Craftsmanship

Anderson's craftsmanship is unique among American writings, not for an accomplish body of fiction but for an angle of vision and a style that is peculiarly American - He borrowed nothing for his inspiration of course - his association with the gifted writers artists and thinkers gave him in line of thinking and reshaping his ideals. He stresses more on the honesty of the artist rather than technical skill. The important feature while discussing the craftsmanship of Sherwood Anderson's art of fiction is his plan - He has presented his fiction based on realistic grounds but it is far more alive than the resources of prose and fiction. It is Andersonian plan that he could present prose with the charm of poetry - He could write at his best when the impulse to write urgently moved him. To him, prose was like a poets concern for the art of verse - He explains his prose as Wordsworth explains his poetry - The recollection of youthful experience the figures of common speech, the instinctive dignity and life of the poor - the moonlit rural scene have been depicted with the
simplicity of Wordsworth - At its best Anderson’s prose presents the light and air between each word in a descriptive paragraph.

Anderson in a true sense was an American novelist. He loved America & its soil and its men and women. He thought of himself as re-presentively and comprehensively “The American Man”. He said about himself a compound of the “Cold moral blood of north and “the warm pagon blood of south, an artist who put down roots into American soil. He is an unbookish author, an “original” and a maker in his own right.

His first novel Windy McPherson’s Son, an autobiographical novel, is an attempt to describe the effect of industrialism on the individual. In Marching Men, an autobiographical novel, he has portrayed his military experiences. In Poor White, another autobiographical novel he presentes the biography of the people of the town wrapped by the industrialism. The Egg is the embodiment of unhappy love affair with America. In Winesburg, Ohio he has depicted the lives of ordinary people in small Western town in United States, with a vivid revealation of their frustration and isolation. Mid American Chants, is a collection of free verse poems in the
Whitmanian manner. His theme in *Dark Daughter*, is the repression of sex and its liberation. *A Story Teller’s Story*, his best autobiographical work, is one to the first significant protests against the power of machine of control man’s fate. Anderson’s *Memoirs* highlight the individual facets of his life. “The Man Who Became A Woman”, “I want to know Why” – “I’m a Fool” present the psychological tradition of writers like Hawthorne & Melivelli. *Kit Brandon* is Anderson’s final novel quite specific on the subject of humanistic verses mechanistic concerns. *The Triumph of The Egg & Horses And Men* are the collection of tales long and short from American life. *Beyond Desire*, shuns the major issue of socialism/communism while gingerly exploring America’s economic and social problem. *Death In The Woods & Brother Death* employ the theme of death to emphasis the value of life & express respect to the working of nature. *Puzzled America* contains his optimistic belief that solution would be formed for the problems of survival and unemployment. *No Swank* is a series of characters, sketches of a number of his friends. In *Many Marriages*, an autobiographical work, he has displaced sex with social and financial success. *Sherwood*
Anderson’s Note Book: Tar: A Midwest Childhood is the fusion of facts with fiction produced some of his finest lyrical prose. *Hello Towns* in collection of news, stories, feature, article, form, a sort of chronicle of town life for this period.

Anderson secured his position as a successful novelist short story writer prose writer and journalist - The great critic Edward Wagenkecht called Sherwood Anderson - “The D.H. Lawrence of American Literature” - He is regarded as one of the liberators of American Literature - Like Lawrence he revolted against the industrial civilization and against mental and spiritual health, men must learn to live more “natural” life. Like Lawrence he attempted almost every literary genre Anderson was entirely successful with sketches and short stories.

Anderson was a true historian, autobiographical writer and a true craftsman - He did not enrich his craftsmanship through books - He learnt every thing through personal experience. Whatever he read even for pleasure got deeply rooted in his imagination - He is self educated writer. Among Herman Melville - Mark Twain and George Borrow the last attracted Anderson most because Borrow’s book could
not be classified either as fiction, stories or biographies - All of Borrows characters are story tellers recording essential life within and around.

His place in American literary history should be given further distinction by his very great influence in liberating the American short story form a petrifying technique - His own tales, appearing first in experimental magazines like the Dial and the Little Review, gradually acquired fame and were eagerly read by younger men and women trying to escape form the technical tradition of Poe, Aldrich and O. Henry - which cramped expression even though it seemed to guarantee financial success. That the best and the most successful American short stories of the next decades - whether by Stephen Vincent Benet or Katherive Anne Porter or Eduora Welty are in free forms where plot is subordinated to theme and form springs form the situation, must be credited in no small degree to the example set by Sherwood Anderson.
No other poet - novelist or dramatist is so fully conscious of the American situation or drives it so forcibly as does Anderson both in his imaginative creation and in his critical comment.

