CHAPTER II

THE ABORTIVE LIFE : THE MATTER-SPIRIT CONFLICT

In the course of his futile quest for "truth", after rejecting his ever expanding financial empire in Chicago, a distraught Sam McPherson, the protagonist of *Windy McPherson's Son* (1916), tells himself the following words:

... all life was abortive, that on all sides of him it wore itself out in little futile efforts or ran away in side currents, that nowhere did it move steadily, continuously forward giving point to the tremendous sacrifice involved in just living and working in the world.¹

The key word, "abortive", reinforces the naturalistic conception of life. For, abortiveness implies disruption in the process of growth and development before it achieves ripeness. Abortiveness brings about waste through destruction. It disdains completeness, denies wholesome finality. It intervenes and thwarts.

The flow of life is continuously deflected by forces man can neither control nor anticipate. The miscarriage of life is due to the chasm existing between the ideal and the real world. "The deviation between what Sam thinks life could and should be and what he finds it to be provides the tension which makes Sam run."² The tension arising from this deviation accounts for *Windy McPherson's Son* as a naturalistic novel.

It will be seen in the following chapters that delineation of man's circumscribed spirit is the focal point of Anderson's
naturalistic vision. Most of his characters search for a life of realization; they want an abiding realm of experience where their spirit, unhurt and whole, can remain in a state of total liberation. The tragedy is that these characters, not knowing what exactly they want in life, miserably fail to force their revolt against the constricting forces in a calculated direction. Their sufferings and turmoil remain localized in their subjective self. Moreover, a few characters who manage to extricate themselves from these forces through revolt, do not know what comes after revolt.

The Anderson characters do not confront identical forces; nor do they possess similar yearnings. However, all of them desire transcendence of their spirit from the inhibiting forces. In the present chapter an attempt will be made to show that this desire for transcendence in some characters is of a spiritual order. Their hunger is basically metaphysical. Convinced of the hollowness of their material accomplishment, they want to go beyond the limitedness of this discordant material world. They feel that this world, conditioned by matter and force, is not the domain of the ultimate reality where the intangible truth can be perceived. They search for this reality and truth to satisfy the thirst of their spirit.

The system of metaphysics and theology as explanatory to natural phenomena has been liquidated by the rise of physical and natural sciences, but these sciences can by no means efface metaphysical longings and spiritual aspirations from man's mind. These longings and aspirations are like desperate hands anxiously extended to reach
something which, naturalism insists, is nonexistent. Naturalism drives man to confront this crisis.

Anderson is painfully aware of this cheerless situation. This awareness finds fictional treatment in some of his characters searching for the fulfillment of their metaphysical longings and release from the tyranny of the finite world.

It is true that Sam McPherson, Hugh McVey (Poor White, 1920) and Kit Brandon (Kit Brandon, 1936) do not articulate their longings in precise terms. Red Oliver (Beyond Desire, 1932) is a more extreme case in that he is more vague, more confused about himself and his environment than others. Beaut McGregor of Marching Men (1917) is, to some extent, conscious of the forces of determinism against which the human spirit is pitted in an unequal confrontation. But all of them lack the perspicacity to recognize the nature of their own crisis which would have enabled them to explore means to direct their life in a meaningful manner. On the contrary, they encounter a dilemma; they are afflicted by cross-purposes and duality of desire.

These Anderson characters are powerful and influential. But Anderson does not end his story with his characters shining in the glory of achievement; his serious preoccupation with them really commences from that point. His characters do not take long in being disenchanted with their achievements. They feel that something vital and significant is missing in their lives. Since invariably they repudiate their apparently successful careers, it can be concluded that they try to look beyond the range of their success. They make
futile attempts to liberate themselves from the thraldom of matter itself with which their spirit is constantly at odds. Their quest for that significant something begins. Not knowing where and how to get it, they embrace one value after another with the hope of arriving at the destination. With their desires remaining unfulfilled and with the consciousness that they have steered their life in the wrong direction, they all echo Sam's anguish: life is abortive.

These characters' obsession with success and their escape to the city are necessitated by the compulsiveness of material privation, emotional malnutrition, and life-negating environment which divest the early part of their life of joy and self-confidence. Besides, values are enforced upon them which mould their attitude in such a manner that attainment of glory through perseverance becomes an inviolable dictum till they are fed up with success.

The combination of these factors decisively initiates them into the world of competitiveness in pursuit of prosperity resulting in the misdirectedness of their lives. This is in consonance with the naturalistic stance that environment and external factors play a directive role in shaping the pattern of life.

Anderson has created a variety of incidents and characters in *Windy McPherson's Son* which exercise a decisive influence on the young Sam McPherson of Caxton, Iowa. His escape to Chicago and his determination to become a force in the financial world can be traced back to the harrowing experiences he undergoes in his native town.

The most important factor that teaches Sam the value of money
is the utter poverty in his family. His father, Windy McPherson, is a "confirmed liar and braggart" who "had for years cast a shadow" (p.15) over the early life of Sam. In the land of plenty even the least fortunate can laugh in the face of want; whereas the McPherson family hovers precariously on the edge of destitution. Windy lives in a world of make-believe and daydreams. He desperately depends upon this world in order to meet the demands of the realities. He is constantly shocked and bewildered when he discovers that what he thinks to be real is, indeed, illusory. Unable to reconcile himself to this fact, he pursues his ever-elusive world by indulging in excessive drink, and tries to keep the real world at bay.

Windy's irretrievable evasion of responsibilities brings hardship; his conduct in the village brings humiliation and shame to the family, particularly to Sam. The most insulting is Windy's hopeless attempt to blow a bugle in the Fourth July celebration in the town, although he does not know how to do it. He becomes an object of ridicule before the assembled people. This act generates revulsion and scorn in Sam against Windy. A resolute Sam declares: "'You may laugh at that fool Windy, but you shall never laugh at Sam McPherson!'" (p.25).

Sam's contempt for his father is symbolic in the sense that indolence and day-dreaming represented by Windy are antithetical to the new American temper which values perseverance and shrewdness embodied by the son. Sam is embittered by the fact that he, along with his mother and sister, has to toil hard to save the family from total destitution. The day his mother dies Sam warns his father not
to make noise in the house. The insubstantial man, as his name suggests, is in a state of inebriation who starts complaining, as usual, about life that has not brought him glory and greatness. Sam's accumulated abomination for Windy makes him strangle the father almost to death.

This act of attempted parricide "is not merely an act of filial repudiation but also a rejection of that stretch of the American past of which Windy is a symbolic caricature." Sam assimilates the current craze for success which can be achieved by personal initiative and drive. The conviction that wealth alone is the substance of life's accomplishment takes firmer grip over Sam's consciousness when he compares his poverty-stained life with that led by his friends belonging to well-to-do families. He considers poverty to be sinister which limits and stunts life's expression and growth. His single-minded devotion to the search for wealth is the logical consequence of these thoughts. Moreover, he feels that money can be the effective antidote against the poison of insult and humiliation he suffers on account of his father's shameful conduct in the town. "He believed that the logical answer to the situation was money in the bank and with all the ardour of his boy's heart he strove to realize that answer" (p.15).

Anderson's small town remains suspended between the last vestiges of the decaying agrarian pastoralism, puritanical values, and social conventions on the one hand and the new spirit of urbanism and industrialism on the other. The old world remains in a distorted
form with the new spirit having made significant inroads into it. Therefore, the small town is always a place replete with the stench of narrowness and constriction for which the suffocated young man escapes to the city, as does Sam, in search of a free and plentiful life. Sam's anxiety is to acquire strength and power through money so that he can take revenge on the people who ridicule his father and censure the lonely and affectionate school teacher, Mary Underwood, with disgraceful gossip. Victimized by the town scandal she is totally estranged from the stream of the town life. She accepts her defeat in life and becomes a purposeless human fragment to wither away unseen.

The obsession with money gets fixed in Sam's mind due to the influence of others, particularly of John Telfer, whose "friendship was a formative influence upon Sam McPherson" (p.47). In Telfer's opinion money-making is a great virtue: "'Make money! Cheat! Lie! Be one of the men of the big world!'" (p.66). In order to realize this, man "'should cut and slash and pound his way toward his mark, forgetting everyone...'" (p.59). "'Money makes life livable. It gives freedom and destroys fear. . . . It brings into men's lives beauty and the love of beauty'" (p.69), again according to Telfer.

In essence, Telfer drives home the ideal of blind rapacity into Sam's mind and literally initiates him into the amoral, savage warfare for wealth. He exhorts Sam to disdain and discard moral curfew. Telfer's is a prescription for building up ruthless individualism. It glorifies the law of the jungle and respects the
fittest in the realm of money-making. An apotheosis of the brute force, Telfer's dictum is in tune with the naturalistic warfare in which the strong devours the weak.

"As Sam's instinctive perceptions were focused by John Telfer, his vision was narrowed so that only success, or a visible material success, had any significance." This narrowness of vision deprives Sam of a broad perspective of life. He does not gain rich, manifold experiences. Worse still, his natural impulses get repressed in the process of his frenzied rush for wealth. Unwittingly he becomes a prisoner of his madness for it.

Sam's rise from rags to riches is the metaphorical expression of the American ambition for success, rapacity and acquisitive spirit. Sam's story is not, however, the story of success; it is the story of the self's quest for fulfillment which is not achieved in a chaotic, disharmonized society. Anderson has shown Sam as a victim of a "duality of desire the conflict of which destroys the possibility of the superman;" because this conflict eventually leads him to abandon his career as a money-maker. Sam is unable to take cognisance of the import of the clash of two sets of values, let alone resolve them in his mind. On the one hand there are the compulsive factors which make him obsessed with money. On the other is his innate desire for a life of fulfillment which persistently clamours throughout his life. It makes him feel restless, pulls him out of his bed and makes him walk on the deserted streets of Chicago till its intensity gets dissipated due to his physical exhaustion.
This desire, ignored and buried in the course of his money-making, gradually becomes assertive and demands realization. It dislodges the factors which have their sway over Sam as a money-maker. In the end it wholly possesses him. He spends the rest of his life trying to realize this desire and bringing his life to a harmonious resolution with it. The tragedy with Sam is that his life is misdirected by his accepting a set of values which proves to be disastrous to his self. Sam's leading a life contrary to the dictates of his natural self results in his personality being "buried away within him, long neglected, often forgotten, a timid, shy, destructive Sam who had never really breathed or lived or walked before men" (p.328).

