CHAPTER III

THE TWISTED APPLES: BIOLOGICAL NATURALISM

In Winesburg, Ohio (1919) Anderson harvests the fruit of his unique creativity. Its shorter episodic form, its language almost lyrical and evocative, and its penetrating insights into human life coalesce in a manner that reveals its author's creative force. Anderson's perception of life and its transmutation into the form of art have never so harmoniously been synthesized as in Winesburg, Ohio and a few short stories.

This is Anderson's third published novel after Windy McPherson's Son and Marching Men. From the point of view of craftsmanship all his novels are imperfect. The novel as a longer form of narrative and as a slice of life seems to baffle him. He is unsure about himself while grappling with a larger canvas. The narrative of Marching Men and Beyond Desire, for example, rambles; the thematic drive gets diffused with the result that the focus becomes chaotic. In Winesburg, Ohio one is conscious of the firm grip of the author over his subject.

The matter-spirit conflict is clearly pronounced in the novels discussed in the preceding chapter, but the conflict dealt with in Winesburg, Ohio is of a different order. It stems from
man's psychic imperfection which is due to an inexplicable biological mistake. Man is born with this imperfection which accounts for his inability to come to terms with realities. The result is that contrary to his wish, he does not lead a wholesome life. In this novel man is seen struggling with this biological handicap making futile attempts to transcend it.

It comprises stories about Winesburg grotesques, each complete and rounded off in itself. Some of these twisted, defeated human beings, whom Anderson calls grotesques, pathetically try to establish human communion in order to overcome their sense of loneliness and alienation from the stream of human intercourse. They come in touch with the young reporter, George Willard, working for the town newspaper, Winesburg Eagle. The presence of George in some of the stories provides the slender interrelatedness in the book.

The Winesburg grotesque is a psychic cripple with his mental structure twisted and distorted. For him the objective world is always baffling and overwhelming. He estranges himself from normal human communion because of his innate diffidence and inarticulateness. He endlessly struggles to liberate himself from the factors inhibiting his life and constricting his spirit. Unable to rationalize and formulate what these factors are and what he precisely aims at, he gropes and flounders. His clamorous but bottled up desires agonize his inner being and make him anxiously restless. He mutters incoherently to himself. His desires demanding fulfillment make him run. He wishes for an escape into a world where his inward tension can be resolved. The compulsiveness of his yearnings overwhelms him.
because he fails to contain them within his self. Without the nourishment of love and understanding he resigns himself to the narrow confines of his life. The town with its eternal monotony and limitedness becomes symbolical of his narrow experience of life. Finding no means of self-expression, he decays silently in a state of imprisonment. Winesburg is a small town of strange, silent human beings who are tormented by the burden of their existence itself.

The following discussion will try to establish that psychic distortion results in what Anderson calls grotesqueness in a man. This distortion prevents a man from reaching his ideal and it determines the shape of his life. The grotesque tries to surmount this factor which condemns him to defeat. Anderson's concept of grotesqueness is closely related to the naturalistic vision that inexorable forces preside over human destiny.

The richness and complexity of *Winesburg, Ohio* has provoked diverse and, sometimes conflicting, critical responses. External forces are identified as responsible for the deformity and mutilation of the Winesburg characters' lives. C.C. Walcutt, for example, believes that the plight of these characters is due to the "confines of tradition or the inhibitions of puritanism," and that Anderson delineates the lives of these grotesques to "indicate what small-town life has done to its people."

The naturalistic tragedy embodied in the novel stems from an "inchoate society's failure to provide forms and patterns for
the life of the heart." Echoing Walcott's contention Hilfer maintains that puritanism is a blockade to the Winesburg people's self-expression because Anderson "saw puritanism as the enemy, the creator of artificial barriers to self-realization; for which the people live in a state of arrest with their energy remaining buried. They are "baffled because their lives offer no channel through which their vitality can discharge itself."  

Waldo Frank ascribes the sufferings of these people to yet another external cause. He says: "Winesburg's men and women are old souls, inheritors of a great Christian culture who have been abandoned and doomed to a progressive emptiness by the invasion of the unmastered Machine."  

