Sherwood Anderson: The Artist's Struggle for Self-Respect

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Sherwood Anderson, although best known for Winesburg, Ohio, a gallery of remarkably sensitive portraits of small-town Americans attempting to adjust to the advent of Industrialism, wrote seven novels and three full-length fictional autobiographies which provide exceptional insight into Anderson's life-long struggle to accept himself as an artist. Every one of the protagonist-artists in these ten works both loves and hates his actual, personal father, and many of them have equally ambivalent feelings about one or more substitute—or surrogate—fathers. Indeed, the persistent recurrence in his writing of unresolved father-son relationships suggests that Anderson accorded to them a reference they cannot bear alone. These unresolved relationships become, I believe, a dramatic metaphor for the more profound struggle, waged within the artist, between the Collective Father (society's laws, its code, its standards, its truth) and the Spirit Father (the individual's private, independent truth, his personal God). Ultimately the artist's struggle is between self-hatred and self-respect.

Critics of Anderson generally have been too quick to content themselves with his description of his father in the three autobiographical works as a "ruined dandy" or as a "lovable improvident." Actually, the relationship is much more complex. Anderson hated his father, for reasons suggested to him largely by the collective truth, by society, by the public Father. He also loved his father, for reasons for the most part suggested by his personal moral authority, his Spirit Father. Above all, Anderson identified with his father, for his father
was a natural story teller as Anderson himself was. It is because of this identification that Anderson’s ambiguous feeling for his father is an expression of the battle being fought for him as an artist by the Collective Father and the Spirit Father.

Anderson hated his father because he didn’t live up to society’s standards for a “good father.” In Memoirs, Anderson blames his father for the hard life that his mother had to endure (Ms, p. 44).* Tar Moorehead—we may take Tar of the “fictional” autobiography as Anderson’s essential boy—self—blames his father for what he vaguely understands as his responsibility for the births of the new babies in the family (TMC, pp. 39, 74). Dick Moorehead’s failure to provide for his family grates on Tar: “The gay kind are all right when you don’t need them for anything special, just want to be entertained. They can make you laugh all right. Suppose you don’t feel much like laughing” (TMC, p. 176). At the same time, Anderson understood that his father was devoted to his mother in his own way, that he had “his own way of treasuring her” (STS, p. 34). And he believed his mother had a sympathetic understanding of her husband’s nature that enabled her “to remain always a faithful and, for anything [Anderson] ever heard of her, a devoted wife” (Ms, p. 44). He recalls, for example, this incident:

She’d never say a word about all the weeks and months he’d been away, not leaving us a cent for food. Once I heard her speaking to a woman in our street. It may be that the woman had dared sympathize with her. “Oh,” she said, “it’s all right. Don’t worry. He isn’t ever dull like most of the men in this street. Life is never dull when my man is about.” (Ms, p. 81)

However, Anderson knew that society—‘people who live their lives by facts,” who worship the Collective Father—saw his father as a bad husband and father.

One of Anderson’s great fears was that he was growing up to be like his father. Tar regards Dick’s lack of respect from the town as resulting from his being caught having presented fancy as fact, and he has a “secret fear he was growing more like his father all the time” (TMC, p. 96). After all, he recognizes, “everyone thought me a little liar and of course I was” (TMC, p. 7). In A Story Teller’s Story, the youngster bitterly notes that his father is all romance and no fact (STS, p. 4); he points out, half contemptuously, his father’s “absurd and never-dying faith” in himself as a bearer of loveliness to obscure people

* See Bibliographical Note at the end of this essay.
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(STS, p. 33). At the same time, Anderson understood that his father was a victim of misunderstanding. He knew that in his father’s land and time dreams were “expressed in building railroads and factories, in boring gas wells, stringing telegraph poles,” and that as there was “room for no other dreams,” his father was an “outlaw in his community. The community tolerated him” (STS, p. 26).

For all the father’s deficiencies, Anderson would have been “loathe to trade [him] for a more provident, shrewd and thoughtful father” (STS, p. 47). It is true that as a youngster he occasionally fantasized a more desirable father: “I was filled often with bitterness,” he writes in Memoirs, “hearing my father go on and on with his tales, and often I wished he wasn’t my father. I’d even invent another as my father” (Ms, p. 82). But as he grew more independent and his vision more inner-directed, his sympathy for his father deepened. Anderson knew that at least from some viewpoint the poverty his family suffered was really wealth enjoyed: “If our family was poor, of what did our poverty consist?” he asks. “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” (STS, p. 5). His family were “outlaws in our native place,” and this thought comforted him when he considered how distasteful were those who “belonged” or how kind and sweet were some he had had occasion to meet on the “outer rim” of society (STS, p. 6).