In a stunning way Anderson's works also contain the field of flowers' crudeness and delicacy. The style sometimes is careless, tends to loquacity, and makes inadequate differences between the significant and insignificant. In examples it completely lacks precision and systematic arrangement and structure. One also finds smiling indulgent palpations of trite or coarse situations, simplicity almost bizarre, and ideas insufficiently pondered or incomplete. At the same time the writings please with their smoothness. Often they present deeply significant points, sometimes with considerable irony, and subtly release tension. Their psychological intuitions are exquisite. Then, too, we come upon original, accurate, metaphors, the play of rich moods, an uncanny sense of the interaction of individual and community, and on fresh air, tenderness, pathos, fullness and rarity of meaning, and a tense form, of Anderson's invention; an impressionistic form curiously akin to that in certain paintings by the young Renoir. Out of blobs of colour, scatterings colour-dots and
small eddies of events connected by invisible filaments, it composes shapes that grow solid to the distant eye.

It seems that several very different impulses of art and methods worked together to produce the mass of his work. Never in prose fiction this gathering and working is to be noticed. Causing the old boundaries of the genres in which he worked to oscillate, to overlap one another, the joint operations of different impulses made these genres the masters of new effects and performances.

Anderson firmly maintained, for a quarter century, the naturalness, innocence and fineness and particularly the complexity the rare manifold of methods of impulses of his works.

Like the Chicago group Anderson experimented with form. He was the most remarkable innovator of the Chicago group he disapproved the carefully manipulated plots of the 19th century writers and replaced them by his stories and novels that did not depend upon incidents towards a dramatic ending. No endeavuor to summarise the plots of his short stories is ever accomplished for he was not concerned with arranging incidents in an even progression.
Anderson, however, strongly defended the structure of the stories. He, like many of his contemporaries, was of the opinion that the loose form of literature can reflect the very same form of life and thus enhance its meaning. If life is not neatly plotted, the absence of a neat plot in a novel or a story could resemble it to the life. He found life consisting of powerful dramatic and meaningful moments but through Winesburg he presented the infrequent occurrence of these moments, that is not essentially the result of rational advancement of events and thus he tried to delineate the reality of life.

The characters in Winesburg are constantly doing surprising and bizarre things. The only way what prompts then is to probe into their troubled minds, where little sense of order or logic exists. That is why Anderson consistently emphasised the significance of character creation. He observed the life around him comprehensively. These gathered information and their impressions laid like seed in his imagination. But he did not present them in his works as they were, rather they were remolded into types.

Anderson’s works have the freshness of clover buttercups, black-eyed Susans. They have their humbleness, their innocence. No
personal interest, neither craving for ostentation or prestige, wealth or applause motivated these writings. They are natural, ingenuous consequences of a simple, need for understanding, fulfilled by an extraordinary imagination. Human faces, semi-consciously noticed, and picked up by his mind, rose into it with mute significance during states of intense emotion and the intoxication of creation.

Within his imagination his numerous experiences tended to cluster about a few dominant, emotionally charged experiences of his life. Thus the portrayals of characters possess predictable, repetitive traits. This tendency may be perceived in his treatment of Twain and Lincoln. Although his characterisation is limited yet in it we find the incarnation of a few intensely felt and memorable insights into human personality. While writing he did not take account of the external appearance of the characters rather he approached them from interior of their beings. He considered their feelings, emotions and thoughts comprehensively.

This inner terrain shaped Anderson’s sense of reality. This very reality he found difficult to define. He himself admitted that he did not know what actually this reality was. He firmly believed that no
one in this world exactly knew how much of his or her life is touched with imagination and that the life of imagination will always remain separated from the life of reality. It feeds upon the life of reality but it is not that life—and it cannot be too. Life to him was a complex delicate thing.

The nature of Anderson’s death seems to epitomize his life and career. He believed that life was not measured by the birth and death of individual people; it was rather a broad sweep of human history, forever on going, forever changing. Having spent a lifetime experiencing and interpreting contemporary life, he died in the process of exploring it still further. Both in its beautiful and revolting manifestations, life for Sherwood Anderson remained to the end, a limitless source of fascination and a constant challenge for intense participation as an artist. This fact he summarised when he wrote the epitaph that adorns his tombstone: “Life, not death, is the great adventure”.

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

He felt that the depiction of reality is nothing but merely a process of selling. His heroes particularly those of his novels: Sam McPherson, Beaut McGregor, Huge McVey and Kit Brandon all are in battle with reality they secure an independence to their milieu. At some time in their lives they seek an escape from the impacts of the living as well as the death environment and strive for new paths and exits. All of them, Huge McVey noticeably, are inventors and reformers. Their struggle makes them superior to their native average Americans. All of them represent society, American society and their struggle, American struggle.

Anderson realised that in treating America within the Winesburg microcosm he was doing something innovative and vital
in art. This is reflected in the guise and language of the narrator. In stating that his language was that of "streets", "factories" and "warehouses", he was not referring to slang or to the idioms peculiar to any locality, trade or social unit. He was speaking of plain Anglo-Saxon words chosen by Americans for their day to day conversation. He avoided slangs and distinctive idioms because they represent the peculiarities that belong to some particular ethnic group or a place rather he developed a style quite wide, impossible to be confined in such narrow boundaries. He used simple words peculiar only to himself. His prose was as American as that of Mark Twain.