The desecration of a religion by the onslaught of the technological culture, Frank observes, distorts life and makes man a grotesque. Because of this reason the decay of man's old cultural foundation results in the loss of his ancestral prop. Alienated, he suffers psychic paralysis. This view finds support in John H. Ferres who claims that Winesburg, Ohio is "our most sensitive literary record of the human effects of the transition from an agrarian to an industrial-technological age in the American small town." 

James Schevill points out two major sources of American grotesqueness. First: "The American evangelical tradition is often so fanatic in its religious intensities and obsessions" that it enforces repressions which twist man's life and make him a grotesque. In order to prove his point Schevill names Reverend Curtis Hartmann,
Jesse Bentley, Louise Bentley, and David Hardy in *Winesburg, Ohio* who are victims of such perverse religious fanaticism. The second source of grotesqueness is the "goal of individual, materialistic success." 7

In this novel Anderson "displays an extremely hesitant, almost puritanical attitude toward physical sexuality," and this attitude "exerts a controlling influence upon the form and theme of the book," 8 observes George D. Murphy. The crisis of the Winesburg people is due to their being victimized by this peculiar attitude to sex, according to Murphy.

The plight of these people is attributed to still another cause: their failure to establish human relatedness through words. Their lives are distorted "by their inability to express themselves." 9 This observation is supported by Glen A. Love when he says that the "plight of the characters in *Winesburg, Ohio* can be traced to their inability to communicate with one another" 10 which makes them grotesques. Frederick J. Hoffman claims that a repressive moral and social order distorts the lives of these people. He comments: "They suffer primarily from a basic failure of communication; and the failure is the result not only of their own essential diffidence; but also of moral and cultural circumstances." 11

The above observations pointing out the causes of the Winesburg people's grotesqueness are, more or less, at variance with Anderson's conception of grotesqueness explained in the prologue to the novel entitled, "The Book of the Grotesque." Irving Howe condemns the
prologue on the ground that the cause of grotesqueness explained in it is not in conformity with the cause of the crisis confronted by the characters. He maintains: "The one conspicuous disharmony in the book is that the introductory 'Book of the Grotesque' suggests that the grotesques are victims of their wilful fanaticism, while in the stories themselves grotesqueness is the result of an essentially valid resistance to forces external to its victims."\(^{12}\)

The following discussion will suggest that there is no discrepancy between Anderson's thesis on grotesqueness and its fictional treatment in the book. He dives deep to identify the elemental roots of human tragedy. Contrary to the above critical stance, he scarcely concerns himself with any external force exercising dehumanizing impact on these characters. Benjamin T. Spencer is convincing when he says that while revealing the source of the Winesburg people's crisis Anderson is impelled "towards the mythic, toward the archetypal and the elemental, rather than toward the urban and sociological."\(^{13}\)

"The Book of the Grotesque" explains the cause of grotesqueness in the following way:

That in the beginning when the world was young there were a great many thoughts but no such thing as a truth. Man made the truths himself and each truth was a composite of a great many vague thoughts. All about in the world were the truths and they were all beautiful. . . . And then the people came along. Each as he appeared snatched up one of the truths and some who were quite strong snatched up a dozen of them. It was the truths that made the people grotesques. . . the moment one of the people took one of the truths, to himself, called it
his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood. 14

Anderson implies that a man's embracing a truth is altogether a subjective exercise and not due to any external compulsion. He says in Poor White: "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." 15 The wall of misunderstanding is created because of man's insistence on and obsession with a particular truth in terms of which he tries to live. The result is that his life does not conform itself to the normal mode of living. He is considered to be peculiar and out of the way.

For the perfection and completeness of life a "healthy wholeness of a multiplicity of truths" 16 is needed. By this alone man's perception of life will be full and he will achieve "ripeness" in life. He can establish harmonious relatedness with the cluster of realities surrounding him. This is altogether an ideal state of human existence. The fact that even the intellectually "quite strong" people live their lives in accordance with just a few truths suggests that wholeness and perfection in life are impossible to attain.

Clearly, the Winesburg character is not mentally equipped to snatch more than one truth and live a wholesome life. His sole obsession with what he considers to be the ultimate meaning in his life, produces a perverse fanaticism in him. This narrows his vision of life; his perception of the objective world becomes pathetically
limited. Having failed to make any intellectual assessment either of himself or of the scheme of things external to him, he is defeated in life. The range of his vision being narrow due to his psychic finitude, he is always at odds with himself and the objective world. His life becomes stagnant and does not promise fulfillment of his desires. Everything turns out to be hostile and alien to his paralyzed psyche. The truth he embraces becomes an obsession in his life. It proves to be dehumanizing and destructive—a falsehood, as Anderson calls it.

