and then without stopping to consider the possible result of her madness, called softly. "Wait!" she cried. "Don't go away. Whoever you are, you must wait."

(Anderson 1919: 132)

Her impulsive action is directionless and futile. The passing old man does not understand what is surging inside this uncommon presence and goes his way. Frustrated, she crawls back to her room and "wept brokenheartedly." The crisis passes without any solution. She finds solace in the recognition of loneliness as a shared condition:

"Many people must live and die alone, even in Winesburg." Alice fares much better than other characters in the book for she is rendered capable of objective knowledge of herself, but she remains lonely as anybody else.

It seems that Anderson in *Winesburg, Ohio* tends to think that unfulfilled sexuality conditions the state of loneliness. The context of loneliness in many characters is presented as psychological rather than social reality. A realistic character ought to be set in a concrete social context in which partial problems are considered against a total background of personality and society. In the prologue of the book, entitled "The Book of the Grotesque," a grotesque is defined as one who adheres to a single truth:

It was the truths that made the people grotesques. The old man had quite an elaborate theory concerning the matter. It was his notion that the moment one of the people 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. (Anderson 1919: 15)

The grotesque characters are dealt with sympathetically, but their problems are seldom projected in an objective context. Many of them may seem to be exaggerated psychopathic cases rather than real persons. This may be one of the characteristic weaknesses of Anderson as a writer.

Along with Alice Hindman, many other characters are basically victims of unfulfilled sexuality: the woman-hater Wash Williams in "Respectability," Kate Swift in "The Teacher," Tom Foster, in "Drink," and by implication Wing Biddlebaum in "Hands." Naturally, George's progressive move toward maturity proceeds predominantly with his awakening to sexuality. In "An Awakening" George is described to whisper these key words, "lust and night and woman," while holding Belle Carpenter tightly. "Sophistication," which prepares his departure in the next and last story, "Departure," hinges on the sexuality theme in the mature relationship between him and Helen While. Living in the same town, they are all exiles from the community in one way or another. Repression is largely related to the problem of sexuality in both the maladjust and the adolescent.

Singularly the four-part stories of "Godliness" expound the social and historical implications behind the hero's victimization. Drawing heavily from the story of David's power and glory in the Old Testament, "Godliness" traces the monstrous effect upon an innocent boy of the Puritan piety combined with the time's acquisitive greed. Significantly the Bentleys are not the natives of northern Ohio; they came from east. In

Anderson the east is the direction from which comes the new industrial spirit. Jesse, the sole survivor among his many brothers from the Civil War, cultivates a pious patriarchal figure, an extraordinary, atavistic image for the modern reader. Delicate in physique but strong in will, he expands his land with energy. His greed is mixed with his religious eagerness of a self-styled prophet. Thinking himself as the "true servant of God," he persuades himself that the entire stretch of land his eyes could reach should fall into his possession. Jesse's pious greed leads him to regard his rival landowners in the Ohio valley as "Philistines" and "enemies of God." Jesse was filled with fantastic impulse, "half fear, half greediness," and identified himself with the other Jesse in the Bible. But he also feared his enemies coming back like "Goliath the Philistine of Gath." So he fervently prayed for a David to be born to protect him:

Let thy grace alight upon me. Send me a son to be called David who shall help me to pluck at last all of these lands out of the hands of the Philistines and turn them to Thy service and to the building of Thy kingdom on earth. (Anderson 1919: 68-69)

But this David comes to the world not through himself but through his daughter Louise who was impetuous and sulky and did not like her husband who was a banker nor care for her son David. Louise represents one of the Anderson's women who instinctively abhor men's sterile preoccupation with business and industry. As a boy, David lives on his grandfather's farm and is happy there. Shrewd Jesse takes advantage of his banking son-in-law, new farming instruments and cheap labor. He prospers according to his scheme. The crisis comes when the old obsessed man attempts to consummate his success with a bizarre religious ritual. He takes David and a lamb to the woods to make a burnt offering to God and baptize the boy with the blood of the lamb. It was a piteous reenactment of the biblical inspiration in mock tragedy.

