CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Thomas Wolfe was an American writer of enormous energy and imaginative force, marked by a richly rhetorical style and powerful command of language. The subject of the bulk of his writing was his own experience as an American. He was in the tradition of Walt Whitman, attempting through the record of himself to explain and define what it meant to be an American. Wolfe was the witness of Second World War and wrote a lot about the alienation of America. He neglected the European fancy style of writing and gave the theme of awareness in society marked by his experience. Thomas Wolfe was twinkled as the autobiographical novelist of twentieth Century in American frictional world. He was awarded Guggenheim Fellowship in March 1930, and was mentioned favorably in Sinclair Lewis’s Nobel Prize speech, December 12, 1930.

Thomas Wolfe’s life formed the broad pattern of his vast books. The very fact that Wolfe’s fiction is autobiographical makes
it accessible and immediate, just as, in a sense, Fitzgerald’s fiction is accessible and immediate in using elements and observations of personal life. Then we see book and man together, for in a sense they are inseparable. Wolfe worked over his actual experience by the customary literary processes of selection, emphasis, compasses, and development of a unifying point.

One’s concern with the autobiography nature of his fiction results in searching for a one-for-one relationship between Wolfe’s experience and his fiction. Though the relationship of Wolfe’s experience and his fiction will always have a strong interest for many of his readers, it is his frequent capacity to concentrate and to transcend experience that makes him an important writer. Thomas Wolfe has presented the human life, axis around his own personal experience, through the genius of his language ‘rhetoric, and humour and of his symbolic technique and thus the characters and realistic descriptions came out as the autobiographical strains in the novels of Thomas Wolfe. Therefore, to access the autobiographical strain in his novels it would not be unworthy to have a brief glance at the biography of Thomas Wolfe and this is essential to interpret the autobiographical strain in the novels.
Thomas Wolfe was born in Asheville, North Carolina, on October 3, 1900, making his appearance with the new century. His parents, W.O. Wolfe and Julia Westall, and numerous children; of those who lived, Tom was the seventh and the youngest. His father, a stonemason specializing in tombstones, had migrated to the South from Pennsylvania. His mother was a local girl and his father’s third wife. Their marriage was noisy, quarrelsome, profoundly unhappy, a source of endless tension and grief for the growing boy and of endless material for the future novelist.

It was a household full of personalities. The father loved to curse and shout, to declaim familiar passages from Shakespeare’s plays and the *Standard English Poems*, and to conduct his daily life on the highest possible decibel level of noise and emotional energy. He was more interested in eating, drinking, and ranting than in earning a living or carrying on the grubby mundane responsibilities of family head, and he was far more interested in himself than in his wife and children. He had plenty of charm, vitality, and gusto, but he was really a big oversized baby and had a great ham, one of those men-children who never grow up.

His mother also loved to talk and her voice was never still. Her tones were quieter but even more persistent than her
husband. Her style resembled a waterfall’s rushing and booming all the time; she was like a creek that seems about to dry up at any moment but goes on and on into the endless distance. So polarized were their personalities, and was locked within the cage of their own ego that they soon swelled beyond life size and seemed to play out the mythical roles of the male and female figures in a play by Steinberg who lived in a house on Woodfin Street, Asheville, North Carolina, and owned a marble shop on the town square.

There was a curious exchange between them of traditional roles. The father was indifferent to money, made a minimal living out of stonecutting without being absorbed in it. It was the mother who loved money, who pursued it with a ferocity that amounted to a lifelong fever. Finding her husband’s improvidence and imprudence in money matters intolerable, she left his house when Tom was six and opened a boardinghouse on the next block, which she called the Old Kentucky Home.

His mother also loved to travel, and often went off with the children, leaving the father behind. In 1904 she turned up at the World’s Fair in St. Louis, where she operated a boardinghouse for months and where one of the boys, Grover, caught typhoid fever
and died. She took the children to Florida several times, and in 1913 brought them to Washington to witness the inauguration of Woodrow Wilson. The father had his travel seizures, too. On one occasion he wandered all the way to California by himself. Domestically they followed different routes, yet never separated. The father was a free outgoing spirit, craving at space. The mother was a ground creature. They were both fierce centres of energy, in a state of almost perpetual opposition and collision.

The children also had their share of vividness. Frank, the oldest boy, was a school dropout and soon developed into what in those days was called a never-do-well. He sponged off his woman much older than himself and took to alcohol and drugs, would up in various sanitariums for varying lengths of time. Mabel, next in age, played the role of substitute mother. She assumed charge of the father after Mrs. Wolfe left for the old Kentucky Home there was one other girl in the family, Effie, the oldest of the children. She married when she was very young and went to live in another state. After Mabel came the twins, with their Presidential names. Grover died at twelve. The other twin, Ben, grew up into an almost classic case of alienation: bitter, intelligent, ironic, frail of health, disillusioned with his parents and the family situation, and
anxious to save Tom. He took an unusual interest in Tom and from that situation in particular and the conventional world in general. He worked as a reporter for the town newspaper, the traditional haven for the cynical, the disillusioned, and the anguished of heart and died young. Still another brother, Fred, was Ben’s opposite: cheerful, outgoing, and genial of temper, despite the awesome burden of having to go through life with an incurable stammer.

These sibling figures, together with the parents and the future author, appear in the novels and are given full-scale treatment. They got Wolfe off to a tremendous start, sullying him with a dramatic cast of characters, a ready-made network of complex relationships, and a complete set of thunderous emotions. In all Tom was the youngest in the family. As a boy he was thin, awkward, excruciatingly tall, moody, given to explosive outbursts of energy followed by lapses into stupefying apathy. He felt himself to be different conviction, which brings with it a sense of special destiny.

He was not only an active participant but, an advantaged observer also. Of all the brothers and sisters, he was the most bookish. He began reading at an early age and did so well in the
beginning grades that his parents were persuaded to send him at the age of ten to a newly opened private school run by a Mr. And Mrs. Roberts. There was much grumbling and jealous of Tom because family money was being spent on him and not on them. Wolfe grew up more intimately bound to his mother than his father. His mother breast-fed him until he almost four and kept his hair in long curls until he was nine, and was loath to let him go. He lived with her in the Old Kentucky Home; shunted from room to room as paying guests arrived. When he wasn’t going to school, he was selling subscriptions to the Saturday Evening Post door-to-door, running a proper route in the Negro section, maneuvering his father home from alcoholic stupors in local bars; and hustling trade for his mother’s boardinghouse at the railroad station. Asheville had a growing reputation as a health resort. It was a town when Wolfe was born, and a city by the time he left.