Ihab Hassan's idea of grotesqueness is in complete accord with Anderson's. He says that grotesqueness is a "kind of inwardness gone sour, a perverse insistence on subjectivity. It is innocence deformed and preying upon itself. The aim of the grotesque, in fact is to perpetuate the victim in the self." 17 The Winesburg character with his irremediably narrow psyche recoils from possible contact with others and feels tortured and agonized in his own self. His sense of frustration and defeat sometimes assumes alarming proportions which, momentarily, explodes his exterior placidity and calmness. Such outbursts having no cathartic effect, bring him only momentary release from his inward tension and disharmony. But, on the whole, his life is a slow, silent, inevitable process of self-immolation. The Winesburg character victimizes himself in his own self.

Some of the characters confront crisis due to their inability as well as reluctance to acquire experiences through human relationship. They try to live with their own self because the external
world becomes overwhelmingly bewildering for them. There is, for example, no substantive evidence to show that Alice Hindman (in "Adventure"), Wash Williams (in "Respectability"), Seth Richmond (in "The Thinker"), Kate Swift (in "Teacher"), Enoch Robinson (in "Loneliness"), and Elmer Cowley (in "Queer"), to mention but a few, undergo a traumatic experience due to any external forces that circumscribe their lives and paralyse their mind. No doubt, they are haunted by a sense of timidity about society for which reason they withdraw themselves from the current of human relationship; but no devastating social cause is responsible for generating this sense of diffidence in them.

Speaking of Louise Bentley of "Surrender" and Alice Hindman of "Adventure" Rex Burbank says: "These people find their deepest instinctive need for love met by callousness or indifference or misunderstanding, and they become outcasts or spiritual recluses in Winesburg."18 The statement holds good in summing up Louise Bentley's suffering. But Alice Hindman's plight stems from an altogether difference source. She victimizes herself because of her refusal to relinquish her obsession with Ned Currie and, consequently, withers away alone and frustrated.

Ned's betrayal, of course, is bad enough; but Alice's unwillingness, indeed, inability to retrieve herself becomes destructive. Her inward queerness parallels her ravished physical charm—a consequence of her joyless, hungry life. An utter sense of loneliness assails her, but she wants nobody's companionship.
"She was very quiet but beneath a placid exterior a continual ferment went on" (p.112). One day this placidity caves in under the intensity of this ferment. She runs naked in the rain in a fit of frenzied restlessness. With her inner turmoil dissipated to some extent, she comes back to her desolate room and facing the wall weeps broken heartedly. She consoles herself that the wall of loneliness is destined to stand unshaken. What gives her a peculiar satisfaction is that "many people must live and die alone, even in Winesburg" (p.120).

Alice's totally docile resignation to a quiescent life proves fatal to her. But this state of her life is due to her incapacity to explore possibilities to encounter the realities of her life. She stubbornly clings to her phantasy about Ned and forgets that "there was something that would not be cheated by phantasies and that demanded some definite answer from life" (p.118). Alice considers her dream about Ned as the only truth in her life and, needless to say, it is no definite answer to the demands life makes on her.

Elizabeth Willard's misconception about marriage dooms her as does Alice's incorrigible obsession with her dream about her lover. Alice makes her life a prolonged process of death in wishing for Ned as her husband; Elizabeth similarly! victimizes herself in having Tom Willard as her husband. Both destroy themselves because of their own choice.

The trouble with Elizabeth is: "'It was not Tom I wanted, it was marriage'" (p.226); she is motivated to marry because her friends
move about in the town apparently happy after marriage. "Like all the women in the world, she wanted a real lover. Always there was something she sought blindly, passionately, some hidden wonder in life" (p.224). She fails to rationalize and know what this "wonder" or "something" is. But she believes that her innermost, unnameable desires can be fulfilled through marriage. Thus, Elizabeth wants not Tom but marriage—an abstraction—which proves fatal.