Terror-stricken, the boy runs away. Jesse also starts to run after the fleeing lamb and the boy. David takes out his sling and shoots a stone hard at Jesse, who, being hit squarely in the head, falls down. This tragi-comic incident is the climax of the story. Through his symbolic falling down, the greedy-pious old man has proved himself to be no other than the "Goliath the Philistine" he feared and against whom he had wanted to be protected by David. He was made ridiculous because he turned out to be his own enemy in sheer irony.

Jesse's obstinate and hypocritical religiosity stands in good contrast with that of Reverend Hartman in "The Strength of God" who, after peeping at the weeping naked

body of Kate Swift living next door, concludes that she is an "instrument of God bearing the message of truth." This may be Andersonian version of Lawrentian recognition of the body. Unlike Jesse, Hartman is not blinded by the intense religiosity he has; he becomes capable of a sort of epiphany however limited.

"Godliness" ends with David's exiling from the Bentleys and from Winesburg. He is resolute that he is not coming back: "I have killed the man of God and now I will myself be a man and go into the world." In actuality, Jesse is not dead. Nonetheless, David's action is a symbolic slaying of what Jesse embodies—Puritanism and greed, the shiritual basis of industrialism as Anderson had understood.

David's banishment, along with comparable outgoing motivations in others like Seth Richmond, foreshadows George's eventual departure from town. All of the outgoing characters are driven more or less by a certain repulsive energy of the town. The remaining characters, those aged frustrated ones, have already become grotesques. All of them are intense dreamers. Whether they depart following their desire to escape or remain to become grotesques, they are exiles who have lost connection with real home. So the general condition of Winesburg characters adds to the maturity education of George, the central focus of artistic attention endowed with the rare quality of self-knowledge. George is the only positive presence in the book peopled by the cases of psychological frustration. Yet he is also an exile though he is to seek his chance in life elsewhere not knowing frustration as yet.

4

Concerning the development of his novelistic themes, Anderson once observed that in *Winesburg, Ohio* he had tried to tell "the story of the defeated figures of an American individualistic small town life" and that his later books were "an attempt to carry these same people forward into the new American life, into the whirl and roar of modern machines." (Anderson 1969: 218) *Poor White* (1920), indeed, is set against a fully drawn socio-historical background. Through the growth and defeat of Hugh McVey's life, the novel documents the conflict of the American society which passes over from an agrarian small town into a busy industrial city. The main character's role is vital in the transformation, and his personal conflict develops side by side with that of the changing society. Rex Burbank even considers the town of Bidwell to be

one of the main characters. (Burbank 1964) The defeat of the human cause in the new industrial society is epitomized in the defeat of the main character.

The first phase of *Poor White* is concerned with the life of Hugh before he reaches maturity. Like Twain's Huck Finn, he is the son of a Mississippi river loafer. In the village on the Mississippi called Mudcat Landing, the lonely family of father and son lives in a poverty-stricken yet carefree and idle rhythm. The boy slumbers away his time dreaming beside the river. But change comes to the life of the boy as the town exposes itself to the onrush of industrial America. The railroad is laid out in this small town of Missouri, and the manager named Henry Shepard employs him for odd work in the station. The boy soon comes to live with the Shepards and Henry's wife Sarah takes up Hugh's education with great eagerness. Like a practical and ambitious Yankee, she teaches him how to read and write and urges him to take up the new active life instead of his slothful countrified habit.

Sarah Shepard looked upon what she called Hugh's laziness as a thing of the spirit. "You have got to get over it," she declared. "Look at your own people—poor white trash—how lazy and shiftless they are. You can't be like them. It's a sin to be so dreamy and worthless."

(Anderson 1949: 127)

It has taken time and effort for Hugh to overcome his natural tendencies. He has been frequently haunted by an impulse to return to his old lazy life with his father in the shack by the river. The father was a cruel sponge but at least he lived care-free close to nature. When Hugh could finally manage to conform to the new principle, he has to pay its price—utter loneliness.

When the pages of the book became indistinct before his eyes and he felt within him the inclination to drift off into dreams, he again arose and walked up and down the platform. Having accepted the New England woman's opinion of his own people and not wanting to associate with them, his life became utterly lonely and his loneliness also drove him to labor.

(Anderson 1949: 134)

The second phase of the novel finds Hugh who had left Mudcat Landing on the occasion of the Shepards' departure and his father's death. He wanders along the Mississippi and finally settles down in the Ohio town of Bidwell as a telegraph operator. But the official job is only nominal. In mysterious seclusion he is actually intent on industrial invention, never mixing with the townspeople. This part of the novel is full of observations and commentaries on the social change caused by the coming industry.