A boom atmosphere had set in during Wolfe’s boyhood, bringing with it money, growth, an increasing population, everything associated with progress, but also bringing crowds, noise boosterism, manic real-estate speculation, and the kind of money frenzy that was to make Asheville one of the most painful casualties of the great crash. In Wolfe’s early impressionable
years, the town’s surge of expansion stimulated the expansive side of his own nature.

He won a City-Wide Prize contest with an essay on Shakespeare. It was understood at an early point that he would go to college, the only one of his brothers and sisters to do so. Tom wanted to go to the University of Virginia, the fashionable, upper crust, glamour school of the South. But his father, nursing some vague hope that the boy would become a lawyer or politician and would profit from local contacts, insisted that he attend the state university at Chapel Hill he entered there as a freshman in September 1916.

After age of eleven years Wolfe attended a private school in Asheville where he spent four years at the University of North Carolina. He had no athletic ability and no social connections, but the college offered him plenty of chances to work along, with his own lines. He gravitated toward the weekly newspapers, The Tar Heel, first as a reporter, then as managing editor, then as editor-in-chief. He wrote poetry that appeared in the college literary monthly and plays that were put on by the college players. He became a big man on campus and was acclaimed as the class genius upon graduation. He ran into at least four professors who
inspired him, and one of them, Frederick Koch, who specialized in getting his students to write folk plays, encouraged him to go to Harvard, study under George Pierce Baker, his own former instructor, and perhaps become a playwright.

His undergraduate years were rendered somber by the growing and obviously incurable illness of his father, suffering from cancer. A college roommate died of a heart attack, shocking him profoundly. And the great flu epidemic of 1918 carried off one of the significant figures in Wolfe’s imaginative life, Ben, Grover’s twin, who had been rejected by the army earlier or reasons of health. He loped and shambled rather than walked.

He loved to prowl the streets at night and do his sleeping by day. He would occasionally leave his college quarters and register at hotels and rooming hours in nearby towns under the names of English poets like Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Chesterton, some famous, some obscure, as the mood seized him. He had a noisy wit, a gift for parody, and would burst into explosions of laughter starting even in a college crowd. And in obvious prefiguration of the way he would write his novels, he scribbled essays, editorials, of reportage, dialogue on whatever scraps of paper were at hand.
People who knew him at Chapel Hill remembered him long after he left. When he graduated in June 1920, he had only the vaguest idea of what he wanted to do—or be. His only clear urge was to leave home, leave North Carolina and the South, and head of what seemed to him the dazzling Elysium of the North.

Among the Wolfes, the idea of Tom’s going to Harvard was greeted with a chilling lack of enthusiasm. The father now terminally ill thought it a deplorable waste of time when he thought about it at all. The brothers and sisters resented the project as a terrible squandering of the family money. The mother, money grubbing and practical, couldn’t see that it would lead anywhere. In the Ashville of 1920, that made as much sense as wanting to be a player explorer or an astronaut or a soldier of fortune. Many years later, in a speech at Wolfe explained what being a writer meant to someone like his mother:

A writer is first and foremost a workingman. This may surprise you, it does surprise most people for example, it has always surprised my mother, I keep reminding her that writing is also work— as hard work, I think, as anyone can do—I keep insisting on the fact, writing is a king of stunt, a kind of trick which some people are born with— like being a sword-slayer... and if one is fortunate enough to be born with this trick, or gift, he
can, without much effort to himself, be paid for it. I know my mother would certainly be surprised, and possibly astonished, if I told her that I thought I was a working man and if I told her that I looked upon the big room in which I work – with its crates of manuscript-its work-tables-its floor space-in very much the same way as my mother would smile, but would consider my proposition as another fantastic flight of the imagination. And yet, it seems to me, it is not fantastic...my own experience has been that a writer is, in every sense particularly the physical one a workingman. ¹

His mother did not understand what he was doing even after he succeeded at it, one can imagine her bewilderment before he began. Everyone was against Tom’s going North, except may be to look for work. But by this time Wolfe, like the other members of his family, was acutely responsive to the demands of his own personality. He had a driving and aggressive will. Whatever he thought he wanted, he would pursue to the end. Harvard had invaded his imagination, and he would storm heaven itself to get there. He threatened to leave, without a penny, and make his way no matter how.
The argument continued, simmered, dragged on. At last his mother agreed to finance him for a year. She still secretly looked on him as a passionate extension of herself and ignored the loud protests of the others that she was favoring Tom at their expense. His instinct for the grandiose was already highly visible. Whatever he longed for had to be the peak of its kind. The University of Virginia had been his early goal, the very zenith of Southern education. As a graduate student it was Harvard, the very zenith of American education that magnetized him. And beyond Harvard lay New York, still to be reached and scaled, the greatest of cities, the *Enfabled Rock* that aroused his most vivid fantasies about success and fame.

Wolfe spent three years at Harvard, for the most part of his writing dramas for *Professor Baker’s 47 Workshop*. Wolfe also developed an intimate relationship with the Widener Library at Harvard. He regarded its hundreds or thousands of books as a personal challenge, and threw himself into reading them as though they were the endless hordes of some enemy army. “*I wander throughout the stacks of that great library there like some damned soul.*” 2 He wrote to Mrs. Roberts: “Never at rest ever leaping ahead from the pages I read to thoughts of those I
want to read.” He had the obscure conviction that living was a king of war, with a whole series of military redoubts to be stormed and taken. Or it presented itself as a series of obstacles, each higher than the one before, leading to some ultimate Himalayan pinnacle.

The assault on the Widener Library, with the mental looting and sacking of its contents, was an early incident in Wolfe’s assault upon the universe. He was not depressed or discouraged by the image of the world as an obstacle course. His response was exaltation. In the years at Harvard three personalities impressed themselves upon him, and eventually made their way into Of Time and the River. Henry Westall was one his uncle Henry Westall. The grotesque fusion of God and Mammon in this figure so closely related to him by blood aroused Wolfe’s imagination, as the more extreme and extravagantly coloured human types were always to do. A second influential figure was, of course, George Pierce Baker (Professor Hatcher), one of the reigning gods in Wolfe’s private pantheon. Baker extracted a number of plays from his young Southern disciple, and encouraged Wolfe to try his luck on Broadway and become a professional playwright.
Nothing would have pleased Wolfe more. After finally receiving an M.A. in 1923 he thought of teaching, but Baker was opposed, saying that it would dissipate his creative energies. Wolfe kept insisting that he had to eat, and Baker offered no hope in that direction. *I began to understand*, he confided to Mrs. Roberts,