A glimpse into her nature leaves no one in doubt that she is to head towards a catastrophic end. First of all, her girlhood is spent in the "most haphazard manner imaginable." Motherless, she has no definite direction in life. Her father, the proprietor of the "New Willard House", gets defeated in life. The Willard house is in a process of degeneration becoming shabby and losing patronage. At eighteen, the tall, beautiful Elizabeth has already a dozen lovers earning for herself a shaky reputation. Her sense of reason is rendered inoperative by her wild passion for sex and after each act she repents and resolves not to indulge in it any more.

The central metaphor of her life is the stage. She feels that life can be acted away; life on the stage is not illusory but real for her. She "turned her mind to the stage" (p.46). She dreams of joining some theatre company and wandering all over the world. With such misconceptions about life and marriage, she marries Tom much against the wishes of her father. Before his death her father gives her eight hundred dollars and asks her to go away from Winesburg
without marrying anybody else. After a few months of her marriage she discovers that the spontaneity of her life is blocked, desire for adventure destroyed, illusion about marriage shattered. She gets estranged from her husband who smells of paint because of his preoccupation to give a new look to the Willard house. In her consciousness Tom becomes a stranger because he does not come up to the mark as the husband Elizabeth dreams of having.

Like Alice running in a rainy night, Elizabeth gets into a buggy and wants to drive on and on forever in the rain. She wants to get rid of everything—the town, clothes, marriage, her own self. When the horse is no longer able to run, she gets out of the buggy and runs afoot in the dark. She sums up her predicament, indeed, the predicament of the Winesburg characters thus: "I wanted to run away from everything but I wanted to run towards something too" (p. 277).

The Winesburg people do not know what exactly the goal of their life is; but the "desire to fly toward some kind of unnameable spiritual union with God, man or nature" constantly torments them. Like the major characters in the novels, these people have essentially metaphysical yearnings. They struggle to liberate themselves from the forces which constrict their lives and to merge with an area of experience more enriching and abiding.

The box containing things for make-up is, indeed, a coffin containing Elizabeth's dead dream of becoming an actress. The money given by her father remains hidden in the wall because she does not
use it for exploring means of release from her drab life. Everything remains buried in her life including her girlhood vivacity. She allows herself to fade away and die. But before her death, release came "twice in her life, in the moments when her lovers Death and Doctor Reefy held her in their arms" (p. 232). Those are the only moments during which her dying spirit experiences bliss and animation. The fact that she considers "Death" to be one of her lovers reinforces her death-wish.

The failure of Wash Williams (in "Respectability"), the telegraph operator of Winesburg, is of a different order. His failure can by no means be attributed to a hostile and indifferent society. His hatred of life and women which he expresses with uninhibited courage and bravado is, of course, a masquerade to conceal his fear of sex and diffidence to lead a meaningful married life. His two years of marital life does not lead to physical consummation with his wife. Confides he to George Willard: "I kissed her shoes and the ankles above her shoes. When the hem of her garment touched my face I trembled" (p. 126). His misogyny is obviously generated by his wife's promiscuity, but he forgets that his wife's infidelity is entirely due to his failure as a husband. His wife's mother, anxious to dispel his fear of sex, sends her daughter naked to him—an incident which becomes revolting for him and embitters his attitude towards women still further.

Wash Williams's work in the garden is ironic in the sense that his planting the seeds in the ground is no substitute for his failure in the realm of sex. This work in the garden suggests his
love for and identification with nature; but it does not, in any way, recompense for the basic flaw in his nature. This failure, more than the failure of his wife or society, degrades his attitude towards the fair sex and generates resentment towards life in general. Like Alice Hindman and Elizabeth Willard he loses physical charm and becomes frightfully squalid and ugly.

Enoch Robinson (in "Loneliness") is vulnerable to "actualities like money and sex and opinions" (p.168) which force him to separate himself from the stream of human communion. His retreat into loneliness is due to his obsession with fancy and imagination through which he tries to grasp the "essence of things." Having failed to come to terms with realities which choke him, he feels at home in a lonely room in the city of New York away from his wife and two children. The world of his fancy takes him away from the world of realities which he considers to be harsh and suffocating. He imagines the presence of men in his lonely room and, in fancy, becomes articulate before them; although, in reality, the presence of men bewilders him and makes him speechless. Therefore, "The story of Enoch is in fact the story of a room almost more than it is the story of a man" (p. 168).