The novel projects the divided emotions of Sam on whom the pull of his hunger for material success and attainment of self-realization is simultaneous. Hypothetically Anderson provides Sam with these two alternatives to lead his life. But he wraps Sam firmly and subtly in the ironic web of conflicting desires with the result that he first collapses as the superman in the world of material success and subsequently fails as a pilgrim of what he calls "truth".

In a letter to Ben Huebsch in 1921 Anderson says that the later part of Windy McPherson's Son "represents too much of my own floundering about in life.... My own nature was in revolt against money-making as an end in life, and the history of Sam McPherson is the history of such a revolt." Sam flounders in his quest for
"truth" because, by the time he repudiates his financial world, his outlook and perception of realities are already twisted by his act of self-absorption as a businessman. The abruptness with which he assumes a totally different role to bring meaning and purpose to his life, makes him grope without direction. He does not rationalize what is the nature of the truth he is after and how to achieve it. The values which make Sam choose the life of a businessman, thus, exercise a dehumanizing influence upon him. Obviously, Anderson focuses his attention on the matter-spirit conflict. His conviction that money-making is not an end in life lends credence to this fact.

Critical opinion, however, points out that Sam's suppressed and neglected desire is basically sexual. Henry F. May declares: "Throughout the story Anderson expresses his nearly religious feeling about a mysterious, resistless force, the power of sex." Speaking about Windy McPherson's Son and Marching Men Ray Lewis White comments that "Anderson does write much of the sex drive and its manifestations in these works" and the protagonists of these novels are "unable to cope with sex" for which they fail in life. This is the view to which J. R. Scafidel also subscribes. He observes that the "chief concern of Anderson in Windy McPherson's Son is the theme of repressed and distorted sexuality." Throughout his life Sam denies expression to his sexual self which remains buried within his limited outlook on life and reality. This sexual self explodes the values in conformity with which Sam so far has been channelizing his life. For this reason "The ending of the novel is quite naturalistic."
The observation that Sam's sex impulse remains arrested throughout his life is valid. No doubt, his attitude towards sex is one of hesitation and diffidence. The idea remains a baffling enigma for him. Finding no means of expression, this urge makes him feel restless and tense. Indeed, the story of Sam's bottled up sex drive is an integral part of the thematic substance of the novel. But it is difficult to accept the contention that Anderson's chief concern in the novel is Sam's distorted sexuality and that his failure as a pilgrim to self-realization is attributable to his inability to cope with sex. To say that Sam's pent-up sexuality makes him abandon his financial empire and search for means to release it, is to dislocate the thematic pattern of the novel and misjudge Anderson's vision of life reflected in it.

The reasons why the above critics consider Sam's distorted sex impulse to be the focus of the novel are not far to seek. Telfer's counsel to Sam: "'I think that a man or boy who has set for himself a task had better let women and girls alone'" (p.59). Telfer holds women and girls in utter contempt. According to him, "'No man or boy can grow toward the purpose of a life while he thinks of women'" (p.60).

Sam scrupulously adheres to this advice because he apprehends that dishonour of it may destroy the possibility of his being a man of wealth. Consequently, his attitude towards the question of sex gets distorted. It becomes a confusing abstraction in his mind for which reason he continually blunders when confronted by it. For example, he asks Mary Underwood, the Caxton school teacher, to marry
him although she is very much older than he and has maternal affection for him. In Chicago he establishes friendship with Janet Eberly, a cripple, and "thought of her as in a sense his wife..." (p.150). His unrealized sex drive intensifies his inner dissociation. He recognizes that in the "world of men there was a force as resistless, as little understood, as little talked of, moving always forward, silent, powerful—the force of sex" (p.119).

In Chicago his talent for earning money makes him a dominant force in the great Rainey Arms Company owned by Colonel Tom Rainey. He believes that marriage will resolve the restless hunger of his self and cleanse his inwardness. He is now convinced that "Sex is a solution, not a menace—it is wonderful" (p.180). With this conviction he proposes marriage to Sue Rainey, the only child of Colonel Rainey.

Sam's resolve to marry is his first important act which runs counter to the values enforced upon him by Telfer. The dictates of Sam's inner being triumph over Telfer's caution to Sam that he let women and girls alone if he wants to rise in life. The tragedy, however, is that Sam's sexual relationship with his wife is sealed consequent upon Sue's failure to give birth to live children. Thus Sam "found himself looking with more than passing interest at women in the streets" (p.211).

The theme of Sam's sexuality remaining clogged and imprisoned is in accord with Anderson's naturalistic conception of inhibited life. But Sam not only searches for the means for the realization of his arrested sexuality; he searches for something broader and
more significant. What he aims at defies definition, but he calls it "truth" and gropes to find it out.

He feels that this truth can bring perfection to his life. He tries to practise the most difficult of all arts—the art of living. Telfer tells Sam: "'An artist is one who hungers and thirsts after perfection'" (p.7). Telfer declares about himself: "'I am an artist practising the most difficult of all arts—the art of living'" (p.8).

After his mother's death Sam is advised by the minister of the town church: "'Join in the work of Christ. Find truth!" (p.98). The true measure of man, the minister insists, lies in his attempts to find truth.

Sam's acquaintance with Janet Eberly widens his perception of life "so that at the end of the evening he went out of her presence feeling strangely small and insignificant against the great world background she had drawn for him" (p.149). Janet instils into him "the bigness of the conception of human life" (p.149) which he tries to grasp. The men of money and action, according to her, are "blind" in the sense that neither money nor power can enable one to perceive the vastness of the universe and the complexities of life. The intuitive perception of an artist can realize what she calls the "purposeful universe." Perfection in life can be accomplished through this realization.

These ideas to which Sam is successively exposed are metaphysical and spiritual by nature. He is convinced that the Darwinian world
of strife and amoral competitiveness in which he leads his life is of lesser magnitude. He gets a glimpse of a bigger and more meaningful world existing beyond this small, tension-ridden one. In other words, these ideas stimulate and enliven his hitherto neglected spiritual aspirations. They arouse in him the consciousness of the call of infinity. He feels that his inner dissociation and disharmony are due to his being subservient to the precepts which are external and hostile to his self. Therefore, Sam is restless to liberate his self from the confines of these precepts which have so far forced him to be consciously and actively related to the objective and finite world for wealth. The result is that he has been leading a life of limited physical realities.

Sam is bent upon merging himself with the infinite universe and being a part of its "purposeful" wholeness. He has this metaphysical longing which gets neglected and suppressed by his infatuation with wealth. His rejection of the financial world is necessitated by his conviction that material success is, after all, a finite thing hopelessly inadequate to take him to the realm of infinity and transcendence. After his marriage becoming a failure and the prospect of his attaining fatherhood thwarted, Sam moves from idea to idea never clinging to any one of them for long because none of these ideas opens the avenue before him to take him to infinity and enable him to attain transcendence. This makes his life peripatetic. Forever in search of means to realize this spiritual need and fulfill his metaphysical longing he gropes, flounders and drifts.
Implicit in the novel is the tension between natural harmony and order on the one hand and the chaotic, discordant commercialism and industrial environment on the other. Sam's response to nature is lyrical. He recognizes a quality of cleanliness and nobility in it. He laments that due to their ineradicable pursuit of material success, the Americans fail to make their lives an identification of nature. "American men and women have not learnt to be clean and noble and natural like their forests and their wide, clean plains" (p.294). When still a young boy, Sam had declared in the Caxton church: "The Lord maketh me to lie out in green pastures" (p.36). In the course of his quest for self-realization he comes across an unsophisticated old man who says: "God is a spirit and lives in the growing corn" (p.246). According to Sam, the growing corn, benevolent and orderly, sustains life.

Contrasted with this world of vital nourishment is the world of tension and chaos apitomized by Chicago. Sam enters into this world and alienates himself from nature, from its cleanliness, nobility and orderliness. He builds up an egoistic individuality and employs ruthless methods to fetch financial triumph. Money becomes synonymous with truth. His moral degeneration and material rise are simultaneous.

With Sam at the centre, the fortunes of the Rainey Arms Company soar rapidly. Sam reorganizes its entire administrative and business structure. He sheds no tears while eliminating whomsoever he considers to be a dead weight in the company.
The business world represented by Chicago is essentially dominated by the law of the jungle. For survival and success in it, one has to call upon animal strength that knows no compunction. To drive home this fact Anderson makes use of animal imagery and shows Sam's moral debasement in this competitive and strife-ridden world. The tragedy is that in Caxton, Sam's boyhood was embittered by material privation and a debilitating environment. In Chicago he is infected by its evil environment. His natural goodness and his love for nature get stifled by his mad pursuit of wealth. This is a naturalistic situation because his ostensible triumph in Chicago proves deceptive to his psychic needs. Sam is, thus, pushed to a situation in which his spirit, remaining neglected so far, explodes the myth of his material success.

Sam's success in Chicago can be ascribed to his having the "quickness and accuracy of a beast" (p.113), the capacity to take calculated risk to accumulate money. He pours his energy and mind to develop in him the "force of the brute trader, the dollar man . . . cunning of Wolf quality of acquisitiveness" (p.131) for his selfish ends. These traits enable him to drive the fortunes of the Reiney Arms Company in his own terms.

The persistence of his inward hunger not to be satisfied by money makes him feel the insignificance of his achievements. He becomes aware of the aimlessness and purposelessness of his life and activities. His disenchantment with his career and his sense of loneliness make him propose to Sue Rainey. He feels that his inner discord and his sense of horror at the uncertainties and
restlessness of life can be resolved by his marriage. This would enable him to come out of his self-absorbed life. By loving someone, he feels, he can find spiritual justification for his own existence.

The marriage takes place after Sue gets Sam's condescension that their marriage would be intended for "service to mankind through children" (p.177) and that their children would be the centre of their lives and activities. Sam feels jubilant at the thought of having a new pattern of life which would be a departure from his money-obsessed mode of life. Moreover, his marriage and children would provide him with a new avenue to approach his goal of self-realization. The marriage promises him perfection in life; the prospect of attaining fatherhood promises effacement of his self-indulgent activities. He feels that marriage would broaden his self and enable him to be united with something vast and great.