A bitter draught it was that Professor Baker was an excellent friend, a true critic, but a bad counselor. 4

Their relationship unraveled and came to an end, partly because of the insatiable demands of Wolfe’s digestive tract, but partly because of his slowly growing conviction that he was not destined to be a playwright. When he parted company with Baker on that, it was plain there was nothing else of consequence for them to agree about. The third Harvard personality who grew close to Wolfe was Kenneth Raisbeck (Francis Starwick in the novel). Though only two years Wolfe’s senior, he was Professor Baker’s assistant. He was very impressive to Wolfe at first and very pathetic later. They were the kings of opposites that would naturally be drawn to one another. Raisbeck had polished manners and limited vitality. Wolfe’s social surface was raw, but his creative energies were limitless. In the end, however, Wolfe
was to develop a ferocious antipathy to aesthetes, book reviewers, literary critics, and college professors those, he felt, who while incapable of creating anything themselves lived off the creative efforts of others. His intimacy with Raisbeck supplied him with the essential mould for this emotion. When his plays were criticized for whatever reason, he was not only upset but angry at the critics. He would attack them as stupid, philistine, insensitive, out of tune with true genius.

His later years were marred by a series of lawsuits, involving such matters as the rights to his manuscripts and his use of real people as characters in his work. Characteristically, he never wanted to compromise or settle out of court but to pursue each litigation to the absolute end, no matter what the cost. Vanity, disguising itself as a burning sense of justice, overcame prudence and rationality at every turn. Whatever difficulties of temperament he had to contend with, there was still the unavoidable matter of how he was to earn a living. He had spent four years at the university of North Carolina at his father’s expense, and three at Harvard with his mother paying most of the bills. His two college degrees were of no great help in launching him as a playwright, but they did qualify him for one profession:
teaching. He did not want to teach, felt ill, at ease, at the thought of it, was convinced that teaching would injure his creative talent, and sent out letters of application to various departments of English with extreme reluctance.

As usual Wolfe was excessively conscious of Urban Jews. Their dark foreign looks repelled him, yet he was sexually attracted to the females. The manifest intelligence and will to succeed of these Jewish students aroused his admiration. The intimate confrontation between them was dramatic, indeed almost stagy. The man-mountain of the young Protestant Southerner and the swarms of Semites one generation removed from the ghettos of Eastern Europe, facing each other in the great city that was their unexpected meeting ground.

Wolfe spent six years at N.Y.U., off and on. The school was unfailingly courteous and hospitable, granting him leaves of absence when he went abroad and welcoming him back on his return. He appears to have gotten along with his colleagues, his chairman, and the dean while there, it came as a cruel and unexpected shock to them to read his bitterly hostile account of the university in *Of Time and the River*, where Eugene Gant sneeringly refers to it as the School for Utility Cultures and speaks
savagely of the faculty as a cabal of small-souled, self-seeking, backbiting figures obsessed with their sterile little promotions in the academic hierarchy.

After two terms of hard work at school, he saved enough money for a European trip, and in October 1924 sailed on the first of his seven journeys aboard. It was a conventional grand tour through England, France, and Italy. In Paris he ran into Raisbeck and two young women from New England, and for a time the four of them travelled about together, with emotional complications that Wolfe was later to fictionalize in detail. At Harvard he had suspected Raisbeck of being a homosexual; now in France the homosexuality became blatant. There were scenes, shouts, quarrels, and a final blowup.

Wolfe, who drank heavily throughout his life—a habit he shared with Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Faulkner, Sinclair Lewis, and Ring Lardner, prodigious boozers all—went on several extended drinking bouts during this troubled period. He had planned originally to return in February. But his mood changed, and he resolved to stay on in Europe.

His money, however, ran out, and he had to plead with his mother for more funds. As always, they were forthcoming, though
not without the usual angry grumbling back home. In September 1925, returning from Europe on the Olympia, he took his savings and money his mother was willing to give him and sailed for Europe where he continued his writing. On his own voyage home in Aug. 1925 he met Aline Bernstein, a successful set and costume designer in the N.Y. Theater and director of the Neighborhood Playhouse who by coincidence was caseying a copy of Welcome to Our City. Which the playhouse had asked her to seed, he was 24; she, 44 and so began the six-year affair that has become part of American Betray History.

Though they had much in common in aslistic temperament, their lines were really a contrast of opposites. She was really twenty years older than Wolfe, married, and the mother of two grown children. She had a Jewish Heritage and had been born and raised in New York City. Her husband was a successful New York businessman who gave her a secure life of melts and privilege. However for from being a socialite, Mrs. Bernstein lined her life as an artist and a worker. In spite of their differences and the turbulence problems of their love affairs, Wolfe showed his admiration for the beautiful qualities of her character that
attracted him to her, when he portrays her as the Esther Jack of his posthumous novels.

In June of 1926, while on vacation in England with Mrs. Bernstein, Wolfe began to unite what would become Look Homeward, Angel. With the help of Mrs. Bernstein, he was able to continue his writing in New York. It was this artistic, emotional, and financial support Wolfe wanted to recognize when he dedicated his book to her upon its publication by Scribner, in October of 1929. However, their affair had reached a breaking point. Wolfe felt trapped both by Mrs. Bernstein’s love for him and his own emotional response to the many problems of their affair. In March of 1930 Wolfe was awarded a Suggestions Fellowship that allowed him to travel to Europe for almost a year. It provided the opportunity to end, finally, his relationship with Mrs. Bernstein. When he returned to New York in February 1931 he rented an apartment in Brooklyn. In these new surroundings he continued to wrestle with his second book. Wolfe found he could replace the emotional support he had lost when he left Mrs. Bernstein with his editor, the famous Maxwell Perkins.

He edited such authors as F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway. Perkins became very close to Wolfe, being the father
of five daughters, Wolfe became the son he never had off, and there can be no doubt of his great belief in Wolfe’s talent and ability. It was, perhaps, his parental feeling towards Wolfe and their close emotional bond that eventually caused even Wolfe to feel he was too dependent on Perkins.