His confused and disconcerted state of mind is symbolized by his vague paintings; his inability to face realities by his lame leg; his withdrawal from sex by his first name, Enoch, which brings to mind the word, "eunuch". It is possible that his lonely boyhood has much to do with his sense of loneliness. But the fact that his
coming over to New York and his getting married fail to set things right suggests that loneliness is an ineradicable part of his nature. This twists his mind and distorts his life.

The crisis of Seth Richmond (in "The Thinker") and Elmer Cowley (in "Queer") reminds one of Malcolm Cowley and Love A. Glen's contention that the Winesburg people are beset with the problem of communicating with others. Of these two, Elmer is, indeed, rational. He is conscious that his predicament is due to his inability to establish channels of friendship with others. Infact, Elmer finds his self-expression alive not before anybody in the town but before a half-wit, Mook, who is intellectually inferior to Elmer. Mook, on his part, finds his expression paralyzed before others; but holds "long conversations with the cows, the pigs, and even with the chickens that ran about the barnyard" (p.195).

The juxtaposition of Elmer's problem with that of Mook underscores the fact that theirs is a case of diffidence to communicate with intellectually superior men. Elmer is not as confused as Seth Richmond who wants to shy away from others simply because everyone talks. Before coming to Winesburg from a neighbouring farm, his life was a quiet, eventless affair where he "wasn't always seeing people and thinking" (p.197), but in the town he is exposed to a variety of life. His cowardice to talk condemns him to live in self-exile.

His last attempt to establish human relatedness through
conversation brings him defeat but instils into him a sense of peculiarly triumphant satisfaction. Before boarding the train for an unknown destination he tries to explain himself to George Willard whom he considers to be the representative of the town life. But his self-confidence collapses and he loses control of his tongue. What he ultimately manages to mutter is sheer nonsense: "'I'll be washed and ironed. I'll be washed and ironed and starched'" (p.200). This sense of defeat enrages him which instantly gets transmuted into violence. He strikes blow after blow on the young reporter who rolls over the platform stunned and half unconscious. Satisfied, Elmer cries with pride: "'I guess I showed him. I ain't so queer. I guess I showed him I ain't so queer'" (p.201).

Elmer's father, Ebenezer Cowley, finds his dream of being a merchant shattered. After disposing of his farm he tries to run a shop located in an unpromising place of the town. The shop with its dust-stained goods earns no patronage. Ebenezer's habitual refrain—"'I'll be washed and ironed and starched'"—becomes ironic in the sense that he looks horribly dirty and unwashed. It is as if the shop, the father and the son are tied to the same misfortune of unrealized dreams and live in a prison surrounded by the wall of wordlessness.

Seth Richmond (in "The Thinker") completely resigns himself to his inarticulateness and thinks that "He was lonely and had begun to think that loneliness was a part of his character, something that would always stay with him" (p.133). Son of a silent
father and a nervously diffident mother, his taciturnity is part of his heritage, but he makes no attempt to surmount this wall of taciturnity. He is irritated by the fact that "'Everyone talks and talks . . . I'm sick of it!'" (p.141), but resents his being lonely in the town. Little does he understand that through the medium of expression he can identify himself with the town life and get rid of his sense of aloofness. How he recoils from human intercourse is exemplified by his relationship with Helen White, the banker's daughter. She takes a fancy to him, writes several notes to him without evoking any response from him. In her enthusiasm for friendship with Seth, Helen feels that their mutual relationship will be vast and lively like the garden surrounding the Richmond house. After being disillusioned about him she becomes aware that the garden is "quite definite and limited in its outlines" (p.141). She identifies Seth, who does not promise reciprocity to her feelings towards him, with this area of narrowness. As for Seth, he is always "perplexed and puzzled by all of the life of the town out of which she had come" (p.142).

The above characters like Kate Swift (in "Teacher") are not fatally victimized by society. Neither are their lives twisted by severe puritanical code of conduct. There is, moreover, no evidence to support the argument that the process of transition from agricultural pastoralism to aggressive industrialism has played havoc with their lives. Inspite of its limitedness and monotony the small town still offers opportunities for human communion from which these diffident characters withdraw themselves in order to suffer the
pangs of loneliness.