Sam's six-week honeymoon period is obviously the best part of his life. Away from the chaotic, discordant atmosphere of Chicago, the McPhersons experience supreme joy and contentment. They spend this period in the wholesome lap of the woods. They sail on boats. The steady, continuous flow of river water evokes the hope in them that their life would have a steady and continuous flow. The honeymoon is a release for Sam. Estranged from nature he was gradually feeling suffocated in Chicago. The wide, open, benevolent nature instils a sense of fulfillment into him. An ecstatic Sam declares that marriage brings to him "'love of life, I have had a peep into the great mystery'" (p.183).
Naturalism maintains that in the world of uncertainties, man's life does not flow in the desired direction. One stunning disruption is sufficient to disarray the scheme carefully laid out by him about his future. Sue's two successive abortions defeat Sam's dream of attaining fatherhood and of liberating his self from the life-negating values in which it has so far been imprisoned. He desperately wants an existential prop, a set of satisfying ideas for the renewal of his life. His anxiety is to search for the means that can lead him to the domain of the hugeness and mystery of life and the universe.

Sue's abortions reinforce the naturalistic vision of life in symbolic terms. Her miscarriage could not have been anticipated or prevented. It is the consequence of a flow in her physiological and biological system with which she is born. This irrevocable state of her incompleteness and imperfection infects Sam's life and makes it abortive, incomplete and imperfect. As Anderson puts it, her abortion is a serious "blow given the plan of life so carefully thought out and so eagerly accepted by the young McPhersons" (p.208).

The world abruptly changes into a malignant place of denial for Sam. In the absence of any positive ideas to base his life on for the comprehension of meaning, purpose and the truth in life, he floats, not finding a foothold. In compliance with Sue's suggestion he tries to engage himself with the task of ameliorating the lot of the defeated and destitute people. He does not take long to discover that this work fails to satisfy his basic hunger.
He wants work which can absorb his potentiality and bring about a healing touch to his wounded self. He wants to cling to some idea which can promise him transcendence so that perception of the mysterious hugeness of the universe will be possible. The tangible, limited world and the logic on which it functions become sickeningly horrible to his aspiring mind.

Having found no such work and idea, he takes the destructive step of returning to the world of money-making with a bleeding heart. By reembracing the values which had proved to be discordant to his nature, he inflicts more injury to his lacerated self. It is an act of self-immolation through which he registers his protest against the irresistible forces that prevent his life from flowing in the desired direction and deny him self-realization.

His rapid moral fall is suggested by his becoming more drastic and ruthless. Deceit, falsehood and betrayal become his guiding principles. Contrary to the wishes and pleadings of Colonel Tom Rainey and Sue, he brings about a merger of the important arms producing companies in the country. Shocked and horrified at his outrageous activities, Sue and Tom Rainey leave Chicago. The old Colonel Tom Rainey fails to reconcile himself to the sad fact that the company he had nursed and developed has lost its identity after its merger with others. In a New York hotel he commits suicide.

Sam's guilty conscience receives another jolt when he gets news about the death of the Caxton teacher, Mary Underwood. What pains him is that he had promised help to this lonely lady who had
given him motherly affection and tenderness. He had become oblivious of her, engaged as he was in the act of self-absorption as a money-maker. His dereliction of duty allowed illness and poverty to take her life.

Sam reaches a point in his life where his past proves to be deceptive and false; the present lonely and in a state of shambles; the future, devoid of possibilities and ideas, uncertain. However, he repudiates wealth and the precepts which had enabled him to gain it. Saying goodbye to none he disappears from his apartment with a bag. "In his mind was no definite idea of where he was going or what he was going to do... He would try to spend his life seeking truth" (p.242).

He comes to an Illinois town and works as an ordinary labourer for Ed. He takes this step like a somnambulist without careful and conscious deliberation. It is because "his mind was unsettled and his outlook on life disturbed" (p. 262). He needs work of course; work that can energize and rejuvenate the "best and finest in him so that he would be held to the need of renewing constantly the better impulses of his mind" (p. 263). But the type of work he is required to do for Ed is not the work he searches for. Physically demanding, it leaves him totally exhausted with his hands badly blistered.

His working there under a pseudonym and putting on the uniform given by Ed, are his symbolic attempts to erase his former identity from his mind and see the resurrection of his self which can find
truth and meaning in life. Sam tries to help the workers in their revolt against Ed who, along with his wife, brutally beats Sam. For the next several months Sam leads a wandering, vagabond life—aimless and rootless.

He goes to an Ohio town to work as a bartender in a saloon. Soon after he flees that place horrified at the blatant dishonesty of the owner. Nor does his involvement in a strike, resorted to by the girl employees of a Jewish shirtwaist factory in a Pennsylvania town, bring him relief. The trade union leaders suspect him for his interest in the strike and take no notice of his attempts to get the employees' grievances redressed. After a few days he is on the move again. He even goes to different countries for no particular purpose. No place arouses interest in him, no work animates his dejected spirit. He drifts from place to place because he does not have a basis and a way to approach the goal of his life and bring his inner tensions to a harmonious resolution.

The observation of Rex Burbank, therefore, that after abandoning business Sam "throws his great personal strength into helping oppressed farm and factory workers in their conflict against emotionally insulated capitalists, corrupt union officials, and brutal hireling managers" and thus achieves "moral victory", does not sound convincing. Of course, he tries to help the aggrieved workers in some towns, but he does not come to these towns with the vow of a determined and conscientious social worker. In the course of his vagrant wanderings he merely chances upon these strikes. The fact
that his involvement in them is tentative, is suggested by his running away from these towns without waiting to see whether the issues raised in the strikes are resolved.

Far from achieving moral victory, he becomes combative with life, brutal and violent with hotel attendants. He talks nonsense, runs about the streets swearing vilely. He becomes coarse and vulgar. It is a state of self-inflicted debasement resulting from his inability to have life on "his own terms ... command and direct it as he had commanded and directed the gun company" (p.315).

In the Pennsylvania town where he tries to help the striking girl employees of a shirtwaist factory, Sam sees two fighting fowls about to kill one another. Anderson describes the hugeness of the background in which the combatants, for no particular purpose, indulge themselves in the destructive fight. He makes his naturalistic vision explicit by the fact that the "two feebly struggling fowls immersed in their pointless struggle in the midst of such might force, epitomized much of man's struggle in the world. . .." (p.276).

Man is endlessly in conflict with the mighty and malignant forces. As Sam puts it, he wants to have life on his own terms; whereas the forces disrupt the pattern of his life. Life becomes all chaos devoid of coherence. His attempts to impose a pattern on the disjointed life become futile like the futile struggle of the fighting fowls.

Had man been like a fowl without intellect, dream and hope,
his pointless struggle would not have been tragic and poignant. But he is conscious of himself and the scheme of things around him. His aspirations and dreams run wild. His emotional self fails to reconcile itself to the grim fact that he may not realize his aspirations and dreams. He is precariously placed in a situation which may tumble down by forces he neither comprehends nor controls.

The naturalistic writers raise the questions Sam raises: "'Why had I a brain and a dream and a hope? Why went I about seeking Truth?'" (p.315). Anderson implies that release from the relentless forces is well nigh impossible. Man has to conform and submit himself to these forces for survival, but survival is not the ultimate goal of man. The problem of achieving self-realization and self-fulfillment, the problem of disengaging oneself from the rigours of material forces and finding union with abiding bliss remain unsolved as before.

The only way open to man is to find alternatives to his aspirations and dreams. Physically tired and mentally sick, the defeated Sam returns to Sue with three children purchased from a dissolute woman to whom they are a nuisance and a burden. The childless McPhersons are to resign themselves to alternatives which these children symbolize. The fact is that Sam's search does not end; it stops. After his return "The struggle within him became more intense" (p.329) which indicates that his tragedy has never been cathartic nor has he reconciled himself to the alternatives he has contrived. He still pines for the goal that remains beyond his reach, but the "reader is aware that Sam McPherson will never cease his walking:
it is a search for something the reader senses he will never find."\textsuperscript{12}

While entering into the house Sam stumbles in the semidarkness as he has been stumbling throughout his life. \textit{Seen} from outside, Sam presents the picture of a prisoner in the house. Thus, "Sam McPherson's search for meaning in life concludes in a chaos of emptiness and negation. The dominant tone is one of darkness and frustration, steadily increasing in intensity."\textsuperscript{13} Sam remains a prisoner in the finitude of the objective world and in the web of deterministic forces with his metaphysical yearnings buried in his being.

The story of the matter-spirit conflict and the protagonist's repudiation of the material world for the fulfillment of his psychic needs continues in \textit{Poor White} (1920), Anderson's fourth published novel and admittedly his second most important after \textit{Winesburg, Ohio}. Anderson makes it clear that he wrote the novel, \textit{Poor White}, "having in mind the town as the hero of the book rather than the people of the town."\textsuperscript{14} The critics\textsuperscript{15} point out that the novel, almost in symbolic evocativeness, dramatizes the transition of Bidwell from its quiet, pastoral past to the machine-dominated industrial present. Anderson probes the mythic roots of the past of which characters like Ezra French and Joe Wainsworth are metaphorical expression. He also chronicles its obituary under the assault of industrialism initiated by the inventor, Hugh McVey.

Because of the process of industrialization, the "modification of circumstances and environment"\textsuperscript{16} brought to bear upon the small
town of Bidwell is of an extreme order. The impact of this process on the pattern of the town-life is unprecedented and overwhelming. Anderson gives fictional expression to his observation of what happens to Bidwell which is made to face this force in all suddenness. From this point of view, Anderson is "both observer and experimenter," as Zola would put it. The minor characters of the novel are the correlatives of the economic, social and human issues affected by the industrialization process. Their destiny is abruptly presided over by this external force.

The protagonist of the novel, Hugh McVey's crisis is due to some factors not altogether different from those that are responsible for Sam's crisis. Like Sam, Hugh achieves fame and wealth because of his inventive genius. Convinced that this achievement is trivial and insignificant, he searches for human relationship in order to circumvent the wall of loneliness and fulfill emotional needs. Like Sam's rejection of the dollar, Hugh's rejection of the machine becomes a compelling imperative.