In 1937, Wolfe broke with Scribner and signed a contract with Harpers. The young Edward Aswell, a great Wolfe admirer, became his editor. While on a trip, Wolfe was caught with pneumonia. Doctors were perplexed by unusual complications that developed, so in September of 1938 Wolfe was admitted to Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland. Dr. Walter Dandy, the foremost brain surgeon in the country at the time, believed Wolfe had tuberculosis of the brain. On September 12th he operated, in the last ditch effort to save Wolfe’s life. He found the entire right side of Wolfe’s brain was covered with tumor cells. There was nothing that could be done, on September 15, 1938, never having regained consciousness, Thomas Wolfe died. He was buried in Riverside Cemetery, Asheville, North Carolina. Wolfe’s frantic rush to do all, see all, and write it all down had proved tragically correct.
Though his life was short, his literary achievements were indeed large. His words are torrential explosions of adjectives and adverbs, but through the magic of his words, he breathed life into his vision of the world around him. His lyrical quality of his writing, his robust rhetoric, his vast vocabulary, and his expansive eloquence are found nowhere else in American literature. He communicates his experiences through the shapes, sounds, colors, odors, and textures of life, and he proclaims his impressions of the world with total mastery. His opulent language and unique literary style have cleaned his life to legendary status through his tour large and famous novels, containing various themes in itself. His first novel *Look Homeward, Angle* was published in 1929, only nine years before his death. His second novel *Of Time and the River*, was published in 1935. This was followed by a collection of short stories, *From Death to Morning*, published in same years. An autobiographical essay on writing, *The story of a Novel*, was published in 1936. These books, along with many short stories published in magazines, complete the works that appeared during his lifetime:

There were three posthumous works *The Web and the Rock, You Can’t Go Home Again*, *The Hills Beyond...*that were gleaned from the huge manuscript
Wolfe left behind. All of Wolfe’s works manuscripts are honored at Houghton Library, Harvard University. Wolfe scholars continue to use their manuscripts to produce such works as the complete edition of the Parry at Jacks’s, published in 1995.  

His works have raised fundamental questions about his sense of forms, themes, and criticism has labored almost endlessly on his structure. He used various themes as nationality or patriotism, Theme of Time, Theme of Loneliness; Theme of Death and his proprietary for direct use of autobiography is memorable. All his works are having these themes but a common subject and one almost universally recognized as Wolfe’s own experience in his world presented under the transparent disguises of two protagonists, Eugene Gant and George Webber. The pattern of his life was a pattern of embroidering articles. From his hill-locked home town, to a state university just being to reach out to find its place in the national scene, to the city, and finally to Europe, Wolfe monad in a steadily expanding world.

A similar expansion was present in his work. He began in an intensely personal lyric any in Look Homeward, Angle, moaned on to an attempt to realize his nation through himself in Of Time and the River, and came out the end to a satiric social criticism in
You Can’t Go Home Again. Actually Wolfe was suggesting throughout his career toward some solution to the problems posed in America for the democratic and yet patriotic artist.

Being impressed by Walt Whitman Wolfe had attempted to sing the nature of America by celebrating the American whom he knew best, hoping to find in his own genetic experiences an image of a national self. Thomas Wolfe attempted much the same objective. Caught in the essentially romantic theory of art which holds that the artist must express himself, the patriotic poet must experience a catholically of life in order to give expression to a self representative of nation. Hence wolfe’s another pre-occupation with experience and feeling. Yet, having expression to this national self. Usually through a homeful evocation of time, place, and action, employing to its fullest his intensely sensuous style.

The experience of Eugene Gant and George Webber are bound together through certain recurrent themes. One of his central themes is loneliness. To be an American is to be lonely and restlessly moaning beneath vast skies, Wolfe assets. The barriers that are created around the individual effectively shut him off from all communication. The original title of Look Homeward, Angle was The Building of a Wall. The Theme of Of Time and the
River is the ‘Search For a Father.’ One of Wolfe’s most successful short novels— one which he wanted to issue as a separate book— is entitled No Door. When his characters grow out from home they find that You Can’t Go Home Again.

Wolfe used his bitter experiences with the help of other theme like Time. He has a philosophical concern in these works, it seems to be centered in the nature of time, and in the selections among past and present and time immutable. And in place after place in his fiction he tries to bring past into present through memory and to project them both against the backdrop of eternity. A story like The Past Boy is centered squarely on this problem of time.

His use of language and subject underwent only gradual changes; there was a steady development in his work of a sense of the outer world. He began as a youthful lyric article, celebrating the intense and uniquely personal response of the self to the morning freshness of the earth. He gradually developed a larger view that centered itself increasingly in a national ideal. By the time of each later works, he was attempting as he in a letter to Perkins in 1930, the representation of:

The whole consciousness of his people and nation...every sight, sound and memory of the people
the motive force shifts from representing a person to using that person to express each element of a universal experience, or at least an experience common to most Americans.  

And the American experience seemed to him to demand a new use of language and new artistic forms. Thus, Wolfe takes his place in the long pattern of American writers struggling to find an adequate form and substance for the native character and the democratic ideal in one sense he is the poet whom Emerson demanded but could not find and about whom he said:

Dante’s praise is that he dared to write his autobiography in colossal cipher, or into university. Although Wolfe treats time in many ways throughout Of Time and the River. Wolfe is successful in conveying the details of Van God’s painting ‘the Road menders, and he also succeeds in linking different periods of time. Present time Eugene in the café) links with past time (when van Godh painted there trees). That memory triggers Eugene’s memory and calls up unfathomed memories of home, and...something in his heart he could not utter. That which lies too deep for words is the immutable, that time of great mountains and rivers this long and unconventional novel has many memorable parts. Of Time and the
River still finds readers who will argue that it is, if nothing else, a book of magnificent fragments. 7

Death is another recurrent theme in his work. It seems always to hones ones his mutable world, and seems of his most impressive scenes are concerned with its consuming. The Death of Ben Gant and William Oliver Gant are as fine dramatic scenes as he ever whole. And death is central to a short story like Child by Tiger or Dark in the Forest, string as time or even to archetypical meditation like The Hollow Men. Of all this country’s major novelists Thomas Wolfe was the most honestly autobiographical, his own family and boyhood providing the national form many memorable passages and characters in his four and most successful novels. He made his fiction largely from his own life.

His opulent language and unique literary style have elevated his life to legendary status through his four large autobiographical novels. Because he made is fiction largely from his own life, the merits and demerit of Eugene Gant and George Webber are those of Thomas Wolfe. Wolfe seldom felt that the evocation of feeling was enough which are bound to our age to give a powerful scene in dramatic sense. Wolfe was to attempt his well of consciousness to give the materials from which his art was to follow experiences,
sights, sounds, people, books, and all the materials of art, both immediate and vocations. That’s why Wolfe’s intense pre-occupation was with his own experience and feeling. This occupation was fully absolute into autobiography taking with his other elements as given above theme of time, death loneliness and nationalize autobiography style was found in all these themes and came out intentionally or unintentionally from his all novels, short stories and manuscripts. Wolfe began his career with his own life. He employed his characters and their activities with great memorable description by reading these impressions in his noble books.