Judge Hanby, much like Judge Turner in *A Story Teller's Story*, poses as a popular prophet. The whole town is seen to be aroused by rumors on Hugh and by expectations and suspicions on the great changes of the day. The turmoil of industrialization as a "new force" is generally felt. Its power is regarded as ubiquitous, omnipotent, and threatening.

Already the giant that was to be king in the place of old kings was calling his servants and his armies to serve him. He used the methods of old kings and promised his followers booty and gain. Everywhere he went unchallenged, surveying the land, raising a new class of men to positions of power. Railroads had already been pushed out across the plains; great coal fields from which was to be taken food to warm the blood in the body of the giant were being opened up; iron fields were being discovered; the roar and clatter of the breathing of the terrible new thing, half-hideous, half-beautiful in its possibilities, that was for so long to drown the voices and confuse the thinking of men, was heard not only in the towns but even in lonely farm houses, where its willing servants, the newspapers and magazines, had begun to circulate in ever increasing numbers. At the town of Gibsonville, near Bidwell, Ohio, and at Lima and Finley, Ohio, oil and gas fields were discovered. (Anderson 1949: 170)

This fast-moving, breath-taking journalese constitutes one of the triumphant moments of the novel. The passage leads on to the name-calling of the aspiring tycoons of the day.

At Cleveland, Ohio, a precise, definite-minded man named Rockefeller bought and sold oil. From the first he served the new thing well and he soon found others to serve with him. The Morgans, Fricks, Goulds, Carnegies, Vanderbilts, servants of the new king, princes of the new faith, merchants all, a new kind of rulers of men, defied the world-old law of class that puts the merchant below the craftsman, and added to the confusion of men by taking on the air of creators. They were merchants glorified and dealt in giant things, in the lives of men and in mines, forests, oil and gas fields, factories, and railroads. (Anderson 1949: 170)

This sarcastically negative view of Anderson's on the industrial age gains impetus with the specificity of documentary information. At another juncture, he scathingly attacks young talents bought by business to enhance the cause of "the new thing."

In a sweeter age many of these young men might have become artists, but they had not been strong enough to stand against the growing strength of dollars. They have become instead newspaper correspondents and secretaries to politicians. All day and every day they used their minds and their talents as writers in the making of puffs and the creating of myths concerning the men by whom they were employed. They were like the trained sheep that are used at great slaughterhouses to lead other sheep into the killing pens. Having befouled their own minds for

fire, they made their living by befouling the minds of others.

(Anderson 1949: 199)

If the industrial power is so ominous an evil as is conceived by Anderson, then the bankruptcy of innocence of Hugh the inventor ought to be inevitable, almost predetermined. Several ambitious men of property in Bidwell become industrial businessmen, Tom Butterworth the farmer and John Clark the banker join with Steve Hunter, the youthful entrepreneur with sufficient cunning, in setting up a factory which is to produce labor-saving machines invented by Hugh. The initial plant-setting machine fails, but the subsequent corn-cutting machine and the apparatus for unloading coal cars turn out to be great success. Such business occasions bring to the shy inventor a momentary though illusory comfort of society.

However, the shock of industrialization is felt from the beginning. The recruiting of investments has produced damage to petty investors. The new factory system does not provide the workers with a sense of emotional fulfillment. Tension has grown between employer and employee. Industrial strikes happen. There are traveling socialist agitators coming to town to arouse people in the streets. Discontented workers either quarrel with each other or talk of "good old days." And Hugh is obliged to realize that he happens to have been one of the prime causes for this new situation and that he has become the principal target of their discontent. Once he overhears one of them say:

"... I thought it was mighty funny, all this talk about the factory work being so easy. I wish the old days were back. I don't see how that inventor or his inventions ever helped us workers. Dad was right about him. He said an inventor wouldn't do nothing for workers. He said it would be better to tar and feather that telegraph operator." (Anderson 1949: 363)

In the third and last phase Clara Butterworth comes into the scene. She is significant in the novel for she embodies the antithesis of the cause of business-industry. She goes through her own independent moral education before uniting with Hugh. To her all men in the town are dishonestly plotting against each other. Only Hugh is "one man of them all who was not a schemer." But the marriage does not result in consummation. The timid Hugh, having long lived in isolation, gets bewildered by the human closeness. Passionate Clara becomes scornful. From the symbolic point of view, the union of the couple is delayed because Hugh still plays the vital role of an expediter of the life-destroying force against whose repression and perversion Clara has been

fighting with the intuitive wisdom and impulsive energy of the female being.