In the “Unforgotten” section of Memoirs (Ms, pp. 76–85), Anderson describes the moment when he exchanged public for private truth, the moment when he apparently realized the full meaning of Sherwood Anderson’s being the son of Irwin Anderson. After having been away from home for several weeks, Irwin returned one stormy night wearing on his face “the saddest look [Sherwood] had ever seen on a human face.” After a time his father, the eternal talker now virtually wordless, asked his son to go with him to the pond at the edge of town. For what seemed like hours, the boy and his father swam naked in the pond in the storm, and the boy became wondrously aware of his father’s power as a swimmer. All the imagery and emotion of Anderson’s account, I believe, asks us to see that the boy has discovered his father’s natural giftedness as a “swimmer” in the dark and fluid and sometimes stormy Mother Unconscious, the creative imagination. The father is an artist, and for the first time the meaning of this fact comes through to the boy and he feels a new closeness, a new pride, a new respect for his father.

It was something strange. It was as though there were only we two in the world. It was as though I had been
jerked suddenly out of myself, out of a world of the school boy, out of a world in which I was ashamed of my father, out of a place where I had been judging my father.

He had become blood of my blood. I think I felt it. He the stronger swimmer and I the boy clinging to him in the darkness. We swam in silence and in silence we dressed, in our wet clothes, and went back along the road to the town and our house. (Ms, p. 84)

It is as a story teller that Irwin takes on “a new and strange dignity” and wins his son’s love and respect.

At times young Anderson was unspeakably bored or annoyed by his father’s tale-telling, but at other times he envied his talent and style. Irwin was undeniably awesome in his ability to make the “grand gesture,” and no matter how unfortunate the circumstances, Sherwood found he had to love and admire the man (STS, pp. 54–56). Anderson writes that “professional jealousy” may have had something to do with his invention of a tale in which his father is replaced by one more desirable. “’Get out from under the spotlight for a time, daddy. Give your son a chance to see what he can do,’ I perhaps really wanted to say” (STS, p. 95). Of course, orthodox Freudian critics will want to see in this test of skills between father and son the classic oedipal struggle for the love of the mother, here the Mother Unconscious. I believe that such an interpretation is, on some level, true, but I prefer to see the test of skills—and I think all of Anderson’s material asks us to see it—as a boy’s love, an artist’s love, for both his Mother Unconscious and his Spirit Father.

Those of Anderson’s labels for his father commonly emphasized by critics—“lovable improvident” and “ruined dandy”—reflect, I suggest, a strategy invented by Anderson’s unconscious to cancel his father’s sexuality, to make him sexless, or more accurately, above sex, so that he was more available to be embraced and loved. Anderson’s unconscious permitted the desired union between himself and his mother or, more importantly, his Mother Unconscious through a similar strategy, by neutralizing or purifying the sexuality of a group of the female characters portrayed in his works. The fact that both of these strategies depend upon the combination of masculine and feminine components further suggests that ultimately Anderson’s hunger for and involvement with mother and father figures was hunger for a harmonious Mother–Father combination representing the artist’s ability to conceive of the source of creativity together with his ability to penetrate and use that source. Or, to put it another way, Anderson, by
“robbing” these particular females or his father of their sexuality, managed, in effect, to slay the parents, or to surpass the imprisoning unconscious and the inhibiting conscious. Thus the artist achieves “his own new world,” writes Erich Neumann in *Art and the Creative Unconscious*, “the world of his individual mission, in which the figures of the uroboric parents, of the mother and father archetype, assume a new aspect. They are no longer hostile, confining powers, but companions, bestowing their blessings on the life and work of the victorious hero-son.”

Anderson, then, came to recognize that he was his father’s blood and that together they were a breed which the community could never understand. Irwin Anderson succumbed to the Collective Father in that he did not know or did not accept that he was a story teller. His life was a tragedy. Finally understanding this, Anderson declared, “What my father should have been I am to become” (STS, p. 19), and “My father had been [a tale-teller] and his not knowing had destroyed him” (STS, p. 308). Anderson’s initiation passage into manhood was the act of accepting himself as an artist, rejecting the Collective Father in favor of his own personal Spirit Father. “Had I,” asked the middle-aged Anderson, “finally accepted myself, in part at least, as a tale-teller, had I come that far on the road toward manhood?” (STS, p. 398).