The quality, aside from his almost dizzying command of language that’s most impressive about Wolfe’s writing is his power of characterization-his protagonists whether Eugene Gant or George Webber—are essentially the focal points and important as the people whom they meet, watch them with startled and child-like wonder, and secondly they take an intense delight in variety of the characters such as W.O. Gant, Eliza Gant, brother Ben, sister Helen, Laura James, Jones, the cousin family, Esther Jack, Dick Proper, Randy Shepperton, and Nebraska Cranes etc.
They are all vividly realized people. Besides these characters and his school, college, university, tours, but the most memorial living house Old Kentucky Home, his mother’s boarding house in Asheville, North Carolina has become one of literature’s most famous landmark. It has become Wolfe’s achievement by giving it name Dixieland in his book. The frame, gabled roof house with its many porches, provided the author with an abundance of diverse characters who are definable from his own family and was the scene of some of Wolfe’s most powerfully written episodes. The home lores as a memorial to Wolfe, maintains its timeless integrity and stands as a striking monument to him. Its settings, the characters and feeding of the environment in which he was raised and framed with great scope and energy of consciousness. One example for this realistic description is given below. All of it is as it has always been. He himself comments:

Again, and again I turn, and find again the things that I have always known: the cool sweet magic of starred mountain night, the huge attentiveness of dark, the stoke, the street, the trees, living silence of the houses waiting and the fact that April has come back again...and again, again, in the old house I feel beneath my tread the check of the old stair, the worn
rail, the white washed walls, the feel of darkness and the house asleep, and think, I was a child here. 

The father William Oliver Wolfe and mother Julia Westall were internalized in the Wolfe’s fiction as W.O. and Eliza Gant. He depicted his own family and associated theme in scenes and situations of his native Asheville, North Caroline that he called Altamont or at the university or in New York. His father, Oliver Gant of the novels was a stone-cutter, and his mother, portrayed as Eliza Gant, managed a residential boarding house in real life also. This Altamont house is depicted with realistic line a fine example of which is given above.

Like the parents, Wolfe’s siblings were portrayed in fiction, Mabel became Helen and Fred was Luke. Frank was called Stene, Effic was Daisy and Tom was Eugene and George. The Twins, Ben and Grover, appeared in Look Homeward, Angel with their actual names. Thus it was from his own family that Wolfe drew his strongest and the most successful characters. As letters to family members indicate, their relations were sources of life-long affection and of great difficulty. There is some small description big resemble ness between his real characters and fictional characters. Wolfe employed impressions in his novel to make his
characters real and memorable. Wolfe was in a small way to begin his literary career.

Thomas Wolfe possessed a singularly delicate sensory perception, a remarkably sentencing memory and passionate concern with the nature of experience, a deep patriotic strain, a commitment to self-expression, and a powerful rhetorical style. The elements combined in his works to produce a vast, sprawling epic of one man’s experience in America.

INFLUENCE OF OTHER WRITERS ON THOMAS WOLFE

He was an early disciple of H.G. Wells, a follower and imitator of James Joyce, both in Ulysses and in the Work in Progress that became Finnegans wake, and admirers of Sinclair Lewis, of Dostoievski, who supplanted Dickens in his affections while he was an undergraduate, and of Proust. The whole range of English Poetry fascinates him Milton and Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Coleridge he echoed and paraphrased again and again. He admired Donne and Eliot’s verse he knew and quoted. When Wolfe was writing badly, his pages sometimes seem like a particles of other writers. Among early reviewers Basil Davenport
saw Wolfe as possessing with Rabelais “the same fundamental and most unusual quality, a robust sensitive”, ⁹ and found in his manner a hint of Joyce. Geoffrey T. Hellhean called it:

Anextraordinarily fine novel, not to be mentioned with all the forgotten blue ribbon winners of the past few years. Burton Roscoe found the novels of Wolfe thrilling to contemplate and read. ¹⁰

Jack D. Wages examines how Wolfe in Look Homeward, Angel uses names of real places and people, clenices names for comic effect, while Darlene Unrue finds that “Wolfe’s first novel shares with books by Faulkner Mc cullers, O’Connor, and others the quality called’ gothic”. ¹¹ He was a great admirer of Walt Whitman and sang the folk songs like him with his own consciousnesses like Coleridge, he used “self representation of mind. View in short he was selective, and he shaped the emphasis of his material for fictional effect. According to Thomas Wolfe the main business of the novelist was to provide his impressions of life in such a manner as to create the allusion of reality in his works.

Before taking into consideration the entire literature canon of Thomas Wolfe, it seems too essential to look into the nature and form of the concept of autobiographical stain. Etymologically
keen, autobiographical strain means tone tendency, style on manner adopted in writing creatively and hence it implies a writing that concerns fictional presentation or description relevant to the writer’s own experiments in the course of his life. Quite like an autobiography, the underlying principle, in a writing having autobiography strain, must be scouting of the self with outside happening, persons encountered, and observations admitted primarily as they impinged on the consciousness of the person on whose characters and actions the writing is focused. Wayne C. Booth qualities this phenomenon as depresondization and explains.

As he writes, he creates simply an ideal, impersonal man in general but an implied version of himself that is different from the implied authors we meet in others men’s works. Thus, we come across the created version of the real man and necessary, consciously or unconsciously, he is the June of is own choices. In this way, writing with an autobiographical strain involves conversion of life into textual self-representation.
A BRIEF STUDY OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STRAIN

A study of autobiographical strain in creative literature necessitates the knowledge and understanding of the genes of autobiography. The work autobiography was not coined until the close of the Eighteenth century. Prior to that time memoirs was frequently used for works, which would now be called autobiographical writers of antiquely often sexual a great deal about themselves. For instance, Horace in his Poems and Cicero in his Letters evidence the autobiographical strain, then the Confessions of St. Augustine deserves the title of his earlier extant autobiography, and is a landmark in establishing the conversion of experience into narrative. Again, the earliest autobiographical account in English, which has come down to us, is his absorbing book “Of Margery Temple”, written in the early fifteenth century. Then, in the sixteenth century we come across, works such as Montaigne’s Essays and Samuel Peppy’s Diary. In the eighteenth century we have Rousseau’s Less Confessions as a significant writing on the autobiographical lines.