Clara hated the machine and began to hate all machines. Thinking of machinery and the making machines had, she decided, been at the bottom of her husband's inability to talk with her. Revolt against the whole mechanical impulse of her generation began to take possession of her.

(Anderson 1949: 400)

Hugh awakens to the reality and the dilemma of his social position. His initial impulse is to revoke what he has helped to come into being. Hugh made machines himself. But once they come into being they are out of his reach. His protest is in vain. The communion of Hugh and Clara coincides with the climax of the novel. Joe Wainworth, the once independent craftsman reduced to a discontented worker in Hugh's factory, kills Jim Gibson, originally his own assistant before the factory comes, for his insult, and attacks Steve Hunter. Joe is subdued by Ed the foreman. Clara, who happens to be on the scene, sympathizes with Joe's outburst. But when Joe starts attacking Hugh as the original cause of his unhappiness, she immediately comes to her husband's rescue out of a genuine affection of a woman. After all Hugh was not an evil-doer; he was just one of the many perplexed and hurt by life.

At that moment the woman who had been a thinker stopped thinking. Within her arose the mother, fierce, indomitable, strong with the strength of the roots of a tree. To her then and forever after Hugh was no hero, remaking the world, but a perplexed boy hurt by life.

(Anderson 1949: 432)

Joe's animal attack upon Hugh gives the occasion to resolve the marital tension. But more significantly it also became the occasion by which Hugh was awakened to the falsity of the surface prosperity of the town. At last he could see through the thick walls of Sarah's Yankee education and its social outcome, industrialism, and recover the vision of the town's preindustrial past when supposedly there was peace with people living close to nature. The attack of Joe was the "attack out of the town's past."

The sudden attack out of the town's past had brought Hugh to Clara, but it had brought something quite different to Hugh. The bite of the man's teeth and the torn places on his cheeks left by the tense fingers had mended, leaving but a slight scar: but a virus had got into his veins. The disease of thinking had upset the harness maker's mind and the germ of that disease had got into Hugh's blood.

(Anderson 1949: 433)

It is perhaps safe to say that *Poor White* has a happy ending, for Hugh and Clara are reunited. But his acceptance by Clara is more of a dreamful nature, for it is obvious that he will lose his social ground in the life after the story. He has contracted the "disease of thinking" from the victim of industrialism. He is not the victim of a futile success dream like the farmer in "The Eggs," nor of his own passion like many of the grotesque characters in *Winesburg, Ohio*. It was society that initiated the innocent uncontaminated boy to the schemes of the industrial order and pressed him against his natural temper to the inevitable moral bankruptcy at the end. David in "Godliness" flees from the world of Jesse; Hugh remains after his social shock and is even accepted by Clara. But he awakens to his own epiphany that industrialism inflicts damages upon the proper existence of human beings. From the moment of such an awakening—it is appropriate that the novel ends at this point—he becomes an exile, almost an archetypal one though the writer does not record nor comment on this later phase. Hugh is representative of those uprooted, alienated individuals of a changing industrial society. He can disentangle himself from his mistaken commitment but cannot go back to the idyllic life of his boyhood on the river, for it is not any longer there. He has lost his social space to belong to.

5

While *Winesburg, Ohio* depicts the pitiable, deformed shapes of isolated characters and *Poor White* emphasizes the socio-historical process which estranges the individual from society, *Dark Laughter* (1925) singularly concentrates on the repressive standards and barren mores of industrialism. Here Anderson's characteristic mode of perception entails the opposition between the natural instinct of a sensuous individual and the repressive machine-ridden order of business power. No doubt society is larger than its individual, and for that matter negative characters taking sides with the inhuman power are likely to prevail upon innocent ones adhering to the ways of natural man. The rejection of social norms in Anderson's characters comes invariably out of psychological necessity, never out of sober moral decision. This may be one limiting characteristic of his social themes. Persons refusing to accept social conventions are doomed to be victims and exiles. Grotesque characters in *Winesburg, Ohio* and Hugh McVey in *Poor White* are morally innocent individuals and the various aspects of their victi-

mized existence constituted the subject matter of the books. *Dark Laughter* reverses the focus. It is presupposed that blind power does not necessarily guarantee the personal sense of satisfaction for those who apparently profit as its functionary.