It will be wrong to blame Winesburg for the buried life Kate Swift leads. The tragedy is that her extensive tour of Europe and two-year-stay in New York do no good in teaching her the art of living. Constantly tormented by "some battle raging within" (p.162) her, she restlessly moves about in the cold night contrary to the doctor's advice. Her pent-up sexual desires finding no fulfillment, she weeps in her bed, naked and frustrated. She tries desperately to have sex with her ex-student, George Willard; but realizes that he is too young for it: "'What is the use? It will be ten years before you begin to understand what I mean when I talk to you'" (p.164), the hopeless teacher says to George.

She deliberately brushes her lips on his cheek, takes hold of his shoulder and out of frustration inflicts blows on his face as does Elmer Cowley in his abortive attempt to explain himself to George. Like others she leads a joyless, unfulfilled, buried life. When her sense of defeat and futility about life takes possession of her, she cries alone in her room.

The foregoing analysis tries to bring home the fact that the lives of the above characters remain inhibited and their inwardness constricted. They confront the problem of communicating with others, of coming to terms with actualities, of overriding diffidence in matters of sex. Unable to penetrate through these barriers that separate them from possible realization of their yearnings, they sink deeper into their self. This is how they perpetuate their sufferings in their anguished being.
The naturalistic tension arises because their spirit aspiring to attain transcendence is in a state of struggle against the inhibiting forces which exist in their psyche. They do not understand that their failure to comprehend and be related to the complexities of the external world is due to their twisted psyche. This accounts for their having finite perception of actualities and leading lives of utter limitedness. Their mental finitude is treated by Anderson as a "phenomenon of the individual rather than as a manifestation of a social evil." 20

For this reason the characters confront social crises, but these "crises are simply the external and metaphorical counterparts of their struggle against the internal limits of their being, of their innate finitude, of contingencies which circumscribe their dreams from within and which the grotesques attempt to transcend: they are bent upon immortality." 21

The psychic finitude and the twisted mental shape of the characters are part of their natural condition. Therefore, the inhibitions circumscribing their lives stem from the primordial source. They are cursed by a biological imperfection; they are psychically incomplete. Their mental structure parallels the "twisted apples" referred to by Anderson in the story, "Paper Pills".

These misshapen fruits are, indeed, the book's central metaphor with which the characters with misshapen psyche are identified. In the story, "The Egg," included in his first story collection, The Triumph of the Egg (1921), Anderson refers to grotesque chickens with deformed bodies. These chickens, with two pairs of legs or
wings or limbs on wrong places, are also a result of some biological mistake. The twisted apples belong to the vegetative kingdom and the deformed chickens are part of the animal world. The manifestation of the animate world is obviously due to the operation of the mysterious natural process of birth and development. Anderson's contemplation of this natural process leads him to the idea of twisted apples and grotesque chickens. He implies that the natural process, sometimes unwholesome and imperfect in itself, begets apples and chickens which, on their part, are imperfect and out of shape. The grotesque chickens do not survive for long. The grotesque Winesburg characters with twisted psyche do not succeed in life.

They are endlessly tormented by the "necessity of freedom from those forms of mental and moral paralysis" without realizing that such freedom is not possible in their lives. Each of them struggles to attain psychic completeness and mental perfection. Each strives towards the "infinite call of transcendence which his finitude makes impossible from the start." Unable to assess himself in the right perspective he has "blind gropings and beatings against the walls of personal inhibitions and social conventions" which take him nowhere.

In the novel man is seen struggling to achieve perfection of his mental shape and wholeness of his psyche; he is pitted against the problem to set an irremediable mistake right. Inexorably imprisoned within such walls of constriction, he leads a death-like existence with his desire for liberation remaining buried within his self. This is precisely the observation made by Miller:
"Anderson's most persistent theme is the often futile struggle of human beings for transcendence . . ."\(^{23}\)

Ray Pearson (in "The Untold Lie") is a unique character in the novel. He narrowly saves himself from being victimized by his married life which he considers to be a trap. He complains that marriage reduces man to a horse-like existence. His tragedy is: "'Tricked by Gad, that's what I was, tricked by life and made a fool of'" (p.204). He describes children as the "accidents of life." Because of his discordant relationship with his family, he continually shouts a "protest against his life, against all life, against everything that makes life ugly" (p.207). Therefore, he tries to dissuade his friend, Hal Winters, from marrying his girl friend. But Hal Winters's resolve to get married reverses Ray's attitude towards his family. His emotional reconciliation with his wife and the thin-legged shabby children resolves his inward tension which was due to his resentment against life.