In the Nineteenth century romantic era there apparel accounts of explorations of the inner life of many writers including
Wordsworth’s Prelude (1805) and, J.S. Mill’s Autobiography 1873 and Coleridge’s Biographia Literaria and Charles Dickens’s David Copperfield (1849-50). It is another matter that these are autobiographical writing in a broad sense as these contain elements of self-revelation in their own peculiar contexts. In the twentieth century there appeared the autobiographical writing of Edmund Goose Under the Father and Son (1907), James Joyce’s Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man 1916 and Thomas Wolfe’s aim is to highlight theoretical discussion on the autobiographical element in fiction and forming the basis of textual analysis where the novelist provides his impressions of life in such a manner as to create the illusion of reality in his work. Wolfe’s concepts, of time, faith, loneliness, and death, his notions of isolation, alienation change, and experience, his gusto, vitality and his struggles stemming from his ambivalent romantic guest, were spread out on the blank papers and immortalized him as a writer who is living into his writings.

Most of the works of Thomas Wolfe were not only written in a subjective form in which the emphasis is not only on the author’s developing self but also on the people and elements that the author had known or witnessed. Then carry to say his novels
are a record of the oneness happened in his life. Thomas Wolfe anguished his mental crisis, got a secondary and conversion and finally he discovered his identity with a relish of satisfaction.

Wolfe’s first novel is perhaps his most famous work, and certainly the most widely read. Many first novels, especially when their authors are very young tend to be heavily autobiographical. *Look Homeward, Angel* is more so than most. This is a first book, and in it the author has written of experience which was once part of the fabric of his life, Thomas Wolfe alerted readers of *Look Homeward, Angel*. It concerns the first timely years in the life of its hero, Eugene Gant, and these years follow, with an almost runs weaving literalness.

*Look Homeward, Angel* contains all the experience that the apprentice hero usually passes through, except the religious order. The story presents the struggle of youth Eugene Gant to fuel himself from his environment and particularly to break free of possessive mother. He passes through cannon childhood experience in conflict with his sisters and brothers. He opens up his imagination through the world of books. In his one speech Thomas Wolfe says himself:

> In the fact my first book seemed that in a way life my working life, my experience as a man ends as a writer
about the organized. Almost every character, place, and even in *Look Homeward, Angel*, has its real counterpart in the life of Wolfe, his family, their neighbor, and Ashentic. 12

The extent of his love for her can perhaps best be seen in two places. In the copy of *Look Homeward, Angel* he presented to her beneath the printed dedication *To A. B.*, and the epigraph (the fifth stanza of Donne’s *A Valediction: Of My Name in the Windows*) Wolfe wrote:

> To Alien Bernstein: On my 29th birthday, I presented her with this first copy of my first book. This book was written because of her and is dedication to her. As at a time when my life seemed desolate and when I had little faith in my self I met her, she brought me friendship, material and spiritual relief and love as I had. Never had before. I hope therefore that readers of my book will find at least part of it worthy of such a woman. 13

*Look Homeward, Angel* was the beginning of his career or that career was launched by the Publication of *Look Homeward, Angel* on October 18, 1929, because Wolfe employed to make his great characters real and memorable, by recording these impressions in his notebooks it can be said Perhaps the most
autobiographical novel ever written by an American. The book had been the centre of Wolfe’s work since 1926. He reported to Margaret Roberts:

I have begun work on a book, a novel, to which I may give the title of ‘The Building of a wall.’

The novel would go through many possible titles before the phrase of Milton’s *Lycidas* was selected at a late stage and makes into the sub title, *The Story of a Buried Life*, because as family, Wolfe experienced many frustrations, and to an extent they were hesitant to express deep feelings. The degree to which each member of the Gant family is vulnerable to isolation and to loneliness is extreme. In other words *Look Homeward, Angel* most assuredly is about buried life.

The novel encompasses events in Eugene Gant’s life from his precocious childhood to age twenty when he leaves family, Altamont, and the south to north and enter Harvard of like young Stephen Redalus, who abandons his family, Dublin, and the churchman, Eugene must break a way in order to find himself and to become an artist. Chronologically, *Look Homeward, Angel* is divided into three parts; the first and shortest deals with Eugene’s childhood, to his twelfth year, the second with his school days in
Altamont, and the third, with his college years, marked at the end by his brother Ben’s death and his mother’s reluctant agreement to finance Eugene’s further education at Harvard.

*Look Homeward, Angel* (1929) begins with the marriage of a man- Oliver Gant (Thomas Wolfe’s father) from Pennsylvania, a woman- Eliza Gant [Thomas Wolfe’s mother] from the Carolina Hills. He was a stone cutter, a monument-maker and she was one of a family now settled in the growing resort of Altamont [Thomas Wolfe’s Asheville], with a flair for real estate investment and a gift for building up a fortune. They are an ill assorted pair-the man was a dreamer and drunkard, a prodigious artist.

Temperament not fully expressed in carving angels the woman a miser, a money grubber, willing to sacrifice her whole family to the sordid and back anxious idol of mammon. But there was also a sense of family solidarity, confirmed by common grief later, when Eugene’s father returned to Altamont from his wandering in California. Eugene shrieked happily with the other children

Papa’s home! A double admission that in this jangling household there was a fierce, indestructible unity. Yet when Eliza moaned into Dixieland.15
Leaving Helen to keep house for Gant, Eugene wandered back and forth between the two establishments. Helen’s possessing affection only partly bridged the gap. All through the story the pride of Eugene in his brother Ben’s dogged independence is a family tie as pervasive as the theme of sympathy. Wolfe’s own father, W.O. Wolfe, and his fictional self in the early novels, Oliver Gant, were men of tremendous energy, potency and magnetism, but ruined by illness, drunkenness, irresponsibility and gigantic defects of various kinds. They engendered in their sons the ideal image of the powerful father while lapsing from it themselves, and when they died, the void had to be filled by others.

Though the autobiographical novel chronicling young man’s progress from birth to manhood was a stock item in literature, Wolfe’s version of it has so much freshness and immediacy, recreated the town, the family, and the growing consciousness of Eugene Gant with such hold and élan that Look Homeward, Angel seemed like something new of its kind.

Gant’s native city of Altamont in the state of Catawba was easily identified as Asheville, North Carolina, where Wolfe was born and raised. Major incidents in the book—Eugene’s
development and schooling, his education at the State University, his mother’s complex business ventures, his father’s tragic illness, his brother’s death —were all paralleled tragic illness, in Wolfe’s own early life.

To be sure, Wolfe made the usual disclaimer. In a note to the Reader, he insisted that his book was a “fiction, and that he meditated to man’s portrait here”. Yet he acknowledged that he had written of experience which is now far and lost, but fiction is fact selected and understood, fiction is fact arranged and changed with purpose.