Poor White is the integration of two strands of narrative—one concerning the predicament of Hugh; the other relating to the advent of a new culture which erases the old mode of life from Bidwell. Hugh represents inventiveness from which the machine is born. In its turn, the machine brings about upheaval in the town. Thus the factor which ultimately prevails and determines life in the town owes its roots to the creative strength of Hugh. The novel chronicles Bidwell's transformation in as much as it "chronicles the vicissitudes of another Midwestern youth, Hugh McVey." Awkward and inarticulate,
Hugh's continuous failure to establish human relationship forces him to pour his mental agility into inventing machines. The critical stance that Hugh's career as a man of inventions "throughout which he lies prostrate and powerless and unable to force his way back to consciousness, is a summarization of the novel," 18 focuses on the plight of Hugh.

Hugh's boyhood days in Mudcat Landing, Missouri, are uneventful. Like the rest of the people of his community his father, John McVey, is incorrigibly indolent. Forever in a state of drunkenness, John McVey sleeps in the swamp by the riverside in the oppressive smell of stale fish. His animal stupor is briefly interrupted when the urgency to work somewhere to be able to buy food becomes unavoidable.

Hugh inherits this utter sloth. He leads a very passive life till he is fourteen. He has a "dreamy detached outlook on life. He found it hard to be definite and to do definite things;" 19 but the pattern of his life changes dramatically. The railway station master, Henry Shepard, employs this boy to do all kinds of work at home and the station. His childless, ambitious wife, Sarah Shepard, has the New England blood of the pioneers who feels undefeated and unbeatable in life. She implants the virtue of industry and perseverance in Hugh's consciousness. Stupidity and indolence are firmly-rooted weeds in Hugh which she tries to exterminate with stubborn determination. Lest he should lie down to sleep, she does not allow him to sit idle. She tries to keep him in a state of perpetual diligence and wakefulness.
At the age of nineteen, when he becomes the station master after the departure of the Shepards, Hugh is already a vastly changed person. His foster mother's dictum—"Do little things well and big opportunities are bound to come!" (p.16)—sticks to his mind. He becomes the only educated man among the people of his community. He holds their animal existence in total contempt. His own heritage becomes degrading and slovenly to his awakened mind.

In Windy McPherson's Son Telfer's precepts and Sam's revolt against his environment force him to lead a life with which his finer instincts are at odds. In Hugh's case the modification of his environment is more drastic and extreme. He finds it difficult to come to terms with the new mode of life he is initiated into. Completely estranged from his people, he becomes pathetically lonely. In order to search for the right type of people to establish human communion, he leaves for an unknown destination after a year. Sarah Shepard's training, therefore, exercises a dehumanizing impact on Hugh. It deflects the course of his life. Hereafter he leads a life not in response to his inner self but within the strictures of his foster mother's precepts.

His floundering about for three years does not resolve his predicament. He sees people but does not meet them. His natural diffidence and consciousness of his inferior heritage make him afraid to talk with others who, he feels, lead beautiful and significant lives. Besides, his inarticulateness makes him unfit for self-expression. In order to keep his mind awake so that his impulse
to be in a state of inertia does not overcome him, he counts the
number of trees on roadsides and does such similar things. Before
he comes to Bidwell, Ohio, at twenty-three, he weaves a basket of
twigs in a hotelroom with great patience.

Irving Howe maintains that "The central symbol of the book,
through which it gains a quality of muted pathos, is the basket
woven in desperation: the basket that is neither product nor commodity
but token of despair." Hugh's despair, as Howe sees it, is due
to his failure to penetrate the wall that separates him from the
stream of human communion. But the basket suggests more than this.
It indicates that Sarah Shepard's training has instilled a sense
of definiteness into Hugh's mind, which he did not possess till the
age of fourteen. This enables Hugh to make mechanical inventions
out of steel, iron and wood. The basket signals the direction in
which his inventive force, once released, would move.

As a telegraph operator, Hugh lives in a far away place from
Bidwell which consolidates his loneliness. He does not belong to
the community life lived under one invisible roof. He gives up all
attempts to relate himself to the people. Instead, he pours all
his energy and time into the study of mathematics. He constantly
thinks of steel, iron and wood taking fantastic shapes in his mind.

The process of evolution of Hugh's inventiveness brings about
the circumscription of his natural self. Thus, the situation of
Sam and Hugh is identical. They become dollar-obsessed and invention-
obsessed not knowing how, in the process, their natural instincts
get smothered and clogged. Like Sam, Hugh is assailed by his sexual drive. He thinks of women, imagines his pillow to be the face of the woman whom he casually meets in his office; but concludes that women are not for a man like him. Contrary to his natural self, he leads a life which "is to imprison whatever imaginative impulses do not bear directly upon mechanical invention."21

By the time Hugh comes to Bidwell, the town, or, for that matter the whole country, awaits the coming of an unprecedented change with muted anxiety. According to Judge Hanby, a man of prophetic vision, the import of this change is to far exceed that of the Civil War. The change comes from the process of industrialization. Hugh, the personification of inventiveness, initiates the process. He looks at Ezra French's sons planting cabbage in the field and conceives of a machine that can replace this human toil.

The plant-setting machine becomes a failure, of course; but success comes from his corn-cutting machine and the apparatus for unloading coal cars. He achieves wealth and fame, but he is unaware of the personal triumph he accomplishes. Nor does he understand the havoc his machines play with the old pattern of socioeconomic life in the town. Rather his sense of loneliness becomes an anguish experience for him. His failure to become a part of humanity forces him to be more attentive to mechanical inventions.

This aggravates his inward crisis. Having failed to have life on his own terms Sam returns to the money-making world although it
had sickened his soul. Hugh's inability to circumvent the wall of separateness leads him to indulge in the act of self-absorption which strengthens the wall. As will be seen later, Kit Brandon does precisely the same thing. These Anderson characters become rebellious because of their inability to get their subjective longings fulfilled. But their rebellion is not directed towards the external world. It is directed towards their own self and, therefore, proves to be self destroying.

Life becomes abortive for Hugh. He makes futile attempts to be acquainted with the school teacher, Rose McCoy, in whose house he stays. His whole being aches due to his inward hunger. His spirit is in conflict with matter represented by the world of inventions in which he finds himself imprisoned. This idea is made explicit by the fact that the "hay-loading apparatus on which he was at work seemed suddenly a very trivial and unimportant thing" (p.234). He becomes restless, feels inclined to shout at the top of his voice and addresses the young trees and bushes.

For Anderson, physical proximity has never been a condition for mutual understanding and human relationship. His men and women are always lonely creatures whether they are in the family or in a crowd. One of Anderson's persistent images is the "wall" within the confines of which he sees man withering away. The complexities of the objective world perplex and overwhelm men. For this reason he sinks deeper into his self and the barrier isolating him from others becomes stronger. Anderson finds fault with men for this predicament: "All men lead their lives behind a wall of misunderstanding they
themselves have built, and most men die in silence and unnoticed behind the walls" (p.221).

Hugh proposes marriage to Clara, the only child of the richest man of Bidwell, Tom Butterworth with the hope that his inner discord and tension can be resolved by his being emotionally related to another person. Besides, he feels it imperative to save her from a scandal that is current in the town. His twisted inwardness makes him unfit for human relationship. Bewildered and hopeless, Hugh runs away from the Butterworth house on the day of marriage. His marriage is consummated after several days of confused and desperate attempts.

This consummation, however, does not end the problem of his inner dissociation. His growing sense of introspection convinces him that his preoccupation with mechanical inventions is the result of the misdirectedness of his life which is, in turn, due to the discipline enforced upon him. This moulds and bends his attitudes towards the world in which material success is considered to be the ultimate goal of life. This sense of disillusionment about his achievements indicates that Hugh's self is anxious to liberate itself from the values that have so far governed his life. "Hugh was no longer proud of himself and his achievements" (p.259); for he wants to start his life anew so as to discover self-identity. He feels, this will enable him to take cognizance of the scheme of things surrounding him of which he can be a part.

This feeling, quite obviously, weakens his absolute involvement
in mechanical inventions. The hay-loading machine he tries to perfect gets blurred in his consciousness. He takes the iron wheel intended to drive some intricate part of the hay-loading machine, places it on an anvil and with a great sledge in his hand strikes terrific blows till the "comparatively delicate metal wheel was twisted, knocked out of shape" (p.313).

Anderson describes it as an act of "protest against the grotesque position into which he had been thrown by his marriage to Clara" (p.313). Hugh's destroying the wheel signals the end he brings to his career as a man of inventions. This is synonymous with Sam's abruptly repudiating his career as a money-maker. This act of Hugh is antithetical to his weaving a basket in a hotel room. The basket is the first tangible result of Sarah Shepard's training of Hugh's mind. His destroying the wheel is the result of his conviction that this training has constricted his self and has distorted his life. It is hostile to his subjective world and, therefore, deserves his repudiation. Hugh's attempt to extricate himself from Sarah Shepard's training, thus, parallels Sam's resolve to liberate himself from Telfer's precepts to be a man of wealth.

Hugh's situation, however, is not as hopeless as Sam's. This is because of Clara who is, unlike Sue, an anti-naturalistic character. Clara is an idealization of Anderson's conception of woman. A symbol of creativity and compassion "she was made of the kind of stuff that survives the blows life gives" (p.153).

It may be mentioned that Clara reminds the reader of Perhaps Women (1931). In this book of essays Anderson apprehends that in
the world of industrial determinism man would be divested of potency and maleness because of his work in prison-like factories. But a woman may be physically tired, but the machine "cannot paralyze or make impotent her spirit. She remains, as she will remain, a being with a hidden inner life." 22

Clara retains her inner life inspite of an unhappy girlhood because of her rapacious and suspicious father's total neglect of her. She undergoes harrowing experiences in life, but her inner self remains alive and healthy. Her attitude towards life is in total variance with Sarah Shepard's in that she holds the world of matter in total contempt. Her tenderness and love for Hugh become a healing touch to his anguished self.

Hugh develops a moral attitude towards things which brings about a decline in his interest in mechanical inventions. He fails to perfect the hay-loading machine. The drawings of a similar machine invented by a man of Iowa are obtained with the hope that Hugh would perfect his own, but "A conscientious determination not to infringe on the work of the Iowa man stood in his way" (p.351).