Ray Pearson is an exception in the book. The other characters silently protest against all that distorts life and makes it ugly. They resent life itself which, they feel, deceives them. As Dr. Parcival observes: "'It is this--that everyone in the world is Christ and they are all crucified" (p.57). The stagnant life is the cross for the Winesburg characters to which they are inexorably nailed by their indelible psychic incompleteness.

The characters do not know the nature of their crises, nor are they aware of the factors that circumscribe their lives. They know that "something" inward remains hungry and demands realization.
As for Jessee Bentley of "Godliness", for example, "Never did he succeed in getting what he wanted out of life and he did not know what he wanted" (p.67); but is assailed by an "indefinable hunger within." Louise Bentley, his daughter, does not "know what she wanted" (p.96). Alice Hindman has "something" deep within her that demands an answer to be quiet. Seth Richmond does not have any "definite plan for his life" (p.133). Reverend Curtis Hartman of "The Strength of God" does not "know what he wanted" (p.152) from Kate Swift. At ten O'clock in the cold night Kate Swift goes out and the "walk was unpremeditated." She tries to fight out "some battle raging within" (p.162). While leaving Winesburg, Elmer Cowley does not "know where he was going or what he was going to do" (p.193). Dr. Reefy of "Paper Pills" and Elizabeth Willard are aware that "something inside them meant the same thing, wanted the same release" (p.221); whereas for Elizabeth "there was something she sought blindly, passionately" (p.224). The characters are not definite about themselves and the nature of their predicament. Therefore, their search for release becomes haphazard groping.

They try to escape from their twisted lives but, as Elizabeth Willard puts it, they do not know where to go. Moreover, they do not realize that however blindly they may run like Alice or Elizabeth or Louise, they would be taking their twisted lives with them. A change of place can by no means solve their crises.

Anderson does not find fault with Winesburg. Most of the characters in the book are not, in fact, the natives of the town. Wing Biddlebaum settles in Winesburg after his escape from a
Pennsylvania town. Dr. Parcival comes from Chicago. Wash Williams and Kate Swift are not natives of this town. The Reverend Curtis Hartman hails from Indiana. Ebenezor Cowley, Elmer's father, comes from a farm several miles away from Winesburg. Enoch Robinson spends fifteen years in New York. He is brought face to face with his crisis in that city. Tom Poster (in "Drink"), although not a naturalistic character, comes to Winesburg with his grandmother from Cincinnati. The stranger in "Tandy" belongs to Cleveland.

In general, the potentiality of the Winesburg characters remains untapped and clogged; their desires remain repressed. A look at the lives of Alice, Kate Swift, the Reverend Curtis Hartman and Wash Williams suggests that their predicament is identical: their inner discord is due to their inability to find a channel for the release of their sexual urge. Anderson consistently maintains a naturalistic attitude towards sex, describes it as a "tremendous force," and believes that its suppression "twists" man's life. As is seen in the preceding chapter, it leaves Sam and Hugh restless and tense. In most of his short stories Anderson delineates man's life as distorted and disjointed because of the lack of expression of this urge. As will be seen in the next chapter, the protagonists of Many Marriages and Dark Laughter are in quest of a satisfying sex life. For this reason they revolt against the factors that constrict it. The naturalists insist that sex is altogether a biological and natural truth which is to be met on biological terms. Far from being dirty, it can bring about a healthy cleansing both to the mind and the body. This does not happen in the case of the
above Winesburg characters.

Anderson shows what happens when man feels inexorably cramped and limited by forces; when man's spirit, anxious to transcend them, remains buried. Devoid of assertive energy in the face of realities, the Winesburg character puts on a calm exterior unsuccessfully trying to conceal the endless mental agitation. Alice "was very quiet but beneath a placid exterior a continual ferment went on" (p.112). Behind Kate Swift's "cold exterior the most extraordinary events transpired in her mind" (p.162). About Seth Richmond the opinion goes: "He'll break out some of these days. You wait and see!" (p.133). This internal ferment spills over the characters' physical frame. As Granville Hicks says: "Anderson relies upon the lightning flash. Surfaces, deeds, even words scarcely concern him; everything is bent to the task of revelation." In such spasmodic eruptions the human spirit protests against the factors that constrict it.