The novel is constructed in the balance of two antithetical characters. Bruce Dudley and Fred Grey, and moves toward the utter personal defeat of the latter who is the businessman representing the barren cause of mindless industrialism. Defeat is brought upon the power man through the triumphant workings of retaliating social victims. Though Hemingway parodied the novel with his *The Torrents of Spring* and critics tend to think slightly of it, *Dark Laughter* was significantly Anderson's exceptional commercial success which helped him to build the Virginia country residence.

The brief outline of the story is like this, although it does not seem to be felicitous to abstract an outline from the overflowing, stream-of-conscious narration. Bruce Dudley, the central character, is an ex-journalist and writer who dreams of a spontaneous natural life. He works in his home town Old Harbor for a wheel factory owned by Fred Grey, a typically impotent Andersonian businessman. Fred's emotional poverty is symbolically manifested by sexual inadequacy with his estranged wife Aline. In the factory where he varnishes wheels, Bruce has a close companion Sponge Martin, a manly, spontaneous, self-sufficient ex-craftsman. Around this simple network of relation are built, in rather a loose manner, memories of their past lives. Before coming to this Mississippi town, Bruce left Chicago without a notice to his wife Bernice, a contemptible dilettante writer, and lived for a while in New Orleans among Negroes who impressed him as a natural, spontaneous race. (This episode remarkably parallels the author's own experience.) In Chicago Tom Willis was his only friend, more or less an intellectual counterpart of Sponge.

Aline's reminiscences are equally resourceful. Like Bruce, she instinctively bears longing for human self-fulfillment and takes a grudge against everything that lies in its way—war, business, and her husband. As a child she once wept bitterly to hear that her father had cut down acres of the forest to make money. After the world war that had taken the lives of her brother and fiance, she went to Paris, where she met Fred and married him. But the most important memory of Paris is the party held at Rose Frank's apartment. Rose, an American anti-intellectual intellectual, was furiously delivering iconoclastic messages unsettling everything and everybody. There was also a mysterious, impressively silent young man, who "got into the mind and won't go

out” and who, in retrospect, resembles remarkably the features of Bruce.

Then begins Aline's affair with Bruce. Every afternoon while she is waiting in her car for Fred in front of the factory absorbed in the beauty of the dance-like movement of working men swarming out, she catches sight of Bruce walking together with Sponge and calls up to her mind the young man at Rose's apartment in Paris. There is a mutual, unexpressed hatred between Fred and his employees, Bruce and Sponge. Presently Bruce is employed as the gardener of the Greys by Aline; sexual relation happens at her invitation; and Bruce disappears. From this point, the disgrace of Fred becomes intensified. Aline suddenly turns tender and declares her pregnancy, which mistaken Fred happily accepts as his own making after initial distrust. He is especially glad of his power to reproduce and of his torturer's disappearance. However, the illusion proves to be momentary. Bruce comes back one evening and Fred is forced to face the stark, naked truth. Not only is the baby his antagonist's; Aline rejects his pitiable appeal to stay with him and departs with Bruce. After an interval Fred takes the pistol and goes out after them. But the hunt is rather perfunctory, for his action is not so convincing even to himself. He reaches the riverbank, shoots a futile shot at the dark river, and returning home, trifles, amid the Negro servants' laughter, with the possible ways of saving his face from the scandal.