Hugh is still beset with the problem of achieving emotional togetherness with Clara when Joe Wainsworth attacks him with teeth and nails. Once a proud craftsman, Joe is rendered obsolete by the industrial age. He directs his sense of protest and vengeance against Hugh, the personification of mechanical inventions. Clara comes to Hugh's rescue and from that day "He never again escaped out of boyhood in her consciousness of him" (p.360).
Hugh is persuaded to go to Sandusky in connection with the hay-loading machine, but he comes back with a few pieces of coloured stones in his pocket. Subsequently, he goes to Pittsburg to attend to some urgent business. After his return he does not go to the Butterworth house. He spends a few hours in the woods looking at the coloured stones. A multi-coloured pattern radiates from them. He tries to make his life an identification of this pattern "and for a moment he became not an inventor but a poet" (p.358).

Hugh's metamorphosis from an inventor into a poet implies that he is on the threshold of releasing his spirit from the harshness of the world of matter. He almost reaches a world of possibilities and meaning. At two o'clock in the morning he enters into the Butterworth house. Already the mother of a girl and expecting a son, Clara comes to receive him.

Had the novel ended on this note of promise it would have been possible to accept Nancy L. Bunge's observation that "the novel closes hopefully with Hugh and Clara anticipating the birth of their child."²³ The novel ends with the triumphant sound of the factory whistle. The assertiveness of this sound completely drowns the loud snoring of the old farm hand, Jim Priest, and the sound of the animals stirring in the barns. Old Jim and the animals are the vestiges of the vanishing agrarian age which has been replaced by the industrial age symbolized by the whistle. Moreover, Anderson describes the sound as the "greetings" to the unborn child of Hugh McVey. Anderson drives home the point that posterity has nothing to feel cheerful about. It will have to live not in the harmonious world of nature
but in the world determined by the force of Industry. The unborn Hugh McVeys, therefore, will find their spirit in endless conflict with industrial determinism. They will have to resign themselves to soul-destroying strife and competitiveness which will be the characteristics of the new age.

As Gelfant maintains: "Anderson's way of making us know what the city is, is to show what it has destroyed." The narrative of Poor White maintains a nostalgic mood throughout. The obituary of the agricultural past gives this mood a poignant touch. Man used to lead a healthy community life in nature. The destruction of this life with the advent of the technological culture leaves man trapped in the factory. This is what the end of the novel seems to imply.

Sam, Hugh, Kit Brandon, Beaut McGregor and Red Oliver have the same yearning to release themselves from the finitude of the hostile world of matter. They have the "Longing to escape from self, the desire to merge with others and with the universe" and they are always in quest of fulfillment of this metaphysical yearning. Like Sam and Hugh, Kit becomes a puppet in the hands of compelling circumstances in her youth. Her life is bent in a direction which, in the beginning, seems to be satisfying to her, but she does not take long to resent the type of life she leads. Thereafter she begins her search for self-fulfillment and self-realization. Kit Brandon is Anderson's only satisfying novel from the point of view of craftsmanship. Its narrative has a spontaneous flow. Anderson has admirably dramatized Kit's predicament and his focus on it has
While interpreting the central drive of *Kit Brandon*, Irving Howe maintains that "Anderson perceives the moral uncertainty at the centre of American life;" whereas Taylor's observation is that Anderson focuses attention on Kit as well as on the prohibition era to which she belongs. He says that "*Kit Brandon* is as much a story of America during the prohibition era as it is a chronicle of a mountain girl's development." The characters in the novel are "Torn from the soil, lacking 'roots' in either nature or society, alienated from family and community," comments Burbank. The following analysis of the novel will be an attempt to show how Kit's life remains abortive and how she makes a futile search for the fulfillment of her psychic needs which the material world fails to offer her.

Anderson dwells at length on Kit's primitive, mountain background. Under the pressure of compelling circumstances the life of this girl of East Tennessee takes a course which epitomizes, on the one hand, her bitter struggle for social and economic existence and, on the other, the mountain people coming to consciousness from their slovenly animal mode of life.

Kit's house horridly stinks of filth due to her unspeakably dirty mother whose indolence keeps her confined to a dirty bed. In John Brandon, Kit has a stern and taciturn father. The drudgery of the household work keeps her busy rendering her life joyless and love-starved. In the neighbourhood there go on drunken fights among the mountain people. Primitive violence like stabbing, shooting
and murder continues uninterrupted. Till the age of fourteen she resigns herself to a life-denying environment like this. Her father's misdemeanor and carnal desire alarm Kit who runs from him and keeps on moving almost throughout the night. She becomes a factory hand in a North Carolina cotton mill.

The debilitating atmosphere in the cotton mill makes her feel small and insignificant, but unlike the factory hands in Beyond Desire, she keeps her spirit and self-confidence intact. She shares the mountain people's rugged defiant quality which makes her self-possessed. She accepts challenges without being submissive to them. She is endowed with an abundance of inward energy which makes her feel restless. Her indomitable potential finds no satisfaction in the cotton mill. For this reason she "got out of the cotton-mill town suddenly one hot summer day, took a train to another industrial town of the upper South, got a job in a shoe factory there."²⁹

In one sentence Anderson describes Kit's change of place and change of job. This underscores her impulsive restlessness. This trait in her nature is in conformity with the primitivistic rawness with which the life of a mountain man is invested. Unprocessed and unharnessed by the civilized mode of living, his life is a reflection of his elemental nature. The mountain man is either nerve-shatteringly hard working or notoriously indolent. He is either violently brutal or lovingly generous. He endures the ravages and accepts the bounty of nature. His abject ignorance makes him live in ugly and unhygienic conditions leading to disease and death.
Notwithstanding this, Anderson recognizes an indefatigable, strange capacity in him to withstand the reverses of life. He has a daring and assertive attitude towards life which flows unabated in the face of a malignant nature or the civilized and rapacious people's shocking exploitation of him. Anderson's focus is on the unmoulded, excessive energy of Kit for which reason she restlessly swings from place to place. This makes her life a haphazard run—undirected and incoherent.

While working in the shoe factory two important things happen to Kit. "It was for Kit a time of slow awakening" (p.157) and, secondly, she develops a fascination for the car. This overwhelming fascination makes her explore means for material success. This attitude of Kit parallels that of Sam and Beaut McGregor. They all come of families assailed by poverty and consider achievement of wealth and sophistication to be the triumph of life.

Kit's uncanny spirit of masculinity and combativeness makes her sad that she is not born a man to be a car driver. She knows that drivers consider cars to be feminine. She thinks: "'Odd, my fight in life is going to be with men, not with other women!'" (p.158). Even then she wants to be a car driver and be at par with any man: "'Here I am. I am what I am. It would be well for you not to feel superior to me!'" (pp.162-63). Her infatuation with sophistication is stirred by her reading of Sister Carrie. "She had been lying in bed reading her book and suddenly got up and dressed" (p.164).

This is how her career in the shoe factory ends abruptly. She becomes a clerk in a five-and-ten-cent-store in another North
Carolina town. Here, after a brief period of romance she marries Gordon Halsey whose first marriage had failed. What impels Kit to take the hasty and impulsive step to marry Gorden and to "give it a trial, was that he had such a swell fast car" (p.162). It is important to note that like Telfer and Sarah Shepard bending the attitudes of Sam and Hugh in a definite direction, Sarah decisively influences Kit's outlook towards life. Sarah was her friend during her days as a factory hand in the North Carolina cotton mill. Sarah's dictum is to take life as an adventure. She disdains religion and sneers at the thought of attaining motherhood. She finds nothing wrong in using physical charm to achieve the desired object. She is all for leading a boisterous and riotous life based on instincts, not inhibited by moral strictures.

Kit's choice of Gordon, thus, is guided by her craze for a glittering, sophisticated life and for driving a car. A car, with its speed and sturdiness, seems to her to be the only medium through which her restlessly energetic spirit can find satisfaction. She can dominate it and render it into her passive partner. That is how she can vicariously fulfill her desire to achieve mastery over things. "Life is a game"—these words are repeated over and over again like a refrain. These words persuade her to consider life to be an adventure.

This is one side of the story behind the breakdown of the Kit-Gordon marriage. Nor is Gordon to be exonerated from what happens to this marriage. Gordon is himself a naturalistic character in that he is badly wounded by life. Motherless right after his
birth, he is always frightened of his "strange, quiet" step-mother, Kate. Gordon's father, Tom Halsey, had snatched away this placid and frigid woman who had just lost her baby from her preacher husband, Joseph Lawler. Tom's hope was that Kate would take loving care of his only son so that his childhood would not be impoverished by emotional privation.

Contrary to Tom's hope, Gordon has a very unhappy childhood. When he becomes young, he lives in a hotel totally dissociating himself from his family and father. With a joyless past behind him, Gordon becomes irresponsible and indolent. Since his father owns a flourishing empire of bootlegging, Gordon has plenty of money at his disposal. He carries on affairs with several women in total abandon. Faltering, devoid of self-confidence, lacking a forceful personality and forever dependent upon his father for money, Gordon is incongruous as the husband of an energetic, vigorous, restless, self-possessed girl like Kit.

For two months Gordon and Kit live in a hotel suite together. After the collapse of their marriage they live separately in the same hotel. The failure of his son's second marriage is a stunning blow to Tom's hope for a grandson. He had approved of Gordon's marriage with Kit because he was convinced of the vitality and child-bearing strength of Kit. This vitality and strength remain buried in Kit's being because of her aversion to becoming a mother.

Kit becomes a victim of circumstances and of her wrong decisions on crucial matters from which she tries to escape. Car driving and
money fail to compensate for the unbearable loneliness she experiences in the hotel suite as well as in life. She makes another miscalculation. With Tom Halsey's approval she becomes a rumrunner driving a high powered car and taking illicit liquor to distant places. Her anxiety is to transcend the wall of loneliness, but by joining the bootlegging gang she becomes more alienated from the stream of human intercourse. She spends nights in unknown hotels under assumed names. Her activities being illegal, she is always on the run trying constantly to evade the anti-saloon federal force which is in hot chase of such anti-social elements.