The climax of the novel however is the death of Ben, which cuts the last real tie with the family. Gant, Eliza, Helen, Luke and Stein all seems vibrant strands of his past, but Eugene has gone beyond them now. On his graduation from college his ambition is vaguely fixed on writing as a career. In writing Look Homeward, Angel Wolfe was especially indebted to Goethe’s Within Meister, Steiner’s Tristram Shandy, and Joyce’s A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Freedom from the conventional novel form that he saw in these works led him to similar unconventional forms.

Of Time and the River (1935) begins at the point where the earlier story leaves off. Eugene Gant is now Doctor Faustus,
determined to attain all knowledge and to know all experience. He studies play writing in Professor Hatcher’s (Baker’s) class in Cambridge. He returns home to the deathbed of his father. He falls under the spell of the fascinating Francis Starwick, Hatcher’s assistant, who stands for all that are beautiful and inspiring in the life of the artist. He sends off his play to a publisher and waits a home for the magic letter, which shall seal his fate. It is a rejection slip, and plunges him into despair. He goes on a drunken drive with reckless boys that take him to jail. He tells his mother he will expiate his crime retrieve his failure. He becomes a teacher in New York University; continues his frantic pursuit of all knowledge and all experience.

*Of Time and the River* continues Eugene Gant’s autobiography pone age from twenty to age twenty-five. He meets Esther Jack on shipboard during these years, he visits for the first time such places as Boston, New York, London, Paris, Orleans, which Challenge his thinking. Eugene’s introspection continues and he becomes increasingly amused of both America and the world at large. He gave his own experience about these tours and a true report of his own with the fictional counterparts as Eugene Gant and Aline Bernstein of Wolfe:
He turned, and saw her then, and so finding her saw for a fading moment only the pleasant image of the woman that perhaps she was. He never knew: he only knew that from that moment his spirit was impaled upon the knife of lone. 17

*Of Time and the River* follows the main sequence of Wolfe’s life September, 1920, when he wanted to Harvard, until August, 1925, when he met Mrs. Bernstein at the end of his homeward voyage from his first trip to Europe. There are, however, many omissions and shifts of emphasis. Wolfe’s experience at Harvard and at New York University, are of special interest and are well documented. People can, therefore, compare his fictional treatment with the facts. The Harvard period occupies the whole of Book II, ‘Young Faustus’, and two hundred and thirty five pages of the nine hundred page novel.

Only one third of this space is devoted to Eugene’s university life, which is represented by these episodes: his mad delight in the library, Chapter VIII; his meeting with Starwick, professor, Hatcher’s assistant in the playwriting course, Chapter VIII; five chapters satirizing Hatcher and his students, Chapter X,
XII, XVI, XXXV, XXXVI, and a final chapter narrating a quarrel between Eugene and Starwick, Chapter XXXVIII; interpolated with this material, several chapters on Eugene’s in-sincere friendship with the girl Genevieve; a sketch of the Murphy with Eugene’s father. This organization of Book 2 has the effect of making a rather conventional contrast between the hollowness of academic life and the rich energy.

_The Web and the Rock_ (1939) takes up the story of Eugene Gant from the time he makes the acquaintance of Esther, Mrs. Jack, on the steamer returning to America. But he is now renamed George Webber; and for the first three books the author goes back to fill in the background of his parent’s lives and of his own childhood in Altamont (now Libya Hill). His main object is to trace the two streams of blood and tradition “two worlds discrete” which struggle for mastery in the spirit of George Webber. There are many new fine sensations from the life of a child; many new and cruel incidents of life in his town; and more is made of the lost and desperate people of the hills, and especially that extraordinary old scalawag, his grandfather, Major Joyner. A new selection of incidents from his early college days is given; and
an account of the New York life of Southern men comes to the
great city of the North to take the world by storm.

Then we skip to his return from Europe and his love affair
with the wealthy Jewish woman, Esther Jack, designer of stage
sets for smart society theaters. During this period he is teaching at
the school for Utility Cultures Inc. (the same New York
University) and writing his novel. Esther Jack is a wonderful
character creation and a magnificent woman all round- obviously
quite the best thing that ever happened to George Webber-Eugene
Gant-Thomas Wolfe. But there is a perverse strain in his nature
that makes him resent his attachment to her. He associates her in
his mind with all that is false and sophisticated in the artistic life
of New York- all that is cruel and corrupt in the social system that
floats on the surface of poverty and degradation. She is a symbol
to him of the conspiracy of the world against him, the genuine
artist. When his book is rejected by his publishers, he makes her
the scapegoat for all his shame and misery.

He quarrels with her, and goes abroad to pursue alone his
Faustian pilgrimage, which ends up in a fight in a Munich beer
hall and a hospital bed. The last scene shows him contemplating
in a mirror his simian body, and carrying on a dialogue with that
material casing of his soul. He tells his body how nice it would be to return to the home of his childhood memories. “Yes,” said his Body,” But- you can’t go home again.” 19

So there we have the title for the final volume, to which one looked so long for answers to the many desperate questions, which had been raised by the earlier record. When that appeared, we could see the direction of the thing, and the many incidents and characters would fall into place in something like an ordered design. He comments:

I have given the barest outline of the action, and have had to ignore the vast number of characters and the varied incidents included in this bewildering saga. This is anything but he conventional well-made novel. There is, you might say, no plot, no dramatic situation to be worked out, and no dramatic issue to be followed through from step to step. And he critics have largely been unable to explain he force and fascinations of books so lacking in conventional order and form. They have, I think, been unnecessarily blind to elements of form, which are actually present. We can get further in our appreciation of Wolfe if we think of him not as a novelist but as a poet or a composer. These books yield their secret to us best if we consider them as shall we say? – Tone poems. It is not so much he plots as the musical themes or motives that give us a clue to their
form. By reference to these musical themes the various characters and incidents take on significance, losing much of heir effect of lumpiness and irrelevance. His main trouble is that there are many themes, more or less related but sill distinct, woven together in a pattern of infinite complexity; and it takes study to realize how they are composed into something like a harmonious whole.  

The dominating theme is what Wolfe calls man’s search for a father. He has singled him out himself as the central idea. In his book entitled *The Story of a Novel* (1936), he writes:

> The deepest search in life, it seemed to me, the thing that in one way or another was central to all living was man’s search for a father, not merely the father of his flesh, not merely the lost father of his youth, but the image of a strength and wisdom external to has need and superior to his hunger, to which the belief and power of his own life could be united.  