It is most probable that Fred will survive as a businessman after the story. But his loss of human dignity would remain irrecoverable. He is ruthlessly reduced to a hollow lifeless husk devoid of any human content, a caricature of a debunked industrial hero incongruously wielding a huge business power in his hand. The social inflictor is retaliated in person and with vengeance. The plight of Fred is reminiscent of an account of a practical joke the author enacted rather maliciously in a Mexican village. Toward the end of his *Memoirs*, Anderson remembers it like this. In the hotel where he lodged, there was a wealthy American family occupying the adjacent room. On arrival they probably had been molested by the begging natives. When the night came, they were disconcerted by unfamiliar sounds coming from far and near and trembled at the thought of possible robbery or even murder. Anderson waited and when a cock crowed he diabolically took the chance. He crowed back himself to create the impression that there was a clandestine scheming against them under way. He took a malicious pleasure in this. It worked and the family fled before the dawnbreak. (Anderson 1969: 537-40)

Fred is the sole negative character in the novel. There is Bernice as a target of caricature in the book's anti-intellectual project, but the presence of this minor character is slight. All other characters appear to be aligned against Fred for retaliation. The book is enlivened with the vision of elemental nature with images of sun, wind, rain, earth, river, etc., and of natural sensuous man with images of the dancing waves of negroes, their spontaneous laughter, healthy working people, etc. But Fred is not invited to the feast of these riches of nature. He simply dwindles off to nonexistence while his antagonist strides on the scene with the force of nature. It is as if the exiles had returned to tar and feather the devil that drove them away homeless. So the novel ends with the "dark laughter" drowning Fred:

Why couldn't Fred laugh? He kept trying but failed. In the road before the house one of the negro women now laughed. There was a shuffling sound. The older negro woman tried to quiet the younger, blacker woman, but she kept laughing the high shrill laughter of the negress. "I knowed it, I knowed it, all the time I knowed it," she cried, and the high shrill laughter ran through the garden and into the room where Fred sat upright and rigid in bed.

(Anderson 1925: 319)

6

Works of Anderson including such autobiographical pieces as *A Story Teller's Story* and *Memoirs* generally explore the theme of an alienated individual rejecting or rejected by his society. But his alienated characters retain human warmth. They are uprooted emotionally as well as socially; yet they keep the desire to belong. They are dreaming exiles. There are three characteristic approaches to this theme. *Winesburg, Ohio* concentrates on the pathetic individual symptoms of repression of human nature. *Poor White*, shifting the focus from individual to society, examines with vengeance how the advent of industrial society victimizes the individual. *Dark Laughter* represents the third stage in the development of Andersonian social themes. In this novel, the moral writer celebrates the triumph of natural human impulses over the barren values of industrialism. The theme of alienation, however, is treated impressionistically rather than realistically, Lionel Trilling has this complaint:

In Anderson's world there are many emotions, or rather many instances of a few emotions, but there are very few sights, sounds, and smells, very little of the stuff of actuality. The very things to which he gives moral values because they are living and real and opposed in their

organic nature to the insensate abstractness of an industrial culture become, as he writes about them, themselves abstract and without life. (Trilling 1970: 41)

One conspicuous result of this emotional impressionism is the frequent reduction of social conflict to the antagonism between the two favored images: woman vs. machine. Such imagistic reduction of realistic material may have hurt the artistic integrity as it may enhance and sharpen the poetic vision of industrial America of his day.

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(국문요약)

셔우드 앤더슨과 소외의 모티브

김 길 중

앤더슨에 대한 작가 연구의 일환으로 쓰여진 이 글에서 다루어진 작품은 「이야기꾼의 이야기」와 「회상기」 두 편의 자서전, 단편집 「오하이오주 와인즈버그」, 「가난한 백인」과 「검은 웃음소리」의 두 소설이다. 개인과 사회의 강렬한 대립이 앤더슨의 작가적 상상력의 기틀인데 이것은 두가지 유형으로 형상화 된다. 하나는 심리적 계제로서 「오하이오주 와인즈버그」에서 처럼 인간본성의 억압으로 인한 내면적인 부조화 현상이요, 다른 하나는 「가난한 백인」에서처럼 산업사회의 비인간화 작용으로 인한 개인의 소외 현상이다. 앤더슨은 남북전쟁 이후 산업화 물결이 일면서 개인이 소외되는 현상을 부정적인 입장에서 작품의 소재로 채택하였는데, 라이어넬 트릴링이 지적한 것처럼 사실주의를 희생하여 도덕성을 산결점을 가진 것으로 보인다. 그런데 그의 시인다운 비전은 소외의 문제를 사회적 분석보다는 자연과 본성에 대한 갈구로 치환하였다. 따라서 앤더슨의 소외된 인간은 사회로부터 실존적으로 단절된 것이 아니라, 사회에서 추방되어 참다운 소속을 다시 꿈꾸는 실향인들로 된다.