She becomes increasingly conscious of a "curious persistent loneliness, it growing in her, getting into her being like a disease, only broken by the excitement of her work" (pp.252-253). Hungry for human communion, she exclaims with a sense of defeat: "'How curiously separated I am from everybody. Is there a wall between me and others?'" (p.255). This feeling of entrapment is identical with Sam's obsession with money and Hugh's preoccupation with mechanical inventions. They are all pushed into a situation which arrests the expression of their self. Their suppressed finer instincts trying to find channels for release make them restless. They become disillusioned with their achievements because their spirit is in conflict with the world of matter.

Kit's anxiety is no longer for sophistication and excitement. She desires the liberation of her self from the imprisonment of her soul-destroying activities as a rumrunner. She knows that Tom's close surveillance over the members of his gang to prevent possible
betrayal makes it difficult for her to extricate herself from the present situation. But she wants release somehow and to reorganize her life: "Oh, why was I not born into a different way of life? Why do I not now live in some comfortable house in a town, perhaps with children of my own?" (p. 350).

This is how Kit's neglected inner being becomes assertive and demands a new set of values which can satisfy its hunger and lead to a sense of fulfillment. Kit develops motherly tenderness for a college boy, Alfred, who belongs to an aristocratic family in Virginia. Unhappy in his family, he joins Tom's gang for excitement. But the day Tom forces Alfred to shoot Wyagle, who was about to be Tom's rival in bootlegging, Kit becomes rebellious. She does not forgive Tom for having made the young Alfred a murderer. She resolves to murder Tom, but the end comes abruptly. The crack down of the federal force takes place on the house where Kate lives. In the prevailing confusion Gordon ironically murders his father who has been pining for a grandson. Kate, Gordon and other members of the gang are captured.

The federal force is in pursuit of the "Queen of the Rumrunners", a notorious epithet Kit earns because of her daring and adventurous quality. As she runs from place to place she comes across poor, but contented people living in unpretentious farm houses in nature. She envies them and confesses defeat in life. She wants to "get into some sort of work that did not separate her from others" (p. 373).

Joel, the disgruntled son of a judge, rescues her from
imminent arrest. When she feels apparently safe, she recounts the story of her life to the author. She has no idea as to how to renew living purposefully. She feels betrayed by life because the values she embraces and thinks to be imperative for herself prove disastrous and destructive. She carries the burden of an unproductive life: she has denied its being put to creative purpose.

Anderson exclaims: "What a queer mixed-up thing life was, people always being driven here and there by forces they themselves couldn't understand, some being hurt, sold-out by life, others apparently lifted up" (p.354). Sister Carrie and Susan Lenox are two other naturalistic women protagonists whose lives are also in conformity with this philosophy of determinism. They are also driven here and there by inexorable forces of circumstances. But there exists an area of difference between these two and Kit. Sister Carrie and Susan achieve fame and wealth by taking to the stage after undergoing harrowing experiences. Their creative potentiality finds a channel of sublimation through acting; although the stage itself is a prison and acting on it is no substitute for living a life of realities. But the case of Kit is more tragic. After leading a nihilistic life of tension and so-called adventurism she enters into a future of total emptiness. Rootless and alienated, she drifts in aimless misery. She has nothing except a relentless sense of repentence for having misspent her life and being false to her self.

The novel "possesses a primitivistic naturalism peculiarly well suited to its materials." Anderson depicts Kit's mountain
background and shows how her rugged rawness and indomitable combative-
ness in conjunction with external forces and influences determine
the course of her life. Her experiences enable her to recognize
herself and her aspiration. This is a theme of discovery and "Natura-
listic primitivism saturates this 'discovery'" so that Kit
understands what it means to lead a meaningful life.

There are four minor characters who reinforce the story of
the matter-spirit conflict in Kit Brandon. One is a rich manufac-
turer's daughter who pleads with Kit to initiate her into the
dangerous and exciting world of bootlegging. The fifteen-year-old
Jim is a bright student. The only son of a big furniture-factory
owner, he becomes a member of this gang. Kit has affection for this
boy, but he gets killed by the federal force while taking illicit
liquor to a distant town. As is noted above, Alfred belongs to an
aristocratic family. This college student joins the bootlegging
gang to experience the tenseness and excitement his job would bring
him. The fourth is Joel. The son of a judge, he is given to excessive
drinking and leads a life of dissipation. Joel rescues Kit from the
arrest of the anti-saloon force.

The significant point is that these four characters belong
to affluent and respectable families. They "present a picture of
the dislocation and disjointedness that has come to be the accepted
characteristics of the human condition in this century." This
picture of disintegration is obviously symptomatic of some vital
and nourishing force gone dry in American life. They are essentially
victims of spiritual and emotional poverty which is not compensated
for by the material wealth of their families. With their outlook towards life embittered, these love-starved young men become masochistic in temperament. In the absence of any creative work to absorb their potentiality, they alienate themselves from their cultural roots and indulge in destructive activities. The excitement and tension which they experience in the process, make them momentarily oblivious of their tormenting spiritual and emotional malady.

Written during the prohibition era, the novel embodies Anderson's implicit indictment of the country's rotten administrative set up. Clandestine bootlegging flourishes as this set up goes corrupt. Tom Halsey's Darwinian principle is: "It is a law of nature. The strong must survive. The weak must perish" (p.324). A personification of rapacity, he lives in a world of godlessness, brute force and deceit. Once the wife of a preacher, Kate enthusiastically identifies herself with Tom's principles for making his illegal bootlegging a money-harvesting machine.

Anderson projects this picture of America in Kit Brandon. It is a picture of moral chaos, family disintegration, madness for wealth and ruthless competition. In an atmosphere like this the quest of the human self for identity and self-realization is all the more problematic. Its transcendence from the web of material forces is all the more difficult.

In Anderson's second published novel, Marching Men, the matter-spirit conflict assumes a more definite form; it is a conflict between economic determinism and the human spirit. The
question of transcendence raised in this novel refers to transcen-
dence from this determinism. Economic privation is recognized as
a hostile and destructive force. It mutilates human life, makes
it abortive and arrests its spontaneous expression. The pervasive
"disorganized ineffectiveness" of life is ascribed to this force.

In one significant respect, however, *Marching Men* makes a
departure from the three novels discussed above. The focus here
is not so much on the subjective world of Beaut McGregor, its
protagonist. In the dispensation of a capitalistic system of
economy dominated by crude rapacity and competitive strife, the
workingman leads a life of destitution and shabbiness. Stripped
of vitality and identity, he becomes a passive and submissive
creature. Beaut attempts to unite the Chicago workingmen with the
conviction that their organized collectivism will resist the
capitalists' exploitation. This collective strength, Beaut believes,
will bring about coherence and order, beauty and significance to
the lives of the workingmen. This is the driving force of the
novel's narrative. Beaut's preoccupation as a conscientious social
reformer leaves his private life neglected. His activities are
based upon some principles which do not lead him to the realm of
self-realization and self-fulfillment. Anderson suggests that
Beaut's self remains inhibited for the above reason; but unlike
the three above novels, the theme of this protagonist's inhibited
life is not central to *Marching Men*.

Like Sam, the young Norman McGregor, known as Beaut McGregor,
leaves his native town, Coal Creek, in Pennsylvania for Chicago with a sense of bitterness against the dirty and joyless life in the town. It is a coal-mining town inhabited by diffident miners at the near-starvation level in whom the dream of having a better existence is dead. Totally resigned to their lot they are like imprisoned, submissive animals. They spend the better part of the day inside the coal mine which resembles a dark, ineluctable menagerie. This underscores the state of total arrest of their lives.

The destructive impact of the constricting and life-denying environment on life is symbolically represented by the tall, pale daughter of the undertaker. Victimized by tuberculosis that consumes her vitality, she is to die a premature death before her potentiality has any chance to express itself. She is one of the "figures of almost archetypal significance" because she embodies the havoc a hostile environment plays with life. Beaut's compassionate attraction for this lonely, decaying girl also helps him identify the factors which suck the vitality of the workingmen.

Beaut's mother, Nance McGregor, is a silent, toiling woman who is convinced that any quarrel with life is pointless. She withers under the drudgery her existence forces on her. This widow is betrayed by the miners for which reason the bakery shop she opens after her husband's death gets folded up. This compels her to become a sweepress in the office of the mine.

She ruins her shop in trying to help the miners. Beaut's
father, "Cracked" McGregor—his peculiarly abnormal behaviour earns him that name—sacrifices his life for the sake of a few miners who were trapped inside the mine when a fire breaks out in it. From among the helpless spectators McGregor comes out and forces his way into the dangerous mine.

A silent man, he sometimes mutters incoherently to himself while he hurries along the town road. Inarticulate as he is, he pours his affection on his son silently. Beaut inherits his father's brute courage, immense physical strength and the sense of dogged determination. Unlike Sam, Beaut is proud of his parents for their sense of sacrifice. What generates resentment in him is his feeling that his parents are betrayed by the opportunistic and ineffective miners.

This is how environment and heredity mould Beaut's attitude towards life. He comes to Chicago in order to be a lawyer in accordance with his mother's wish. He is convinced that the city is an extension of Coal Creek with the same picture of colossal disorderliness and ineffectiveness of life. It is also a hideous place of things frightfully jumbled up where men live their lives without purpose and direction. "He began to think that the lives of most of the people about him were much like the dirty newspapers harried by adverse winds and surrounded by ugly walls of facts."34

Beaut develops this deterministic conception of life because of his growing awareness that a feeble man cannot be assertive nor can he have self-identity. Not knowing the purpose and meaning of
his life, he is helplessly blown about by adverse and external factors. Beaut resolves to eliminate these factors so that man can direct his life in a purposeful manner with self-confidence. He thinks it imperative to strengthen man's inwardness which would also enable him to confront any force threatening to deflect the course of his life. This inner strength will eventually make life effective and coherent. The transcendence of human spirit from the rigours of deterministic forces will be possible after that.

This perception of life generates unbounded compassion in Beaut's mind for the workingmen including those in his native town. He had once held them in utter contempt for their betrayal of his parents. But now "he knew that he who had hated the miners hated them no more" (p. 106).