No one is likely to dispute that Anderson disregarded convention. He made a career of questioning the traditional values of society; of exposing the hypocrisy of the giants of industry, religion, and politics; and of mourning for the little people whom he saw being physically and emotionally uprooted and left to make their way as best they could. He fought against “the comfortable, well-to-do acceptance of a disorderly world, the smug men who see nothing wrong with a world like this” (MMEN, p. 119); and against the “insane, wishy-washy philosophy,” the peculiarly “American notion,” that “all’s right with the world” (MMAR, pp. 208–09). But the fact of his being an artist put Anderson even more fundamentally at odds with society. As Neumann explains, it is inevitable that the creative man will stand “in conflict with the world of the fathers, i.e., the dominant values” because he cannot repress the archetypal world which in him is so real.

There are at least four aspects of the artistic personality or enterprise which caused conflict between Anderson’s worldly and spiritual selves. For one, Anderson struggled with the conventional (the Collective Father’s) notion that an artist is a criminal in society. A good example of this struggle is his portrayal of John Stockton in *Lark Laughter*. When Stockton leaves his wife and returns to the Indiana
town where he had spent his boyhood, he adopts the name Bruce Dudley in order to avoid "complications," and then "masquerades" as a workman. "It was like being a criminal. . . . It might well be that a criminal was but a man like himself who had suddenly stepped a little out of the beaten path most men travel. Criminals took other people's lives or took goods that did not belong to them. . . ." (DL, pp. 13–14). Anderson is using Bruce to describe the artist's job: taking other people's lives or goods and turning them into raw materials for artistic reproduction.

Anderson writes, with distinct discomfort, "Try as much as I may I cannot become a man of culture." It bounded on the criminal, he is confessing, how he disregarded the individuals around him as unique personalities deserving to be responded to singly. Anderson found he could not resist scanning the past for faces or personalities to match or color the faces around him (STS, p. 418). "My wife is in the next room as I sit writing, but I do not remember what she looks like. My wife is to me an idea, my mother, my sons, my friends are ideas" (TMC, p. 9). Anderson regarded as "unscrupulous" his use of the ideas that others gave him. Not only did he steal lives and goods to use as materials for his craft; he also stole everything he could from "feeders," cultivating their friendship and conversation on what sometimes amounted to false pretenses so that he might gather all the more (Ms, pp. 77, 379).

In Many Marriages, Anderson deals rather extensively with the "criminal" disregard for others that he feels characterizes the artist. In John Webster, he shows the artist's imagination at work "at the expense of others." Webster's creative activity, perhaps, involves turning others into "instruments" for achieving his own ends. In the process, he violates the integrity of the other persons by failing to have "any real feeling" for them or to understand them and their dreams and needs. Webster's creative unconscious invents a strategy by which he can escape his impossible life, but, at the same time, he doubts the morality of what he is doing and feels guilty about the injustices he may be perpetrating. "Had he only taken up with [Natalie] because she was a kind of instrument that would help him escape from his wife and from a life he had come to detest? Was he but using her?" (MMAR, pp. 255–56).

A second conventional notion with which Anderson had to struggle was the one that the artist is somehow insane. In A Story Teller's Story, he recalls a day (during the time that he worked at a sheet-iron warehouse in Chicago) when his imagination transformed the vacant lot across from the warehouse into a scene of splendor and adventure.
The experience brought both a measure of relief to his misery and the fear that he was mad. "Was I a little insane? Had I been born a little insane?" All external reality had become "strangely colored and overlaid with unreality" inside himself, and these fanciful visions were sometimes stronger than the reality of life. "Might it not be that they were the reality, that they existed rather than myself—that is to say, rather than my physical self and the physical fact of the men and women among whom I then worked and lived, rather than the physical fact of the ugly rooms in ugly houses in ugly streets?" (STS, pp. 137–43). In Tar, Anderson speculates that "the men who make a romance of life," or artists, are perhaps "right," or sane, after all because "the reality is too terrible" (TMC, p. 17); those who embrace reality are perhaps insane. In fact, Tar once senses, "Life may be a comedy half-witted people understand" (TMC, p. 78).