This theme was probably suggested to Wolfe by James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, a book that he regarded as one of the greatest of our day, and in which the central character, representing, Joyce himself as Eugene Gant represents Wolfe, is shown engaged in a similar search for a spiritual father. This image is perpetually
recurring throughout the three earlier books of Wolfe, and it is clear that the entire series is given unity by the idea of life as a pilgrimage, or search for a spiritual essence or being, which for the mature man can take the place, which a father takes for the child. A father protects the child; he is the source of wisdom and strength; he answers all the questions, which the child puts to life; and as it were guarantees to him that life has a meaning and value.

The mature man has to face alone the perils and dubieties of experience; and ever he longs for some assurance that he is not morally alone; that there is something in the nature of things which stands back of him to support him against the adversary; some comfort in failure; some assurance of providence or reason in the way things come about.

This image of the father frequently goes along with the image of a door or gate. Life for the pilgrim is a search for some door that will admit him to reality and happiness; some gate that will open on truth and unbars the secrets of the world. To find this door is to find one’s father; it is to be no longer alone and fearful; it is to find oneself and make one’s way back to the warmth and security of home. All men are by nature lost and lonely; and this is particularly true of Americans. They are so lost, so naked and so
lonely in America. Immense and cruel skies bend over them, and all of them are driven on forever and they have no home.

It is this loneliness and a desperate search for a home that leads them to make so many journeys up and down their own land and in foreign parts; it leads us to so many futile efforts to solve their problems by some childish magic. Of the students in Hatcher’s class, Wolfe says

“They belonged to this great colony of the lost Americans who feel that everything is going to be all right with them if they can only take a trip, or learn a rule, or meet a person that all the power they lack themselves will be supplied, and all the anguish, fury, and unrest, the confusion and the dark damnation of man’s soul can magically be healed if only they eat bran for breakfast, secure an introduction to a celebrated actress get a reading for their manuscript from a friend of Sinclair Lewis, or win admission to Professor Hatcher’s celebrated class of dramatists: Or it may not be in such obvious and extravert things that they will find the open sesame. Perhaps,”22
A related theme to that of lost Americans is the theme of the South seeking its homeland or its realization in the North. This is especially the case with Eugene Gant, George Webber; his father is represented as having come from the golden North to the dark and glamorous South. His blood was mixed there with that of the lost and ineffectual people of the mountains. And in his son there is a perpetual longing to return to his father’s land, the golden land of the North:

Then his spirit flamed beyond the hills, beyond lost time and sorrow, to his father and his father’s earth; and when he thought of him his heart grew warm, the hot blood thudded in his veins, he leapt all barriers of the here and now, and northward, gleaming brightly there beyond the hills, he saw a vision of the golden future in new lands. 23

Closely associated with the image of the father and the door is that of the word. Every person in whom the author has an interest is a reminder of the secret door, the magic word; and he can never forget him or her because they are so vividly connected with the object of his search. There was the mysterious English family with whom he lived in Oxford, having so little to do with them. He could never forget them.
Although he had never passed beyond the armor of their hard bright eyes, or breached the wall of their crisp, friendly, and impersonal speech, or found out anything about them, he always thought of them with warmth, with a deep and tender affection, as if he had always known them as if, somehow, he could have lived with them or made their lives his own had he only said a word, or turned the handle of a door a word he never knew, a door he never found.24

The image of the word is of peculiar importance because this is the record of an author’s life. His natural weapon and tool is the word. And his goal is inevitably conceived of in terms not merely of happiness, of experience, of possession, but in terms of understanding, of expression in words and symbols. He wrote in his essay:

Returning with his uncle from a walk in the mountains, he views the houses of his hometown. The sight of these closed golden houses with their warmth of life awoke in him a biter, poignant, strangely mixed emotion of exile and return of loneliness and security, of being forever shut out from the palpable and passionate integument of life and fellowship, and of being so close to it that he could touch it with his hand, enter it by a door, possess it with a word a word
Wolfe supposes that all men feel in some degree this psychological compulsion to put in words their experience and their judgment of life. But in the case of the artist this often takes on the proportions of a major obsession. And it is perhaps even more the case in modern times since the virus of romanticism entered into the blood, of our race, and since with growing knowledge and doubt, with growing sophistication it has become so much more difficult to see our way clearly, to encompass experience in one comprehensive formula, to find some word of assurance and comfort for a soul distracted and torn as under.

The French in the nineteenth century called this the mal du siecle, the sickness of the age. But they were largely content to utter their doubt and despair without any strenuous effort to throw them off. In America today, where the occasions for doubt are perhaps even greater, but where there is still the determination to assert some faint, it is an undertaking even more difficult, more maddening. Thus George Webber was trying to articulate something immense and terrible in life, which he had always known, and felt, and for which he thought he must now
find some speech, or drown. And yet it seemed that this thing, which was so immense, could have no speech that it burst through the limits of all recorded languages and that it could never be rounded, uttered, and contained in words.

It was a feeling that every man on earth held in the little tenement of his flesh and spirit the whole ocean of human life and time, and that he must drown in this ocean unless, somehow, he got it out of him—unless he mapped and charted it, fenced and defined it, plumbed it to its uttermost depths, and knew it to its smallest pockets upon the remotest shores of the everlasting earth. Or again, as Wolfe says of Eugene Gant, “This is the artist, then- life’s hungry man, the glutton of eternity, beauty’s miser, glory’s slave,” whose undertaking is “utterly to possess and capture beauty.”26 He read all books, visited all countries, possessed all women, scanned all faces, walked all streets and mountain paths, lived in all social levels and so he was driven by the fact that he labours not merely for himself but for all men whose tongue he is.

He is the tongue of his unuttered brothers, he is the language of man’s buried heart, he is man’s music and life’s great discoverer, the eye that sees, the key that can unlock, the tongue
that will express the buried treasure in the hearts of men, that all men know and that no man has a language for- and at the end, he is his father's son, shaped from his father's earth of blood and sweat and toil and bitter agony. He is at once the parent and the son of life, and in him life and all man's nature are compact, he is most like man in his very differences, he is what all men are. He has all, knows all, sees all that any man on earth can see and hear and know. Thus it is clear that the mission of Thomas Wolfe is to utter the unspoken word of mankind upon the whole experience of his life and in accomplishing this mission, he holds himself responsible for all knowledge. He was drafted from birth to the Faustian life.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


4 Ibid., p. 206.


7 Ibid., p. 269.

8 Ibid., p. 275.


13 Ibid. p. 253.


15 Ibid., p. 118.

16 Ibid., p. 186.


18 *Of Time and the River* Thomas Wolfe, p.133.

19 Ibid., p.246

20 Ibid., p. 447.

21 Ibid., p. 449.

22 Ibid., p. 450.

23 Ibid., p. 455.

24 Ibid., p. 459