Elmer Cowley showers blow after blow on George Willard while trying to explain himself, the Reverend Curtis Hartman breaks the glass window with his fist when his desire for Kate Swift runs to excess, Alice Hindman runs naked in the rain, Kate Swift beats on the face of George Willard, Elizabeth Willard and Louise Bentley drive madly in the buggy. These are not only acts of fantastic irrationality, but also symbolic protests against the cause that make their lives futile and condemn them to defeat.

The recurrent symbols in the book—"wall" and "room"—
The symbols also underscore these lonely people's psychic finitude with which they stand in perpetual tension. Winesburg, with its definite outlines, emphasizes this aspect of limitedness and entrapment. For this reason, *Winesburg, Ohio* leaves a claustrophobic effect on the mind of the reader.

Louise Bentley feels that "between herself and all the other people in the world, a wall has been built up . . ." (p.91); whereas Joe Welling (in "A Man of Ideas") thinks that "There is a high fence built all around us" (p.110). Alice Hindman faces the wall and tries to resign herself to loneliness. Enoch Robinson feels "choked and walled in by the life in the apartment" (p.172) and tries to live in a world of fancy.

The solitary, squalid rooms in which these characters live are, indeed, prisons. Most of these rooms have their windows shut to the external world. Alone in his dirty room full of cobwebs and with its windows stuck to the frame, Dr. Reefy writes down his thoughts on pieces of paper and puts them in his pocket where they get reduced to paper pills. The Richmond house and the Robinson house, away from the town, have their windows, facing the road, closed. Elizabeth Willard, alone in her room in the shabby New Willard House, patiently awaits a release from life. Kate Swift and Alice Hindman feel defeated in their rooms. The Reverend Curtis Hartman is afflicted by sexual desires in his room in the church. Dr. Parcival refuses to come out of his room even when his help is sought. Enoch Robinson's story, as the author says, is the
story of his room. Completely estranged from human communion they live in squalid, limited surroundings which emphasize the fact that their desires remain bottled up.

Life is futile and divested of energy. In "Sophistication" Anderson says that life moves between two points of nothingness: men "come out of nothingness into the world, lived their lives and again disappeared into nothingness" (p.234). Man is a hopeless creature, "merely a leaf blown by the wind" (p.234). In the context of this stark naturalistic pessimism, Anderson provides one glimmering hopeful note in the character of young George Willard.

The human fragments of Winesburg come to George at the time of intense mental restlessness without ever being conscious that "George Willard had also his days of unhappiness, that vague hungers and secret unnamable desires visited also his mind" (p.194). Unhappiness and suffering are inalienable from human life, but George is distanced from the rest of the Winesburg characters because of his mental strength to transmute his inward afflictions into a creative source.

At eighteen he leaves Winesburg not with a sense of bitterness against life, not with a sense of revolt against his drab home town. He leaves with a mind enriched and widened by his perception of human life. He wants to make his experience of life at Winesburg the background to his future life as a creative writer. For others life is a malignant agony, a baffling mystery. Their innate incapacity to understand its manifold complexity and to transmute their
sufferings into positive aspects makes them revolt against it. George Willard, on the other hand, assimilates all that life offers him. He believes that even in the realm of apparent disjointedness and tension existing in life and the world, there remains an order, and its exploration can unify things into a unique whole. Moreover, it can establish harmonious relatedness between man and his surroundings. This recognition of order is, undoubtedly, an attribute of a creative writer who not only sees but perceives by his intuition and insight. George embraces life because he is endowed with this attribute.
CHAPTER III

Notes

2 Ibid., p.227.
8 George D. Murphy, "The Theme of Sublimation in Anderson's _Winesburg, Ohio_" _Modern Fiction Studies_, 13, No.2 (Summer 1967), 237-246.
12 Irving Howe, _Sherwood Anderson_, p.107.

15 Poor White, p. 221.


18 Rex Burbank, Sherwood Anderson, p. 72.


23 Ralph Ciancio, "The Sweetness of the Twisted Apples."