If, Anderson asks in Many Marriages, "a man's fancy, the creative thing within him, was in reality intended to be a healthy thing, a supplementary and healing influence to the working of the mind" (p. 200), why then must the man who opens himself to the working of the fancy be thought crazy? Is it sanity or insanity to deny oneself the softening, cleansing, warming touch of fantasy? Gaston Bachelard believes that "a being deprived of the function of unreality is neurotic as well as a being deprived of the function of the real," and in On Poetic Imagination and Reverie, he describes how perception and imagination must interact if a man is to realize himself fully. Similarly, Anderson believed that "the mind working alone was but a one-sided, maimed thing" and that the mind and the fancy must complement each other (MMAR, p. 200). However, Anderson never totally rid himself of the doubts taught him by society that cooperation with the fancy lies in the direction of madness.

A third notion, that an artist is somehow childish, caused still another struggle in Anderson. There is much to suggest that he succumbed to society's habit of making no distinction between the child's perceptions of the world and the artist's. For Anderson it is, after all, the young thing in a man that is fanciful. In Many Marriages, John Webster's newborn or spring self is his artistic self. In Dark Laughter it is "the boy within the man" who may make presents of the treasures of his imagination. In Winesburg, Ohio, in "The Book of the Grotesque," it is "the young thing within the writer," within the old man who lays on his high bed listening to the fluttering of his weak heart, that saves him from turning his theory into a grotesque concept and thus corrupting what is genuinely human about it (WO, pp. 22–25). Anderson appar-
ently believed that the child is better able to suspend reality and entertain unreality—the business of the artist—than the adult, that the child can tune more quickly and finely and lastingly to the Mother Unconscious than can an adult. “No one reads as a boy reads,” he writes in *A Story Teller’s Story*, “The boy gives himself utterly to the printed page. . . .” (STS, p. 99).

Leslie Fiedler, in *Love and Death in the American Novel*, has pointed out that “infantile voyeurs appear in our [American] fiction with a persistence almost obsessive in its effect.” Certainly, in Anderson’s work peeping appears with a conspicuous frequency, a fact which further suggests the closeness in Anderson’s mind of the child and artist. Under cover of darkness, for example, Hugh McVey (*Poor White*) watches the cabbage planters at Ezra French’s farm. The librarian Ethel Long (*Beyond Desire*) goes to a place in the little reading room where she can stand, among the shelves of books, and look over Red Oliver’s shoulder at what he is reading or writing. Kit Brandon and her three friends one night sneak up to some rich people’s estate. “There was a little open place, with more flowering bushes, and they could look directly in” at the party taking place inside (KB, p. 87). The boy in *A Story Teller’s Story* runs back of the shed and throws himself on the ground where he can watch through a crack the confrontation between his angry father and his brother. Tar Moorehead, out delivering newspapers, watches the druggist and his wife frolicking nude in their living room. The list could go on for some time.

The visitation through imagination is yet another form of peeping in Anderson’s work. John Webster goes “in fancy” into his neighbor’s house. He moves through the rooms of the house and at one moment he stands so close to the neighbor’s two daughters as they lie in their beds that he “could have touched their cheeks with his out-stretched fingers” (MMAR, pp. 72–73). When Tar is out delivering newspapers, he tries to imagine what was going on in the houses. “If you let yourself go you could imagine just how [everyone inside asleep] looked. . . . Walls of houses could not hide things from him . . .” (TMC, p. 192). Anderson recalls in *Memoirs* the time when he had newly begun to be a writer. “I became an enthusiast,” he writes. “I had a passion to tear away the walls of houses” (Ms, pp. 19–20).

These visitations through imagination take on even more childish dimensions when they resemble the primal scene. For example, Bruce Dudley wonders how his father and mother behave when they go out walking in the evening by themselves. He wonders if they do some of the same things that he does when he is out walking with his mother.
"When [his parents] came home and had got into bed sometimes they talked in low tones and sometimes they were silent" (DL, pp. 101–02). Kit Brandon tells the journalist "in her own curious, oddly detached way"—a manner which, together with other evidence, indicates she is very involved with her material—"I don't see how Pa ever brought himself to sleep with her but he did." The mother, as Kit describes her, was tall and indolent and had always "the snuff stick in her mouth, stains of the tobacco on her broken teeth and dripping from the corners of her mouth" (KB, p. 6). A girl tells Beaust McGregor things she has overheard her mother and father saying as they lay in their bed, and Beaust is shocked that she would speak to him so frankly (MMEN, p. 27).