Beaut's conception of order gets crystallized in his mind because of the impressions and influences coming to him from different sources. His attitude towards nature is lyrical. Like Sam, he perceives a quality of harmony and wholesomeness in it. When a young boy in Coal Creek, he comes to the majestic and beautiful hill which is in close proximity with the ugly mining area. The groves of trees, contented lambs, singing birds and the flowing stream make him think "it the most wonderful sight in the world" (p. 15). With its proud height and unruffled calmness, the hill is itself a symbol of liberation in sharp contrast to the underground coal mine presenting a veritable picture of captivity and lightless imprisonment. Had he not come to Chicago to be a lawyer in obedience to his mother's desire, he would have been a farmer. He had declared
once: "'I think I want to be a farmer and work in the fields'" (p. 25).

In Chicago Beaut gets acquainted with Turner whose influence on him is decisive. Turner abandons his profession as a barber and deserts his wife and four children to devote himself to making violine. Turner is beset with the problem of creating a definite musical tone on the violin in the midst of the city's confusing din and discordant noise. This gives Beaut an insight into an artist's passion for creating form and order even when the artist works in a chaotic atmosphere with the things surrounding him in a state of disjointedness. Thus, Beaut's idea of natural order and harmony gets enriched by his perception of how an artist's mind functions to create art. His determination to bring effectiveness and liberation to the lives of the workingmen is, in effect, his attempt to be an artist to create new men. He wants to bring to their lives harmony and orderliness which, as a young boy, he had perceived to be the exclusive attributes of nature.

Beaut faces, as does Sam, his early days of hardship and struggle in Chicago with a sense of self-confidence. The enormous strength of his body and the "clearness of his brain" enable him to get jobs in the face of stiff competition. According to him: "'Brains are intended to help fists', he said, 'I've got both'" (p. 53). This primitivistic notion helps him score victory after victory in the city which operates on the law of the jungle. He plunges headlong into the battle for material success. He comes
in contact with an emaciated, frail looking milliner, Edith Carson, who waits vainly for the return of her lover. A great admirer of Beaut's guts and bravado, she renders him all possible help to become a lawyer.

The Andrew Brown case makes him famous overnight. The machinations of the capitalist world throw Andrew into the jaws of death with a false charge of murder levelled against him. Beaut unearths the conspiracy by means of his boldness and adventurous spirit and rescues Andrew. He impresses Margaret Ormsby, the only child of the famous plowmaker, David Ormsby. Their courtship is about to end in marriage. An exalted Beaut goes to the extent of declaring enthusiastically: "'Oh, we will be married, Margaret and I,' he said, 'her beauty has won me. I follow beauty. I want beautiful children. That is my right'" (p.174).

One important fact is that contrary to his natural impulse to be a farmer, Beaut comes to Chicago partly because of his resentment against the environment of his native town and partly because of his mother's wish that he be a lawyer. Clearly, the course of his life is bent in a direction different from what it would have taken leading to the suppression of his natural instincts. Beaut embraces values which fail to satisfy the hunger of his suppressed self. This parallels Sam's situation as a money-maker. However, while achieving personal successes and wishing for beautiful children, Beaut's attention remains self-directed. The attention dramatically shifts towards the external world drastically changing
the pattern of his life.

He feels that he is not meant to concentrate his energy and attention on the furtherance of self-aggrandizement. He wants to do something for the country's workingmen who constantly get defeated in life. He abandone his promising career as a lawyer and becomes disillusioned with his personal accomplishments thinking them to be "meaningless".

The abrupt turn which Beaut's life takes, circumscribes his natural impulses still more. His anxiety is to secure liberation for the workingmen so that assertiveness instead of submissiveness, cleanliness instead of ugliness, purposefulness instead of hazardness, beauty instead of cheapness should enable them to lead significant lives. Paradoxically, in trying to do so, Beaut imprisons his own self, neglects his inwardness and becomes a naturalistic character himself.

The violin maker, Turner, scorns the very concept of marriage. According to him, the wives go on, throughout "their lives, flattering, diverting us, giving us false ideas, pretending to be weak and uncertain. . . . They have no mercy. They wage war on us, trying to make us slaves. They want to take us captive home to their houses. . . ." (p. 68). Turner's conviction is that some men are meant to do more significant and meaningful things than taking care of wives and children.

Beaut marries Edith Carson who is six years older than he. His deep compassion for her who remains loyal and helpful to him
impels him to take this step. He unconvincingly justifies the marriage that since Edith Carson is not beautiful, she will not make inroads into his attempts to ameliorate the lot of the working-men. She will not divert his attention, as Turner would put it, from his objective. In short, she will not exist as a wife in his consciousness. Anderson does not deal with Beaut's marital life; Edith vanishes from the book hereafter. But his sexuality finding no means of expression, remains arrested thwarting his dream of beautiful children. He, thus, becomes false to his subjective needs. The marriage is destined to be disastrous both for Beaut and Edith Carson.

Beaut's organizing skill takes no time in attracting Chicago's workingmen who see the hope of redeeming themselves through the strategy Beaut adopts for them. He had seen disciplined soldiers marching shoulder to shoulder when he was a boy in Coal Creek. His idea is that the individually feeble and docile workingmen will be metamorphosed into a tremendous force if they march shoulder to shoulder in a disciplined manner like the soldiers. The force emanating from their march will be directed towards the task of liquidating the factors which compel them to lead haphazard and inhibited lives.

In essence, Beaut preaches the doctrine of collective force against the capitalistic system of economy. Thousands of workingmen who throng Chicago become a serious menace to the capitalists. A song is also composed which they are to chant on the day they are to march on the city's streets.
Not surprisingly, Beaut and the great plowmaker, David Ormsby, the personification of capitalism, maintain divergent attitudes towards things. In the course of his talk with Beaut in order to ascertain his intentions, the capitalist recognizes the laws of nature as eternal and inexorable. He believes that man's survival on this planet is dependent upon whether he is able to adapt and submit himself to these laws which determine his destiny. Says he: "'For thousands, no doubt for millions of years, the world has gone on its way and I do not think it is to be stopped now'" (p.193). According to him, the operation of the triumphant and indifferent natural laws can never be modified by human endeavour. He is convinced of the existence of an "eternal youth in the world" (p.196). This thwarts man's attempts to direct the world and his life on his own terms.

David Ormsby, obviously, does not confine himself to the question of economic determinism; he refers to a determinism of cosmic dimensions. He holds the opinion that the existing economic situation is the result of the operation of the natural forces. Therefore, Beaut's attempts to change its shape through the organized force of the workingmen are destined to be futile.

Beaut's response to the whole issue is moralistic. He laments: "'We go, each of us, through the treadmill of our lives, caught and caged like little animals in some vast menagerie'" (p.198). He is tormented by his awareness that life is imprisoned within forces. He asks: "'Are the efforts of the patient workers of the
world always to be abortive? ... Do you deny to us individuality . . . the right to work things out and to control?" (pp. 195-196).

Beaut forgets the harsh truth that the natural laws manifest themselves through the activities of persons like David Ormsby. The inability of man to penetrate the ineluctability of these laws leads to the imprisonment of his self and the destruction of his dreams about leading a life in accordance with his wishes. This is why "Everywhere was dirt and disorder, the terrible evidence of man's failure in the difficult and delicate art of living" (p. 219). Anderson recognizes that the natural forces will, forever, continue to deny man his desired life.

The fact that Beaut's marching men disintegrate and finally melt in Chicago suggests that he tries to attain the impossible. The individual man's impulse for order and form, his sense of purpose and meaning in life, and his yearning for liberation of his self, cannot be arithmetically compounded by putting a vast multitude of individuals together. Nor can the sum total of their minds be obtained so as to direct it in a definite direction. The frustrated workingmen, while marching together with a song, may be swayed by a sense of mass-hypnosis for some time; but this sense, volatile and transient as it is, cannot release their spirit from the tangle of forces it is tied to. Beaut's method is thus unworkable. Besides, his idea that man can achieve liberation with the annihilation of capitalism is simplistic. Economic determinism is not the only hostile force that constrains man's spirit and mutilates his self.
The ending of the novel reflects Anderson's despair that life's muddle defies corrective measures. It seems that he wrote Marching Men with the conviction that Beaut's method to secure liberation for workingmen is impracticable. Like the disintegration of the workingmen in Chicago streets, the focus of the novel gets diffused. Edith Carson and Beaut's personal life are left behind in the narrative with the result that crucial issues pertaining to the substance of the novel have not been rounded off.

One gets the impression that the novel has stopped abruptly. This lack of clarity of focus is more glaring in Beyond Desire in which the characters fall apart and the narrative is devoid of cohesion, direction and force. Anderson has not been able to articulate, in artistic form, the confusion and moral uncertainties of the depression decade which forms the background of the novel. Both Beyond Desire and Marching Men exemplify Anderson's weakness as a craftsman.

Irving Howe maintains that Beyond Desire is a "work of incoherence. Its structure is a chaos ... Its prose is in an advanced stage of decomposition ... there is no controlling point of view ... only the gesture of quest ... there is no genuine effort to find anything."  

In a letter to Tom Smith written in 1932, Anderson tries to defend the novel from hostile criticism. He claims that in Beyond Desire he gives fictional treatment to the moral, spiritual and economic crisis of the depression period. He writes:
... all this talk of its being a confused and muddled book makes me tired. It seems to me that the novel has more real form than any novel I have written. I have tried to write the story of a confused civilization, and I think the critics have been up to their old trick of thinking that a writer who writes of a confused and puzzled man is necessarily himself confused. 36

David D. Anderson, on the other hand, does not join issue with the novel's artistic flaws. He maintains that the novel draws its strength from a troubled period which "gave rise to more indecision and self-interrogation than has any other time in American history except the Civil War." 37 The novel, he insists, recaptures the consciousness of a definite period in American history in a more "genuine" manner than any of Anderson's novels.

Of all the protagonists of Anderson's novels, Red Oliver of Beyond Desire is the most confused about himself and the world. He pathetically vacillates, never becomes decisive, never settles down. He moves about like a somnambulist never knowing the purpose and direction of his movement. Lack of perspicacity incapacitates him to identify the factors which cause his inward torment. Like the other protagonists he is in search of selfhood; he yearns for the liberation of his spirit from the inhibiting forces. But his failure to take cognizance of his crisis in rational terms worsens the state his inner disharmony.

Beyond Desire comprises four parts. The first one, entitled "Youth", is devoted to the boyhood of Red who is victimized by the impact of a destructive environment. He belongs to a family which is in the process of rapid decadence. The massive house,
which his eminent doctor-grandfather had built in Langdon, Georgia, is now a bizarre thing. With its doors and windows bereft of screens, this unpainted house becomes a hiding place for stray dogs and cats. This degeneration is due to his father who leads a life of dissipation. Also a doctor, he neglects his profession and becomes a dissolute. After his father's death, when Red becomes an ordinary sweeper in the town's cotton mill, he hammers the last nail into the coffin of his family's glory and opulence.

Another factor accounts for the emotional privation of Red's boyhood. His diffident mother, Susan, is forever conscious of the inferior background of her family. She is afraid of her husband and even the Negro servants of the house scorn her. She "scarcely spoke to her son or to her husband" with the result that a wall separates Red from his mother. Susan's entire being aches to pour her affection on Red, but she fails to assert her motherhood. Red likes it most when his mother is not at home. The Negro servants ridicule Susan and Red joins in their uproarious laughter. Susan, with her melancholy face and taciturnity, becomes nonexistent as the mother in Red's consciousness.

The Oliver house has a yard of sandy soil inhospitable for plants in which Red's mother tries to raise flowers but fails every year. The Oliver house gets identified with this piece of barren land. The seeds of affection which Susan has in abundance do not sprout. The house is devoid of the flowers of human communion and emotional togetherness.

Totally separated from the stream of human intercourse, Red does not know what he is going to do in life. He has several
chances to be friendly with others, but his inarticulateness and lack of self-confidence make him shrink away from human contact. From his childhood he becomes a house of desires. Not knowing the means to realize them, he finds life a veritable burden and the world a tremendous chaos.

Red continues to get letters from his friend, Neil Bradley, regarding his love for a school teacher. Not finding anyone to love, Red considers the world to be a place of denial to his desires. Only once does he have an opportunity to have physical union with the town librarian, Ethel Long, elder than him by several years. Moreover, he feels inexorably trapped in the mill where he works. The high speed machines pervade his whole being and he becomes a part of the mechanical movement in the mill. With his boyhood brutally distorted by emotional privation, Red yearns for transcendence from the state of inhibition. His hopeless infatuation with Ethel Long becomes a source of torment for him. He feels that he can secure release to a great extent by emotionally belonging to a person who can give him love and tenderness.

The novel's focus shifts to the mill girls in the second part and to Ethel Long in the third. But the last one, entitled "Beyond Desire", brings Red back to the narrative. This part of the novel rambles because of lack of cohesion. There is a chaotic crowd of characters not related to the central drive of the novel. It gets diffused owing to unnecessary digressions. The theme manages to crawl haltingly towards the end.
In this part, Anderson depicts another strike-torn industrial centre, Birchfield. Red is surprised to discover himself in this town. He fails to ascribe any cause to his escape from his home town where the workers also resort to a strike and some of them are arrested. He does not identify himself with the merit of the strike; instead, he is aware of "this restlessness in me that has driven me from home, made a tramp of me, made a wanderer of me" (p.312).

This has been the pattern of his life. "When the crisis had come in his own life he had run away from her [his mother] and from his home town" (p.293). He comes to Birchfield "like a moth going toward a flame" (p.271) owing to his inability to serve either the cause of the strike in his home town or the cause of communism which sponsors it. This is Red's faltering, indecisive mental condition. Therefore, Rex Burbenk's contention that "Like Beaut McGregor he [Reg] identifies himself with the workers in their struggle against intrenched financial and industrial power"39 is not convincing. Like Beaut, Red is not committed to anything for which reason he never makes any sustained and conscious effort to serve any cause. He is pathetically beset with the problem of disengaging himself from the state of inhibition. Unable to make an assessment of his crisis and the factors circumscribing his life, he is constantly consumed by his restlessness which remains a baffling enigma for him. When he is shot at and killed by the army for having defied the warning to the striking crowd not to move, his mind is still preoccupied with thoughts about Ethel Long. From his pocket is discovered his friend, Neil Bradley's letter about his school-teacher.
love. The letter and his thought about Ethel Long indicate his buried desire to love somebody.

The story of the twenty-nine-year-old librarian of Langdon, Ethel Long, has an independent focus in the novel. She is conscious that her sexuality finding no means of expression twists her inner self. She desired "To live recklessly" (p.107) disdaining moral strictures; but like Red, fails to impose a pattern on her life. Extremely susceptible to flattery, she confesses: "'I can stand for almost any man if he thinks I'm beautiful'" (p.164). In order to lead a sophisticated life she desires a wealthy man as her husband. She is dominated by her passions and instincts which account for the misdirectedness of her life.

Ethel's childhood has not been an unhappy one; it has not been twisted by any destructive force. Her father, Judge Long, is a respectable citizen of the town who scrupulously takes a moral and religious stance in life. The only trouble, however, is that having lost two sons, the sixty-five-year-old judge marries Blanche for a son. This thirty-two-year old sex-starved stepmother's lesbianism creates a sense of revulsion in Ethel's mind towards her own house.

After completing her studies at Chicago, Ethel comes back to Langdon feeling more lonely and frustrated. Her attempts to find a lover in Chicago prove abortive and she undergoes frightful experiences while making desperate attempts in this direction. Back at home, she becomes the town librarian and her stepmother sees to
it that Ethel remains at home so that she can satisfy her perverse sexual drives.

The smallness of Langdon limits Ethel's choice of an ideal husband and constricts her sexuality. Her attraction towards the physically strong Red impels her to have sex with him in the library in a rainy night. Her passion for him remains alive notwithstanding Red being a mere sweeper and considerably younger than she. When Ethel finds it no longer possible to stay in the house with her stepmother, she takes a bag and goes to Tom Riddle who had once proposed to her because of her style. A wealthy lawyer of the town, the middle-aged, unattractive Tom had lost his wife ten years before. Ethel enters into this dubious wedlock for the simple reason that Tom can give her material security thus enabling her to lead a life of style and sophistication.

The fact that Ethel remains a dissatisfied person in the midst of material security is revealed in a suggestive manner in the last page of the novel. After one year of Red's death in Birchfield, Ethel puts on her raincoat and, without answering her husband's question as to what she is up to, drives the car at an alarming speed in the night lashed by a thunderstorm. The night reminds her of another rainy night in which she had physical union with Red. Ethel yearns for a satisfying sex experience of that sort which her marriage has denied to her. Her reckless driving is an act impelled by her bottled up frustration. Through this act she tries to lessen the intensity of this frustration and bring about a moment of release to her suppressed self.
The depression decade brings about a sense of bewilderment and helplessness to the Americans. Anderson's compassionate attitude towards life, twisted and mutilated by the formidable factors witnessed during this time, makes him toy with the idea of communism as a corrective measure against the existing socioeconomic malady. But the novel does not reflect propagandistic overtones in favour of this political ideology. Indeed, the idea remains hesitant without gaining forcefulness. No character has embraced it; least of all Red. The woman who claims herself to be a communist and makes a speech in the last part of the novel remains unnamed and vanishes from the book after the speech. Beau unites the workingmen because he takes a moral stance on the prevailing economic atmosphere in the country. He fails; because he tries to eliminate the eternal and the universal laws of nature so that the workingmen's spirit may attain total liberation from all kinds of inhibiting forces. The idea of communism in the book, however hesitant, is hinted at as a possible means to release man from the same inhibiting forces.

The novel brings to focus "the corruption of old values, greater discrepancy between the community's ideals and its reality, more and more emotional isolation of the individual, and further disruption of understanding between men and women." Like other novels of Anderson, Beyond Desire also depicts abortive life; life that is dominated by inexorable factors. The inner self of man yearning for release and fulfillment remains repressed and distorted.
Most of Anderson's subsequent writings are a reiteration and intensification of his vision of abortive and unrealized life discernible in the characters of Sam and Mary in *Windy McPherson's Son*. Notwithstanding the variation in social background of *Poor White*, *Kit Brandon* and *Beyond Desire*, the protagonists, like Sam, are in endless search of blissful lives. Place and time are, therefore, non-issues for Anderson. He projects this perception of life relentlessly, to the point of being over-repetitive. It will be seen in the following chapters that Mary is the prototype of most of Anderson's women characters who lead buried and unlived lives. *Winesburg, Ohio* and stories like "The Egg" and "Death in the Woods" embody this perception in the most condensed and forceful manner.

Nor has Anderson overcome, in his latter writings, the flaws in craftsmanship noticeable in *Windy McPherson's Son*. Anderson's tendency is to develop his characters without taking in his stride the larger context of the novel. Consequently the evolution of the plot lacks simultaneity. The characters and incidents do not interpenetrate and coalesce into an organic whole. Each character tends to have an independent focus—Red and Ethel and the factory girls in *Beyond Desire* illustrate this point. In *Poor White* the characters of Hugh and Clara are developed separately and then welded together. The integration of the two identical plots in *Dark Laughter* seems to be contrived. Anderson's inability to grapple with the larger canvas of the novel accounts for the structural looseness in his writings. The best result of this looseness is *Winesburg, Ohio*; the worst, *Beyond Desire*. 
Windy McPherson's Son is not a commercial success like Dark Laughter; nor is it a literary masterpiece like Winesburg, Ohio. However, the importance of this first novel of Anderson lies in the fact that its substance and form consistently recur in his latter writings. In this context Windy McPherson's Son occupies a pivotal position among Anderson's works.
CHAPTER II

Notes

1 Windy McPherson's Son (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1965), pp.262-263. With an "Introduction (vii-xix) by Wright Morris. All subsequent page references to the text in parentheses are to this edition.


10 Ibid.


Rex Burbank, Sherwood Anderson, p. 81.
Irving Howe, Sherwood Anderson, p. 124.


Irving Howe, Sherwood Anderson, p. 129.


Irving Howe, Sherwood Anderson, p. 233.


29 Sherwood Anderson, *Kit Brandon* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 156. All subsequent page references to the text in parentheses are to this edition.


36 Letters of Sherwood Anderson, pp. 265-266.


40 Walter B. Rideout, "Introduction" *Beyond Desire*, vii-xiii.