A third form of peeping to be found in Anderson's work is one which Norman Holland, in The Dynamics of Literary Response, calls "feasting one's eyes." Holland suggests that "feasting one's eyes" is characteristic of the oral phase of childhood development, and he explains that "often, when literary works ask us to enter an environment explicitly labeled as fantastic, we are being asked to merge orally into that new world . . ." Holland believes "we must 'trust' this new world as we would a nurturing mother, take it in and be taken into it." It seems to me that it is precisely in this spirit that Anderson extends frequent invitations to his readers. "Let us (in fancy)," he says on one of several such occasions in A Story Teller's Story, "imagine for a moment an American lad walking alone at evening in the streets of an American town" (STS, p. 78). "We shall let our fancies loose," he writes, "lie to ourselves if you please. Let us not question each other too closely" (STS, p. 100). In his introduction to Memoirs, Anderson again warns of the trust that is necessary: "My readers, therefore, those who go along with me, will have to be patient. I am an imaginative man" (Ms, p. 29).

Anderson's view of the child-artist correspondence, however, differs from society's in that he rightly senses their common, inherent openness to the transpersonal while society makes only crude observations about their similar behavior. Anderson can only be glad if as an artist he shares with children a fresh and spontaneous way of experiencing the world. Walking is the child's way of experiencing the world and it is profoundly the way that Anderson presents his world to us. Wright Morris has written, "Early in Windy McPherson's Son I stumbled on the proper unit measure. It is the walk. A walk comprehends both space and time. Both Winesburg and Sherwood Anderson are back when a man went for a walk, rather than a ride" (WMS, p. vii). It is only when one is walking—or it was only, to Anderson's memory, in
that time of America's youth before the coming of Industry—that one has the leisure and the proximity to the environment to establish a loving relation to it. The artist tends to be born with or to cultivate this relation to his environment so that he may more ably give it verbal expression.

A fourth aspect of the artistic personality or enterprise which caused a conflict in Anderson is the emphasis on the feminine. Anderson's work reflects his discomfort with the emphasis in his own life on the matriarchal–creative unconscious or the feminine component manifested by his artistic receptivity and sensibility. To his mind it was the young female thing inside him that saves the old man in "The Book of the Grotesque." It is the mother and not the father who possesses the creative force and with whom the artist must form an alliance. Anderson often speaks of his writing as a mother might speak of her child. "Having, from a conversation overheard or in some other way, got the tone of a tale, I was like a woman who has just become impregnated. Something was growing inside me. At night when I lay in my bed I could feel the heels of the tale kicking against the walls of my body" (STS, p. 358). He explains that to the tale-teller, "the telling of the tale is the cutting of the natal cord" (STS, p. 122). In his correspondence, Anderson has written:

Your third question—what is my personal favorite among my own books?—is too much like asking a mother which is her favorite child. (Ls, p. 149)

I find I have to wait for stories as I presume a hen must wait for her moment before she can lay an egg. (Ls, p. 266)

When my tale was finished, I got up and stood. . . . I think I must have felt as a woman feels after birth, when she has her first babe in her arms. (Ls, p. 317)

Anderson's awareness of a feminine component within him led him to suspect his masculinity. Time and again we find him struggling with the questions of what is masculine and what is feminine, what is pure and what is impure about a male–male or a female–female or even a male–female relationship. The Collective Father's rigid definitions of sexual identity, to put it another way, were at war with the Spirit Father's more relaxed, more authentically human, more flexible notions about sexual identity, especially in the case of the artistic man: his own inner Truth or Intelligence suggested to him, for example, the possibility of a "pure" homosexual relationship. Anderson seems con-
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scissiously to have drawn the lines and defined the roles that were right for him.

Why is it that men, as males, constantly deny their greatest inheritance, the love of the male for the male? . . . I have always been afraid of fairies. They sell you out. They are, in some queer way, outside the life stream. They know it. The male love of the male is something else. It is something that must, some day, come back into the world. (Ms, pp. 521–22)

[Woman's] desire is to BE. There was never a real woman lived who did not hunger to be beautiful. The male desires not to be beautiful but to create beauty. No woman can be beautiful without the help of the male. We create their beauty, fertilize it, feed it. (Ms, p. 554)

Yet in the works themselves there are so many instances of implicit homoeroticism that it seems doubtful Anderson had so clearly settled the problem. Kate Chancellor says in Poor White, "It's absurd the way things are arranged. Because my body is made in a certain way I'm supposed to accept certain rules for living. The rules were not made for me. Men manufactured them as they manufacture can openers, on the wholesale plan" (PW, p. 20). However, as Anderson portrays the relationship between Clara Butterworth and Kate, there is at least the threat of "impurity." There are "impure" possibilities in the Aline Grey–Esther Walker, Doris Hoffman–Grace Musgrave, Ethel Long–Blanche Long (Ethel's stepmother), and Kit Brandon–Agnes and Kit–Sarah relationships. Among Anderson's male characters, there is erotic tension in the relationships between Red Oliver and his professor and between Judge Turner and his college mate, and the body of marching men—which Anderson describes at length in three separate works—depends on a brotherhood which, like the powerful mass itself, can be perverted.

In Beyond Desire, it is suggested that the pure bond among women derives from the shared experience of pregnancy and child-bearing, and that only the poet or creative man is capable of understanding this bond. The artist can understand it because his is a bisexual nature: the experience women share comes also within the realm of his own experience. Yet if Anderson does understand this pure bond and also the pure bond among men and the pure bond between man and woman, and if he understands how it is that he is also feminine, he at the same time fears the perversion of what is pure.

In the very language that Anderson employs to describe his artistic activity, we find further evidence of his confusion about his sexual
identity. Curiously, he combines phallic with womb imagery. A boy “remakes his own life more to his own liking by plunging into a fanciful life” (STS, p. 123). Winesburg, Ohio did not come out of reality, “but out of that strange, more real life into which I have so long been trying to penetrate and that is the only real reality” (Ms, p. 238). Anderson thinks of his stimulated fancy as “running away like a wild horse broken out of its stall” (STS, p. 210), and he writes that “there is a world of the fancy into which I constantly plunge and out of which I seldom completely emerge” (TMC, p. 9). It is as if Anderson were asserting his masculinity to assuage his discomfort with that part of himself which he recognizes is feminine.

Anderson did make progress in his struggle to come to terms with the criminal, insane, childish, and feminine aspects of his self. In his first novel, Windy McPherson’s Son, written in 1916, we see the protagonist–artist hopelessly caught up in an unresolved love–hate relation to his father. Thus, this first novel stands as a dramatization of the early Anderson’s inability to choose between the Collective Father and his own private Spirit Father. In his last novel, Kit Brandon, written twenty years later, Anderson portrays a protagonist–artist who simply accepts her father and her surrogate–father and who thereby comes to stand at what at least appears to be the threshold of genuine maturity. This last novel, then, suggests that with Kit, Anderson himself did finally embrace his Spirit Father. Yet Kit’s compulsion to tell her story, together with her emotional manner of telling it, reveal to us that she and her creator have not so completely escaped the influence of the Collective Father.

It may be that what Anderson could not come to terms with was the fact that an artist’s embrace of a private Spirit Father leads inevitably to his loneliness and isolation. Erich Neumann tells us:

Whereas the normal man to a great extent pays for his adaptation to life in Western civilization with a loss of creativity, the creative man, who is adapted to the requirements of the unconscious world, pays for his creativity with loneliness, which is the expression of his relative lack of adaptation to the life of the community.

Certainly one of the main concerns of Kit Brandon is Kit’s loneliness and the loneliness which she senses all around her. All of Anderson’s protagonist–artists fight loneliness. Anderson writes in Memoirs that he spent his lifetime groping to break up his isolation from people (Ms, pp. 5, 161, 176). Perhaps the huge ego that many of Anderson’s contemporaries accused him of having and the egotism which many of
his critics attribute to his work are more accurately regarded as Anderson's self-sufficiency and independence from the Collective Father. An individual dependent only on himself will naturally display a strong ego. Of course, this explanation suggests that the problem may be as much the public's as Anderson's.

It is my view that Anderson did win his independence from the Collective Father, but that once he had won it he didn't know what to do with it and was never entirely comfortable with it. His egotism reveals that he felt insecure about being cut off from the community. In Anderson's own words, "You do not constantly assert what you are sure you have." Leo Marx, in The Machine in the Garden, writes that "in Walden Thoreau is clear . . . about the location of meaning and value. He is saying that it does not reside in the natural facts or in social institutions or in anything 'out there,' but in consciousness." For Anderson, it was never enough to find meaning and value in consciousness alone. He needed something meaningful and valuable outside himself—a need that became very intense and difficult to satisfy once he had made his alliance with a Spirit Father.

**Bibliographical Note**

The following abbreviations of the titles of Anderson's works central to this essay are used to facilitate internal documentation:


