THOMAS WOLFE AS LOVER AND CRITIC OF AMERICA

APPROVED:

Howard C. King
Major Professor

William T. Hagan
Minor Professor

E. S. Clifton
Director of the Department of English

Robert B. Talcott
Dean of the Graduate School
THOMAS WOLFE AS LOVER AND CRITIC OF AMERICA

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June Ann Johnston, B. S.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The great heyday of Thomas Wolfe is over. He no longer enjoys the immense critical and popular esteem that was his during the 1930's, when his novels were acclaimed by many critics and by a broad reading public. He was praised by Sinclair Lewis in his Nobel acceptance speech of 1930, and in later years, he was rated the best novelist of the period by William Faulkner. His second novel was a best-seller for many months, and his work was also very popular in foreign countries, especially in Germany.

However, in the quarter-century since Wolfe's death, his popularity has declined. This loss of favor may, in part, be ascribed to vagaries of taste. As Pamela Johnson said:

To nearly every successful and serious writer, either during his lifetime or within a short period after it, there comes the Kicking Season. This is not arranged or concerted by villains in a committee; it just happens. . . . I remember it happening to Hemingway when *Across the River and Into the Trees* came out. I detected a faint whiff of it—very faint—over Mr. Eliot's last play. . . . Yes, one day it will even be the turn of Scott Fitzgerald. Even of Mr. E. M. Forster. At the moment, it is the turn of poor Tom Wolfe.¹

However, from the appearance of his first book, Wolfe received severe criticism from a number of critics. Bernard de Voto condemned Wolfe thoroughly in an article entitled "Genius Is Not Enough." The attack was continued later by W. H. Auden, who called Wolfe's novels "grandiose rubbish." Many of the attacks centered on the premise that Wolfe wrote only autobiography, and his works, according to these men, could in no way be considered art. Furthermore, they asserted that his novels could not have been written without the guiding genius of Maxwell Perkins. Groups like the New Humanists, who stressed reason and harmony in writing, and the Neo-Thomists, who preached the traditional in literature, had a whipping boy in Wolfe, but they exerted only slight influence on the reading public. In the early 1950's, many critics began ignoring him completely and left out any mention of him in anthologies. Though the critics tried, they could not do Wolfe much harm, for as Seymour Krim asserted in 1953,

We are wrong if we think that even basic criticism of an artist can destroy him: to the extent he says things we need to hear that no one else can say he is alive and fructifying though his sins be as the sails of ten.2


3Seymour Krim, "Wolfe, the Critics, and the People," Commonweal, LVIII (September 4, 1953), 542.
The reasons for Wolfe's disfavor with the average reader, especially as regards his last three novels, can be found in the nature of the works themselves. Average, to Thomas Wolfe, was Gargantuan to most other writers, and his novels are tremendously long. In his meager lodgings in New York City, he filled packing cases to the brim with written manuscript. Even when this great bulk of manuscript was revised and edited into coherent form, the published novels averaged 800 pages. Wolfe's style, in the tradition of Southern oratory, often runs to the extremes of loquacity and verbosity. His grandiose eloquence sometimes becomes tedious. However, in the light of Wolfe's continued popularity, it must be said that his novels contain characters, descriptions, and rhetoric that can stand with the best of any modern writer.

The amount of critical writing being done on Thomas Wolfe at present is scant compared to a decade or two decades ago. Few theses or dissertations are being written in the universities. Critical appraisals of his work appear occasionally in journals and books, but their number is slight compared to those being done on Faulkner or Steinbeck. The younger generation, though they also discover Look Homeward, Angel, now turn to Salinger and Golding as their oracles. Look Homeward, Angel is still widely read and is still Wolfe's most popular novel, but
his last three novels are often ignored. In the last analysis, however, it seems reasonably safe to predict that Wolfe will always have an important place in twentieth century fiction, for as Krim states,

The fact remains that Wolfe has always been constantly read. He has not been resurrected like Fitzgerald, nor was he revived during his own lifetime like Faulkner, nor like Hemingway has he had much of his work handed over to the academicians. The several decades following an author's death constitute his most perilous probation, for during that time he drops from the contemporary scene and some decision is made about his lasting qualities. We have observed Wolfe's endurance despite strong critical opposition.4

This paper is devoted to a study of the opinions, criticisms, and praises made by Thomas Wolfe on his America. Wolfe developed an extremely wide-ranging analysis of his native country, an analysis which is both objective and emotionally warped, and one which possibly constitutes the major theme in his works. Though his vision was somewhat limited geographically, Wolfe was an acute observer of all strata of American society during the period of his life. Though over thirty years have passed since he first put down his perceptive views, many of his observations still have great validity. Many of the situations he described as virulent and injurious are still to be found as an inherent part of American life. Many of the absurdities that he observed are still present,

4Ibid., p. 142.
and, certainly, so is the evil in man's soul with which he was so concerned. Wolfe was keenly discerning in describing what he felt to be the basic substance of America and its people. In his writings on America, Wolfe is still important, as artist, as social critic, and as narrative historian.

Wolfe lived and wrote in an era which was unique in the history of America. There were two distinct periods that witnessed perhaps the greatest social and cultural upheaval since the founding of the nation. The period of the "roaring twenties" was one of widespread wealth and financial boom which overnight disintegrated into the all-embracing poverty and destitution of the thirties. It was an era of violence and crime, in which the morals of a nation collapsed and lawbreaking became widespread. The speakeasy was a national institution in the twenties. The national institution of the thirties was the soup line. The great American pastime of both periods was the pursuit of the dollar, though in the latter period the pursuit was much more desperate.

The intellectuals became the now fabled "Lost Generation" and "... a distinguishing mark of the generation was that it didn't feel at home in its own country."^5

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These intellectuals revolted against the materialism of American life and left the country in droves, becoming expatriates in France, Spain, Germany, and other foreign countries.

... they followed an old pattern of alienation and reintegration, or departure and return. ... A generation of American writers went out into the world like the children in Grimm's fairy tales who ran away from a cruel stepmother. They wandered for years in search of treasure and then came back like the grown children to dig for it at home. ... Perhaps there was really a treasure, ... but the exiles did not find it. ... They found only what others were finding: work to do as best they could and families to support and educate. The adventure had ended and once more they were a part of the common life.6

They found American life and literature different when they returned. It was an America they could become involved in and they took up her problems in their literature. When they came home, they still were spiritual exiles, but the depression years incorporated them into American life and made them allies of their fellow Americans.

Thomas Wolfe was a part of the "Lost Generation" and embraced most of its ideas and practices. In fact, he uttered perhaps more adverse, soul-searching criticism of America than any of his contemporaries. Though he did not become a true expatriate, he fled America several times to search for refuge in different countries of Europe. Then,

6Ibid.
after a while, he would become homesick and abandon Europe with the same gusto. He never knew nor could he completely express what he was fleeing from or questing for.

He also searched incessantly for the true national identity of America as it might be expressed within the boundaries of this country. He roamed the streets of New York City, from Skid Row to Park Avenue, night after night until the sun rose. He took trips to the homeland of his ancestors, trying to find some unnamed tradition or tangible source of his being that he could cling to. His search for the identity of the nation began to take on a more personal meaning. It became, as well, the search for his own identity, the meaning of "Who Am I." He began to explore "The American Dream" in terms of the ideal and the actual. He observed and reported both the boom and the depression years. Disgusted with New York, he travelled to Purdue and to Colorado to lecture. Later, he journeyed to Chicago and on to the West Coast. On an automobile trip with two newsmen, he roamed the national parks and filled a ledger with his observations of the wonders of America, later published as A Western Journal. He went on to Seattle and Alaska, and on this trip, while still in the process of discovering America, he contracted the disease which killed him at the age of thirty-eight.
Wolfe identified himself with America, and thus his novels became not only self-expression but an expression of America itself.

Always he is something more than himself. He is (or meant to be) not only the ambivalent American artist but the symbol of America itself, intransigent and contradictory, looking to Europe for escape and inspiration and, at the same time, repudiating the past, denying any heritage but our own, crying like Emerson and Whitman before him, "From the unique and single substance of this land and the life of ours, must we draw the power and energy of our own life, the articulation of our speech, the substance of our art."7

In this respect, his name is often coupled to that of Walt Whitman as one of the two greatest writers on America. His work has been called the closest thing in existence to an American national epic. The novels contain great prose poems to the land and people of America.

Wolfe knew the enormity of the task he was attempting in writing of the conglomerate substances of America. He kept wild, sprawling catalogues of places he had seen, people he had met, and impressions he had received. He had an insatiable desire to see everything and meet everyone, and it tortured him when he realized his inability to accomplish this purpose. He always felt that he was missing too much. Nevertheless, he attempted this impossible task, and his achievement was the richer on account of the

impossibility. An expression of Wolfe's yearning may be seen in the following passages:

And as he labored on the book, the thing took life beneath his hand and grew, and already he could dimly see the substance of a dozen other books to carry on the thread, moving out, as he had moved from that small town into the greater world beyond, until in the end, as the strands increased, extended, wove, and crossed, they would take on the denseness and complexity of the whole web of life and of America.8

They were all there—without coherence, scheme, or reason—flung down upon paper like figures blasted by the spirit's lightning stroke, and in them was the huge chronicle of the billion forms, the million names, the huge, single, and incomparable substance of America.9

In this paper, Wolfe's four main novels will be used to examine his comments on America. It is necessary at the outset to understand the make-up of these novels. They are autobiographical in nature, but they also take on the scope and universality that are necessary to meaningful literature. Wolfe felt that the only experience worthy of artistic expression was that based on personal experience. Therefore, Eugene Gant and George Webber, the two protagonists of the four novels, are the embodiment of Thomas Wolfe, and the characters of the novels are either based on or composites of persons in Wolfe's own life. Likewise, the Asheville of his birth became Altamont of

the first two novels and Libya Hill of the latter two. The reason for the name changes in the last novels was that Wolfe was fiercely attacked by critics for writing only autobiography, and because of that he decided to change the name of his hero and attempt to fictionalize completely his next novels. As it turned out, however, the name was all that was changed, for Wolfe soon reverted into his old pattern, and after the second novel was published, it could be readily seen that George Webber was an extension of Eugene Gant. Though he had given Webber a new childhood, it turned out that Wolfe only took that opportunity to put in details of his childhood that he had omitted in Look Homeward, Angel. Part way through the novel, he made short work of Webber's life as a boy, suddenly took up with Webber where he had left Eugene in Of Time and the River, and was once again on his old autobiographical track.

Wolfe's writings on America can roughly be divided into four main categories. Though much of his discussion of the land and the people is almost purely descriptive, he has many significant comments and observations on the character of the nation. His social criticism explores principally three areas of American life—our cultural, political, and economic life. Almost all of his criticisms come from personal experience and are not the result
of vicarious knowledge, and it is only in his last novel that he employs direct arguments for political and economic justice. Some of Wolfe's criticism involved his personal entanglements, and other remarks indicate only acute personal observation. Many statements are the result of reëvaluation in the light of personal experience, e. g., his reëvaluation of political life and freedom in America after a visit to Nazi Germany. As he matured, both as a person and as a writer, he began to see more clearly the responsibility of the artist in a society. Whether the issues involved him personally or, as toward the end of his life, whether he was taking the more objective view of the social reformer, Wolfe was always deeply concerned with the present and the future of the imperfectly civilized nation that he loved and loathed by turns.
CHAPTER II

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

In his novels, Wolfe was constantly searching for the "identity" of America, much as one would search for the key to the personality of one individual. Wolfe was certain of one thing: he felt that America was lost; lost in time, lost among peoples, separated from grace and salvation, almost formless and unformed. He laments that "we are so lost, so lonely, so forsaken in America: immense and savage skies bend over us, and we have no door."¹

This is one theme that is constant throughout the four novels, and it is a theme that serves to point out his never-ending quest for certitude—American certitude. He stalked the streets of towns and travelled over much of the nation, longing, observing, seeking. The intensity of his quest can be felt from the fervid, almost blazing quality of his many prose passages on America.

Wolfe perhaps felt that he would not find an ultimate answer to his questionings, but he also knew that he must try. In his art, he made an effort to understand America and to give voice in a variety of ways to what he thought

¹Wolfe, Of Time and the River, p. 281.
America was. He celebrates the land and its people in long, lyrical passages. He uses the train as a device to explore and write about America and as a symbol of America itself. Wolfe pictures the ideal and the actual of America with a curious blend of optimism and pessimism. He compares the South of his homeland to the North, where he spent his adult life. He explores, perhaps better than any of his contemporaries, the life of the large city and its place in the American dream. Though at first his remarks about New York are very egocentric in nature, they widen in scope, in his search for the meaning of what is called the American dream. From there he leads into the larger question of "What is Man?"

The immensity of the canvas upon which he undertook to paint the land and the people is staggering. As Maxwell Geismar states:

And finally completing his plans for his novel... Wolfe realized that he was dealing with material covering a hundred and fifty years in history, demanding the action of more than two thousand characters, and including in its final scope "almost every racial type and social class of American life."  

Wolfe tried to include everything. He would describe people and places minutely and never mention them again.

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They were simply a part of his subject matter—the whole of America. He notes in *Of Time and the River*:

... there lay America—and all the dumb hunger of its hundred million tongues, its unfound form, its unborn art. ... There lay America and the brutal stupefaction of its million streets, its unquiet heart, its vast incertitude, the huge sprawled welter of its life—its formless and illimitable distances.  

Though sometimes, mainly in the earlier novels, his picture of America would be confined to the country as it applied to Thomas Wolfe, he attempted to give as extended a physical picture of America as could possibly be done by one man.

Wolfe celebrated in a sensuous and mystical manner the land and the people of America and can best be compared with Walt Whitman. As Edgar Johnson says of Wolfe, "Ultimately he is both lyric and epic, vibrant and drenched as no other writer save Walt Whitman, with the life and spirit of America itself."  

Both Wolfe and Whitman had a particular affinity for and faith in the common man of America. They glorified, to a certain extent, the American pioneer. In the works of both men can be found vignettes and snapshots giving vivid pictures of American life. Like Whitman, Wolfe wrote not only

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about "respectable people," the refined, and the healthy, but also the prostitutes, the felons, the diseased, and those on the outer fringes of society. The range of subject in each is remarkable. Whitman's use of the word "I" is paralleled in Wolfe's emotional self-involvement. Their styles are extravagantly rhetorical and exuberant in spirit. Wolfe's novels contain huge, sprawling Whitmanesque prose poems on the existence and substance of America, which many critics have called some of the finest writing ever produced by an American writer. Much of the America of both Wolfe and Whitman is treated on the level of the ideal as opposed to the actual, for the two men had a fantastic feeling and love for their country which they expressed in terms of unparalleled vigor.

Wolfe's feeling towards the physical aspects of America displays an unusual quality. In one way, this feeling seems almost sexual, erotic. It is of a nature such as a man might have for a woman, and Wolfe seems to want to know, explore, and possess every facet of the land in much the same way he would a woman. He takes pleasure in describing America much as he would the pleasures of the flesh. He speaks of the land in passionate human terms:

He saw the rocky sweetness of its soil and its green loveliness, and he knew its numb soft prescience, its entrail-stirring ecstasy of coming snow, its smell of harbors and its traffic of proud ships.
. . . he felt this wild and mournful sorrow, the slow, hot, secret pulsings of desire and breathed the heavy and mysterious fragrance of the lost South again, he felt suddenly and terribly, its wild strange pull, the fatal absoluteness of its world-lost resignation.5

This intensity helps the reader to join Wolfe in his love and longing.

Wolfe was never one to do anything by halves. He was a glutton of colossal proportions. If it had been possible, he would have eaten every variety of food, made love to every woman, and read every book in the world. Therefore, when he became obsessed with his country, this enthusiastic zeal naturally possessed him. His country became more than just a vague and indefinable "thing" which one naturally loves but thinks little about; it became a pulsating organism which Wolfe could love, hate, explore, and woo. The relationship between Wolfe and America became a wild love affair, one of the most unusual in all literature.

To explore the majesty of America, Thomas Wolfe used the train both as a symbol and as a literary device. J. B. Priestly notes that Wolfe was "always discovering something alien and sinister in the environment . . . always hurrying away from some evil he could not define.

towards some ultimate good he could never reach." The train was the vehicle of escape. Furthermore, it was particularly suited to Wolfe's purpose because, as Thomas Collins says, "The trains rushing through America are symbols of America itself—violent, splendid, powerful, blindly rushing through the night . . . ." In this respect, they also parallel the restlessness and impulsivity of Wolfe's own character.

The train had a particular meaning in Wolfe's day. It had a quality and excitement all its own, which in many ways was uniquely American. On a train platform, Eugene Gant notes, "all of these people, both strange and native, had been drawn here by a common experience, an event which has always been of first interest in the lives of all Americans. This event is the coming of the train." In the novels, the train also takes on a personal meaning. It becomes hope, and Wolfe uses it to escape from the prison of the small town: "It was his train and it had come to take him to the strange and secret heart of the

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8 Wolfe, Of Time and the River, p. 3.
great North." The train becomes the means to see and
describe America and its people:

"... so relative are the qualities of space and
time, and so complex and multiple their shifting
images, that in the brief passage of this journey
one may live a life, share instantly in 10,000,000
other ones, and see pass before his eyes the infinite
panorama of shifting images that make a nation's
history."  
The train trips gave him the sights and sounds and odors
that he needed to write of America.

The train served also to point up Wolfe's feeling
about time, particularly the impermanency and transitory
quality of American life. "He felt suddenly the devas-
tating impermanence of the nation. Only the earth
endured—the gigantic American earth, bearing upon its
awful breast a world of flimsy rickets." Wolfe's con-
cept of the "devastating impermanence" of America added
a note of urgency to his task, for to him time in the
background was inexorably eroding humanity. John Bishop
states that "Wolfe belonged to a world that is indeed
living from moment to moment," and because of this
immediacy, Wolfe felt compelled to write of the "now" of

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9 Ibid., p. 25.  
10 Ibid., p. 25.  
11 Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel (New York,
12 John Peale Bishop, "The Sorrows of Thomas Wolfe,"
Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction, edited by John W.
American life, to be concerned with what America is and not what America was.

Wolfe's most important objective in writing of the land and the people of this present was to discover the basic character and make-up of America and the American. He rummaged incessantly "the great mongrel and anonymous compost that makes up America." He tried to draw on what he saw for some illuminating experience and meaning. He gradually came to feel that the common man was more typical of America than the "aristocrats." In speaking of the more common sections of New York, he said:

Here was the American hope, the wild, nocturnal hope, the hope that has given life to all our poetry, all our prose, all our thoughts, and all our culture—the darkness where our hope grew, out of which the whole of what we are will be conceived. The place was simply boiling with the heart, the hope, the life of night-time America; and in this way—yes, even to its rusted cornices, its tenemented surfaces, its old red brick, it was American—"a damn sight more American," as he phrased it, than Park Avenue.

Here he felt was some basic part of the real America, a group of average Americans simply living from day to day. Ordinary, everyday human existence—that was the promise, the meaning of America, if not the meaning of life itself.

But this did not explain everything. As George webber mused:

13Wolfe, Of Time and the River, p. 593.
... he knew he was not an "intellectual." He was just an American who was looking hard at the life around him, and sorting carefully through all the life he had ever seen and known, and trying to extract some essential truth out of this welter of his whole experience. . . .

What is truth? No wonder jesting Pilate turned away. The truth, it has a thousand faces--show only one of them and the whole truth flies away! But how to show the whole? That's the question. . . .

But how to solve the whole? He would set down America as far as one man can experience and try to find some meaning in it.

In his pursuit of this meaning, Wolfe fashioned two images that stand out as most important—the small town as represented by the Altamont and Libya Hill of the South and the fascinating giant of the North, New York City. Altamont, for Eugene Gant, was a prison, completely surrounded by mountains. When the trains wound their way out of the valley, Eugene yearned incessantly to escape with them to the fabled land of the North. He loved the South, "the South that burned like Dark Helen in Eugene's blood," but to stay there would only bring stagnation.

His feeling for the South was not so much historic as it was of the core and desire of dark romanticism—that unlimited and inexplicable drunkenness, the magnetism of some men's blood that takes them into the heart of the heat, and . . . into the polar and emerald cold of the South. . . . Years later, when he could no longer think of the barren spiritual wilderness, the hostile and murderous

15Thomas Wolfe, You Can't Go Home Again (New York, 1940), p. 373.
intrenchment against all new life—when their cheap mythology, their legend of the charm of their manner, the aristocratic culture of their lives, the quaint sweetness of their drawl, made him writhe—when he could think of no return to their life and its swarming superstition without weariness and horror, so great was his fear of the legend, his fear of their antagonism, that he still pretended the most fanatic devotion to them, excusing his Northern residence on grounds of necessity rather than desire.16

Altamont, of the slatternly and withered, was no place for a young boy who dreamed of success and of seeing the world. Of all the people in America, to Wolfe, these denizens of Altamont and the South were most lost. They lived on antebellum glories of stately mansions, mint juleps, and slaves, and they resisted fiercely any change that intruded upon their lives. George Webber remarked that he would do anything "for dear old Dixie except to return permanently to her to live."17 As it was, he could never completely get the South out of his blood. He learned prejudices there in his youth, and he forever harbored a suspicion against both the Negro and the "Northern Jew."

Hammed in not only by the mountainous terrain but also by the anti-intellectual climate and anti-progressive tradition, Eugene felt trapped, felt that he had to escape.

16 Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel, p. 127.
again he heard, as he had heard a thousand times in childhood, far, faint, and broken by the wind, the wailing whistle of a distant train. It brought to him... the old immortal promises of flight and darkness, the golden promises of morning, new lands, and a shining city... Suddenly he knew that now there was one road... flight from this defeat and failure which his life had come to... And suddenly he knew that he would go.18

The young man did leave and he went to the big city of his dreams where he was first dazzled by it and then lost in it. The theme of the country boy going to the city in quest of fame and fortune has long been familiar in the literature of the world. Wolfe put extra life into this theme, gave it exceptional validity based on personal experience and fact.

The quality of his impressionistic writings on the city is exceptional. It took the wild and fervent personality of Wolfe to match the wild and fervent personality of the city. New York City rarely functions as mere setting in Wolfe’s novels. His works are dominated by urban imagery and symbolism and the city is his most powerful symbol. For the young Eugene Gant and George Webber, the city is the enchanted, fabled, and legendary rock of the North, which will endure forever. It is the "fabulous and incredible"19 physical embodiment of the American Dream

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18 Wolfe, Of Time and the River, p. 401.
19 Ibid., p. 416.
and the destination of the youth in quest of anything and everything. Blanche Gelfant comments on Wolfe's use of the city as a symbol:

Thus in creating a modern and personal version of youth's quest and frustrations, Wolfe used the city as his key symbol. . . . It was the correlative to both dream and reality, to hope and realization, and to every disturbed and turbulent emotion, every awakening idea, every obsession and affirmation that was part of Wolfe's inner life.20

New York was certainly the place for Thomas Wolfe. He matched its bigness, its feverish pace, its gluttony, and its spiritual isolation. Here his awareness of time took on a special meaning, for the city was the perfect symbol of, indeed monument to, man's relationship to the moment.

According to Gelfant, Wolfe used New York to point up his theme of the lost paradise and of the lost, spiritually isolated American:

The sociological characteristics of the city seemed a translation of man's spiritual condition in the modern world: anonymity, impersonality, instability, isolation—these were another way of stating Wolfe's theme of man's aloneness, homelessness, and incertitude.21

It was in this metropolis that he felt he would find an answer to "what is America," for here were the most Americans and here was every imaginable American characteristic.

21 Ibid., p. 98.
George Webber was not long in finding out that perhaps it is just here, in the iron-breasted city, that one comes closest to the enigma that haunts and curses the whole land. The city is the place where men are constantly seeking to find their door and where they are doomed to wandering forever. Of no place is this more true than of New York. Hideously ugly for the most part, one yet remembers it as a place of proud and passionate beauty; the place of everlasting hunger, it is also the place where men feel their lives will gloriously be fulfilled and their hunger fed.  

The city became Wolfe's, Gant's, and Webber's home. For them, "there is no place like it, no place with an atom of its glory, pride, and exultancy. It lays its hand upon a man's bowels; he grows drunk with ecstasy; he grows young and full of glory, he feels that he can never die." They had become completely captured by the "strange and legendary quality that the city had," and by the "fabulous reality of the city's life." In The Web and the Rock (the rock is New York City; the web, the web of life) George Webber ponders the great city:

"... the life of the city is so wonderful and so terrible. It is the most homeless home in all the world. It is the gigantic tenement of Here Comes Everybody. And that is what makes it so strange, so cruel, so tender, and so beautiful. One belongs to New York instantly, one belongs to it as much in five minutes as in five years, and he who owns the

23 Ibid., p. 262.
24 Wolfe, Of Time and the River, p. 416.
25 Ibid.
swarming rock is not he who died on Wednesday—for he, alas, is already forgotten—but he who came to town last night.

It is such a cruel, such a loving friend. It has given to many people fleeing from the little towns, from the bigotry and meanness of a constricted life, the bounty of its flashing and passionate life. . . . And it gives them its oblivion, too. . . . And at the same time it tells them that they will be nothing here, no more than a grain of dust; that they can come and sweat . . . and pour into the vortex of the city's life all the hope, the grief, the pain, the passion, and the ecstasy that youth can know . . . and leave not even a print of a heel upon these swarming pavements as a sign that a blazing meteor has come to naught.

And herein lies the magic and the mystery and the wonder of the immortal city. It offers all, and yet it offers nothing. It gives to every man a home, and it is the great No Home of the earth. . . .26

At the outset of his life in New York, Wolfe was completely dazzled and saw only what he wanted to see—the good side. Gradually, his view shifted and became more objective. He also saw the "thousand images of cruelty, violence, cowardice, and dishonor."27 He felt that the city was a maze of extremes of good and evil, and "the city was a living, breathing, struggling, hoping, fearing, hating, loving, and desiring universe of life."28

Wolfe was extremely acute in observing city dwellers. He pitied them in their "swarming along forever on the pavements," with their "million faces—the faces dark,

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dingy, driven, harried, and corrupt, the faces stamped with all the familiar markings of suspicion and mistrust, cunning, contriving, and a hard and stupid cynicism.\textsuperscript{29} He was completely fascinated by this monstrous creature which "pulses like a single living thing!"\textsuperscript{30} Though it was crass, violent, and ugly, it was distinctly American, and it pointed up what he felt was another characteristic of the American soul—endurance and energy. His protagonists seem to laugh almost uproariously at the grotesque spectacle of human beings milling around like ants. Ridiculous, Wolfe seems to say, but wonderful:

\ldots and the enfabled rock on which they swarmed swung eastward in the marches of the sun into eternity, and was masted like a ship with its terrific maw of the infinite, all-taking ocean. And exultancy and joy rose with a cry of triumph in his throat, because he found it wonderful.\textsuperscript{31}

Because of his experiences in New York, Wolfe put down many portraits of life on American streets, of the great mass of humanity rushing from nothing to nowhere. At times, he would note and describe the architecture of America and its cities. He even defined cities in terms of their peculiar odors, odors which take on a symbolic meaning:

\textsuperscript{29} Wolfe, Of Time and the River, p. 416.\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., p. 419.\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., p. 417.
Each great city Monk had known had had an odor for him. Boston had an odor in its crooked streets of fresh-ground coffee mixed with smoke. Chicago... had an unmistakable odor of burning pork. New York was so much harder to define, but he thought it was the odor of a dynamo, it was the odor of electricity, it was the odor of the cellar... a little stale and dank, touched with a subtle, fresh, half-rotten smell of harbor. Wolfe began to see in the architecture of American cities the character of America. Like their buildings and cities, Americans had no "planned coherence." Wolfe described them as chaotic and sometimes grimy and evil, with an occasional glow of richness and beauty and goodness.

Wolfe lived almost his entire adult life in New York City, with the exception of several trips in America and to Europe. With his craving for life, excitement, and fame, the city was the only place for him, the only place where he could constantly observe and be a part of the million forms of life. Fame came with the publication of Look Homeward, Angel in 1929; the boy had conquered the city. Ultimately, however, he rejected much that he had found there, and in doing so, he rejected, symbolically and realistically, many of the main values of American life. George Webber rejected the love he found with Esther Jack, the heroine of The web and the Rock and You.

Can't Go Home Again, for their love flourished in a society abounding in corrupt immorality. He rejected the "father" he found in his friend and publisher, Foxhall Edwards (Maxwell Perkins). He rejected and condemned the "culture" he found there, for he deemed it false and pretentious. Finally, Webber became disgusted with the fame and material rewards he had received when he observed how it corrupted his fellow author, Lloyd McHarg (Sinclair Lewis). Wolfe would never fully accept the values of a people and a land so lost to spiritual virtue.

As the result of his observations on urban life and on American life in general, Wolfe began to think of the nation as an interwoven pattern of the ideal and the actual. As George Snell says, "His success was only partial, but as far as he went, he is still the best modern representative of the long line of writers who dedicated themselves to an interpretation of life on the levels of the real and the ideal."\textsuperscript{33} He often identified with the ideal, for the ideal offered hope from the harsh ugliness of reality. In this respect, he is a romantic. The ideal for Wolfe is akin to Hemingway's "clean, well-lighted place," and in it Wolfe took refuge from the actual. Some of Wolfe's best writing catches the ambivalence, the

tension, the irony, the contrast of the ideal and the actual of America:

It is the place of autumnal moons hung low and orange at the frosty edges of the pines; it is the place of frost and silence. . . .

It is the place of the wild and exultant winter's morning and the wind, with the powdery snow, that has been howling all night long; it is the place of solitude and the branches . . . piled with snow. . . .

It is the place of violence and sudden death; of the fast shots in the night, the club of the Irish cop, and the smell of brains and blood upon the pavement . . . it is the lawless land that feeds on murder.

It is the place of the crack athletes and of the runners who limber up in March . . . it is the place where Spring comes, and the young birch trees have white and tender barks. . . .

It is the place where they like to win always, and boast about their victories; it is the place of quick money and sudden loss. . . .

It is the place that is savage and cruel, but it is also the innocent place . . . where they believe in love and victory and think that they can never die. . . .

He dwelt much on the incongruities of American life:

". . . the great web of America—with all its clamor, naked struggle, blind and brutal strife, with all its violence, ignorance, and cruelty, and with its terror, joy, and mystery, its undying hope, its everlasting life."35 America was an enigma: " . . . he noted its cruelty, savagery, horror, error, loss and waste of life, . . .

35 Ibid., p. 536.
its murderous criminality, and its hypocritic mask of virtue, its lies, its horrible falseness, and its murderous closure of a telling tongue. . . ." Could such a country survive? Could a country obsessed with fraud and materialism and violence endure? Yes, said Thomas Wolfe, because these are only the natural human failings of beings who are far from perfect indeed. These are only the natural human lapses into hedonism. They are the mere symptoms of that national disease called the American Dream.

What is the American Dream? Eugene Gant saw it as . . . the old hunger that haunts and hurts Americans—the hunger for a better life—an end of rawness, newness, sourness, distressful and exacerbated misery, the taking from . . . America our rich inheritance of splendor, ease, and abundance—good food, and sensual love . . . exultancy and joy forever. . . .

The mere existence of a country such as America made it inevitable that such thoughts would evolve to the level of a national philosophy. Eugene observed, "It is a fabulous country, the only fabulous country; it is the one place where miracles not only happen, but where they happen all the time." Never before had this been possible. The new advances of science coupled with the democracy of

36 Ibid., p. 660.  
37 Ibid., p. 894.  
38 Ibid., p. 155.
America now made the dream seem real and possible for everyone. Horatio Alger's creations had a special meaning. They were the embodiment of individual dreaming. Even George Webber, the hero of Wolfe's last two novels and the embodiment of Thomas Wolfe, was not immune to the dream's lure:

The shape, the frame, the pattern, the definition of this "good life" was still painfully obscure. . . . It had in it the promise of thick sirloin steaks, and golden, mealy, fried potatoes. It had in it, alas, the flesh of lavish women. . . . It had in it great rooms sealed to rich quietness, and the universe of mighty books . . . [and] alas, alas, such sinful dreams of fleshly comforts. . . . It had in it the magic of the Jason quest. . . . It had in it . . . the painted weather of a boy's huge dreams of glory, wealth, and triumph, and a fortunate and happy life among the greatest ones on earth.39

The American dream is not just a peculiarity of the American, but a peculiarity of the human race. It became an American trait because here was the land in which the dream finally became a distinct possibility for all.

However, in a conversation with the ghost of his dead brother, Ben, Eugene Gant prophesied the ultimate impossibility of the complete fulfillment of the American Dream:

"Fool," said Ben, "what do you want to find?"
"Myself, and an end to hunger, and the happy land," he answered. "For I believe in harbors at the end. O Ben, brother, and ghost, and stranger, you who could never speak, give me an answer now!"

Then, as he thought, Ben said: "There is no happy land. There is no end to hunger." 40

The dream implied a perfect country and the making of a perfect country required that humanity be perfect, and this, said Wolfe, was not to be. The people of America would not, however, give up the pursuit of this dream, for in defining an essential quality of Americans, Wolfe said:

[Americans] are filled . . . with an almost quenchless hope, an almost boundless optimism, an almost indestructible belief that something is bound to turn up, something is sure to happen. This is a peculiar quality of the American soul, and it contributes largely to the strange enigma of our life. . . . 41

Though the dream will probably never be completely fulfilled, people should not put an end to it. The dream nurtures hope and what is life without hope? The dream is not wrong, Wolfe says, it is only that people have corrupted it with evil acts. Man is equally composed of good and evil, and therefore his works are composed of good and evil.

This is man: for the most part a foul, wretched abominable creature, a packet of decay, a bundle of degenerating tissues . . . a hater of his kind, a cheater, a scorner, a thing that kills and murders in a mob or in the dark, loud and full of brag surrounded by his fellows, but without the courage of a rat alone. . . .

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Yes, this is man, and it is impossible to say the worst of him, for the record of this obscene

40 Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel, p. 520.
41 Wolfe, You Can't Go Home Again, p. 395.
existence, his baseness, lust, cruelty, and treachery, is illimitable. His life is also full of toil, tumult, and suffering. His days are mainly composed of a million idiot repetitions.

For there is one belief, one faith, that is man's glory, his triumph, his immortality—and that is his belief in life . . . he is great, he is glorious, he is beautiful, and his beauty is everlasting . . . he has endured all the hard and purposeless suffering, and still he wants to live.

Thus it is impossible to scorn this creature. For out of his strong belief in life, this puny man made love. At his best, he is love. . . .

In spite of man's evil, Wolfe still felt that, in the end, the goodness in man's soul would triumph, but he sometimes wondered whether man would endure to enjoy the triumph.

He resolved it thus:

For what this agony of concentration? For what this hell of effort? . . . Because brother, he is burning in the night. . . .

So, then, to every man his chance—to every man, regardless of his birth, his shining, golden opportunity—to every man the right to live, to work, to be himself, and to become whatever thing his manhood and his vision can combine to make him—this, seeker, is the promise of America.

He was torn between what he felt and saw. There was the great depression in which he could only ask again, "For what does man endure?" Then would come the unquenchable hope and the exuberance of life and spirit. At one point, he even led one of his characters to ask, "Can there be

42 Ibid., pp. 399-401.
43 Ibid., p. 462.
such a place as America . . . do such things really exist?" 44

Wolfe says, Yes, there is an America. But it is a lost place. The people wander around in giant machines and towering skyscrapers and have lost sight of themselves in the wonder of their accomplishments. Where there should be only peace, there is greed, lust, adultery, and murder. If mankind cannot find peace in America, they may never find it. Finally, as always, Wolfe returns to the most stable part of his existence. The undying hope that he felt to be the peculiar quality of the American soul was also present in Thomas Wolfe:

... amid the fumbling march of races to extinction, the giant rhythms of the earth remained. The seasons passed in their majestic processions, and germinal Spring returned forever on the land—new crops, new men, new harvests, and new gods.
And then the voyages, the search for the happy land. 45

Wolfe’s viewpoint had noticeably changed and matured over the years of his writing. The George Webber of You Can’t Go Home Again had fifteen years more experience with the many varied aspects of America than the Eugene Gant of Look Homeward, Angel, and these years were busy ones. Eugene had had little knowledge of the great bustling cities, glittering parties in New York City, Nazism,

45 Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel, p. 519.
exploitation, the slums of Brooklyn, foreign countries, the stock market crash and the depression, and many other phases of American life. On top of that, webber had made the acquaintance of hundreds of people and had read hundreds of books, which had added to his philosophical outlook. Still many of Wolfe's heroes' ideas had remained constant, for instance his feeling about the vast evil in man's soul. But whereas Eugene was only vaguely aware of this feeling and did not have a great deal to say about it, Webber, because of his long observance of man, harped on it incessantly, and he had more concrete examples to back his statements up. Eugene's love for America was only in the embryonic stage, while in Webber it was an obsession. All the years of wandering and searching had given Webber a more intimate knowledge of himself and the people of his country.
CHAPTER III

THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF AMERICA

In his later years, Thomas Wolfe was becoming concerned with the social and economic upheaval that was taking place in America. His interest was a natural repercussion of the stock market crash and the depression years which followed. Wolfe also had a ceaseless desire to "sing America." Edward Wagenknecht stated about Wolfe's later novels:

The most significant development is the growth of the hero's social consciousness, away from his earlier extreme individualism, through his contacts with the terrors of the Great Depression in America and with emergent fascism abroad.

If Wolfe was to be true to his own purposes, he could not ignore the happenings in America during the 1930's. In fact, they were probably impossible to ignore. However, Wolfe became aware that a change had taken place in his basic outlook, and he felt that, to a certain extent, the change had been decreed by the cataclysmic events during his lifetime. As George Webber said, "And during this period of his life he learned a great deal that he had


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never known before . . . he began to realize how the changes in himself were related to the larger changes in the world around him."² This change had led Wolfe to reject the material values that he had acquired, to denounce the culture and society of New York, and to take a more responsible attitude toward the problems of his time. Such a trend becomes apparent in his last novel, You Can't Go Home Again, when the bulk of his writing was concerned with cultural criticism, the depression years, and Nazi Germany.

In telling the stories of Eugene Gant and George Webber in the first three of his novels, Wolfe was telling the story of his own life up to the year of the publica-
tion of his first novel, the stock market crash, and the beginning of the anguish of the great depression. The focus of attention in these first three novels is the author's struggle for self-knowledge, for self-realiza-
tion, and for self-expression. They are passionate, intense narratives of a romantic ego seeking not only to understand but also to transcend a largely hostile environment. They are marked, as indeed most of Wolfe's writings are marked, by fiercely intense yet ambivalent emotions; Eugene Gant's alternate cries of exultation and

²Wolfe, You Can't Go Home Again, p. 304.
despair resound through the first two novels; George Webber's vacillating attraction and repulsion toward Esther Jack are wrought to maddening intensity in The Web and the Rock. These first three novels are largely the story of the author's emotional life.

In telling his own story, however, Wolfe also tells the story of his people and his land. Egocentric these novels may be, but they also render an environment. Hundreds of individuals appear in these pages. Some are presented only briefly and the reader may not even know their names, but other characters are minutely detailed. Wolfe portrays the people of Asheville and of Chapel Hill; of Boston and of Cambridge; of Brooklyn and of New York. He treats also Americans abroad in Germany, France, and England. In many instances environment and character are not only fully rendered but fully realized. Most notable are Asheville, the Altamont and Libya Hill of the novels, and New York City, which Wolfe presents in depth. The reader knows Asheville's topography as well as the lives of scores of its citizens; he knows it over a span of years. Very few authors have done full justice to New York City; but in his picture of the great American metropolis, Wolfe captured the essence, the vital, intense quality of the city, which in effect represents the essence of modern life in its economic setting.
In treating the environment and the people of the first three of his novels, Wolfe necessarily includes matters which are economic in nature. The effects of poverty appear, but poverty never becomes a theme. The skull-duggery of individual citizens is a frequent feature, and the materialism generally of American life appears in many forms; but specific questions of economic interest are always subordinate to the broader questions of human personality: the realization of personal potential, the mysterious and glorious dreams, the blind urges, the infinite possibilities, and the grotesque and twisted performances, all set to the swift passage of time, not to be halted or stayed, with ultimate extinction the end.

Observation of economic factors in American life appears in the early novels, but the question of economic justice and of the functioning of the capitalistic system is not a prominent feature. Wolfe's awareness is simply that of a man who is considering many aspects of his native land. Only in You Can't Go Home Again, with a hindsight gained from the inflation and high living of the twenties, the crash, and the resulting depression, Wolfe gives serious attention to economic problems of national scope.

In Look Homeward, Angel, Wolfe had made Eliza Gant's insatiable urge to acquire property a major cause for the misshapen lives of her family. She is greedy and grasping
to the extreme, and the boy, Eugene, was repelled by his mother's penurious ways. She never really enjoyed the pleasures of life that her income could have provided. Worst of all, her children suffered for her greed and were made to endure her skimping and conniving when her activities hurt their pride. To say the least, their childhood was far from normal, and besides the usual agonies of adolescence, they had to endure the indignities that Eliza's greed heaped upon them.

Her love of property could not be appeased. She saved string, old cans, and all manner of trash, and she poured every cent she had into more and more property. Her profits grew on paper, but Eugene had to wear shoes that were two sizes too small. She sacrificed the privacy of their home by turning it into a boarding house, much to the disgust of everyone in the family. She prodded Eugene into selling The Saturday Evening Post to people in the streets, even though this venture was humiliating, almost degrading, to the sensitive boy. Her greedy nature caused her to live in fear and hatred of the tax collectors. Once when Oliver Gant muttered that he hoped he never owned another bothersome piece of property, Eliza looked at him as if he had committed an unspeakable act of heresy. A rampant love of money and property dominated every other characteristic in the make-up of Eliza Gant
and caused her to become a grotesque figure, and though she remains first and foremost Eliza Gant, she also becomes the symbol of all American materialism.

Against Eliza's penury and acquisitiveness, Wolfe had placed Oliver's prodigality. "Tom's relationship with his father was a much happier one," states Elizabeth Nowell, and indeed it was. Oliver Gant is the prodigal provider of the Gants in Look Homeward, Angel, and the young boy Eugene worships the indulgence in material pleasures displayed by his father. He loves the abundance of food, the huge carcasses of meat and baskets of produce, that Oliver brings to the family table. He derives sensuous pleasure from the fires that Oliver builds in their home. Even though Oliver Wolfe's indulgence led to extremes, even to drunken debaucheries, Thomas Wolfe was always more attracted by his father's nature, having in himself the same tremendous gusto for life.

If Wolfe may be said to condemn materialism, the kind of materialism he saw in his mother, there is no suggestion of the ascetic in his attitude toward the material pleasures of life. Wolfe had nothing against the enjoyment of material pleasure. Quite the contrary; for much like Whitman, he often gloried in and celebrated this

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aspect of life. He was angered only by the perversion of the desire for material wealth that he saw in the structure of American life. People had allowed themselves to sacrifice their dignity, honesty, and morality, while cultivating their greed and viciousness, in their abandoned pursuit of material gain, a pursuit that had become, Wolfe felt, an insatiable, national greed.

In *Of Time and the River*, he records Eugene's sensations on being introduced into the life of the Hudson Valley aristocracy. It is a scene of both enchantment and growing disillusionment. At the outset, Eugene gives an account of dazzling physical pleasure and material plenty. He arrives on a moonlit night and is completely awed by the opulence of the landscape and the lush richness of the people who inhabit these suburban estates. For a while he is caught up in this perfected world of manners and taste, of culture and social prominence. He is totally seduced by the vast array of food in the kitchen, the plush furniture, and the enormous, leathered library. This is the life he would wish for every American.

However, his enchantment is soon dispelled and he discovers that this is not, nor can it ever be, his world.

It was a desolating loss, a hideous acknowledgment, a cruel discovery—to know that all the haunted glory of this enchanted world, which he thought he had discovered the night before, had been just what
it now seemed to him to be—moon-magic—and to know that it was gone from him forever.\textsuperscript{4}

He finds that this beauty and luxury have only masked pretense and ignorance. This world of the rich is far removed, even detached, from the world that Wolfe would know. His real America is not here.

Although he suggests a variety of reasons why Eugene's way must be separate from Joel's, Wolfe places in climactic position Gene's feeling that this way of life is based upon the exploitation of the poor. The Pierces have constructed their vast palace with money earned through human misery, child labor, and despair. He does not enlarge upon this feeling: it is merely stated, but it is given a key position in his description.

The development of Thomas Wolfe and of the protagonists in his novels may be read in terms of a lessening of self-consciousness and concern with self. In \textit{You Can't Go Home Again} Wolfe is still writing a personal record; he is still concerned with his own problems, but he is concerned also with the problems of a nation. George Webber's emotional life and the realization of his potential as a writer have importance in the novel; but Webber is important also as an observer, a recorder of Wolfe's impressions of a land and a people.

\textsuperscript{4}Wolfe, \textit{Of Time and the River}, p. 34.
On the train returning to Libya Hill for the funeral of his Aunt Haw, George encounters several of the more prominent of his fellow townsmen. Among them are three of the local dignitaries, Banker Jarvis Higgs, Mayor Baxter Kennedy, and Parson Flack, his old friend Nebraska Crane, and the decayed Judge Bland. Through his conversations and observations of these men, Webber gives his picture of modern American life.

The three townsmen, Higgs, Kennedy, and Flack, are the Babbitts of George's home town. The whole topic of their conversation is money and the fantastic profits being reaped in speculation. It becomes apparent to George that not only do these three control the politics and the money of Libya Hill but they use their influence to benefit one another by whatever means necessary. Parson Flack, so called because he never misses a prayer meeting, is ecstatic over the land boom and some of the deals that he has recently made. Jarvis Higgs, with the fast talk characteristic of such men, tries to talk Crane and George into investing. Their smooth talk and greed are so flagrant that they repulse George and leave him confused and bewildered at such behavior. He begins to see that, though speculation in Libya Hill is more prominent than in the nation as a whole, speculation is
becoming a major feature of American life. Perhaps, he reflects, it has been so for more than a decade.

As an example of what this greed can do to a man, Wolfe includes as a character Judge Rumford Bland. Judge Bland had once been the most promising young man in Libya Hill, but he instead chose a life of usury. He operated a loan shark business which preyed on the fear and helplessness of the Negro. He bled them for all they were worth and then took their furniture and belongings. Now almost blind because of syphilis and hopelessly corrupt, he is, to George, the epitome of pure evil. At the same time, however, he has more self-knowledge than the other townsman represented on the train. He knows himself and he knows his fellow townsman, and he does not hesitate to label them to their faces. The other three men are afraid of him, for his blind eyes see straight through them. Perhaps they see in Judge Bland a part of themselves that they have kept hidden.

George theorizes later on why the Judge has become what he is. He feels that once the Judge had been a warm and generous man who sought to bring joy and beauty to his town. But the town, with its cold values, would have none of it. Because of the evil nature of the town itself, Bland had no one to give of his hope and intelligence, and thus disillusioned he turned to his way of shameless
corruption. The Judge becomes, for Wolfe, a walking advertisement of the town's ills.

In direct contrast to the businessmen on the train and to Bland, Wolfe describes his childhood friend, Nebraska Crane. Crane had become a professional baseball player and had acquired fame and glory, but the grueling pace has worn him out and he is soon to be retired. He is not, however, defeated and is looking forward to settling down on a farm. Despite the fame that he has known, Crane still retains a simple and glorious outlook on life. "The others talked incessantly about land, but George saw that Nebraska Crane was the only one who still conceived of the land as a place on which to live, and of living on the land as a way of life." In the midst of the speculation boom in Libya Hill, George is heartened by what he sees in Nebraska Crane.

George is not at all heartened by what he sees in Libya Hill; in fact he is astounded at what he finds there. The town is losing its sanity at an appalling rate. What is even worse, the same scene is being re-enacted in a speculative craze in hundreds of towns all over the nation. Everyone is a real estate agent and "everyone was fair game for them—the lame, the halt, and the blind, Civil War veterans or their decrepit pensioned

5 Wolfe, You Can't Go Home Again, p. 91.
widows. ..." George can only feel a sense of horror and of shame as he watches this sordid spectacle.

A spirit of drunken waste and wild destructiveness was everywhere apparent. The fairest places in the town were being mutilated at untold cost. In the center of town there had been a beautiful green hill, opulent with rich lawns and lordly trees. 

... . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

It had been one of the pleasantest places in the town, but now it was gone. An army of men and shovels had advanced upon this beautiful green hill and had leveled it down to an ugly flat of clay, and had paved it with a desolate horror of white concrete, and had built stores and garages and office buildings and parking spaces. . . .

This destruction of beauty in the name of progress is an indication to George of the base nature of man. As Wolfe observed the American scene in the thirties, he knew that the madness gripping the country was terribly wrong.

To Wolfe, there was in work an inherent value—esthetic, moral, and economic. Although his friend Starwick saw only futility in man's efforts, Eugene Gant, as Wolfe created him, rejected such extreme cynicism. To Wolfe, whatever else was lost, a man had his work. There was a value in doing the work that lay before his hands, in doing what he was best fitted to do. The basis of the American economic system lay in work and in land—land used to produce food and to live on. Thus, the speculation in land and stock that was now so prominent in

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6Ibid., p. 117. 7Ibid., pp. 117-118.
American life was very wrong. It was gambling, and
gambling lacked the basic virtue to be found in creative
activity. Its primary motivation was greed, and it fed
upon the baser nature of man.

Wolfe put into words his feeling about America at
this period in her history. George Webber states:

America went off the track somewhere—back around
the time of the Civil War, or pretty soon afterwards.
Instead of going ahead and developing along the line
in which the country started out, it got shunted off
in another direction—and now we look around and see
we've gone places we didn't mean to go. Suddenly we
realize that America has turned into something ugly—
and vicious—and corroded at the heart of its power
with easy wealth and graft and special privilege. 8

This was the new and ugly America that George Webber saw.

It had been infested with new values dictated by the
advertising men, and George saw this as the "essential
tragedy of America," that of

. . . the magnificent unrivaled, unequaled, unbeat-
able, unshrinking, supercolossal, 99-and-44-one-
hundredths-per-cent-pure, schoolgirl-complexion,
covers-the-earth, I'd-walk-a-mile-for-it, four-out-
of-five-have-it, his-master's-voice, ask-the-man-
who-owns-one, blueplate-special home of advertising,
salesmanship, and special pleading in all its many
catchy and beguiling forms. 9

Instead of Shakespeare, America had Madison Avenue, and,
because of this, values were all misplaced. The American
Dream had become distorted. Millions of Americans were
led by chimeras of easy wealth. The old American virtues

8 Ibid., p. 361.  9 Ibid., p. 364.
of work, honesty, and integrity had been replaced with the "virtues" of the marketplace—cunning and greed. The victors in the marketplace regarded themselves as realists and those who followed the ancient virtues as fools, and when they heard the thunderous crash of the stock market, it was too late.

The stock market crash and the depression which followed was a period of anxiety in Wolfe's life, as well as in the lives of all other Americans. He wrote in You Can't Go Home Again, "George Webber was just as confused and fearful as everybody else." However, Wolfe viewed the crash in a rather unusual light. Of course, he saw it as catastrophe and as human suffering and misery, but he also saw it as hope and a new beginning for America. He likened it to the last life stage of the cicada: In its first stages, it appears as an ugly, crawling insect; then it sheds its outer skin and creeps out a beautiful newborn creature. For Wolfe, the crash was just such a stage in America's life cycle, the chance to shed the old husk of evils and pettiness, and to become a new organism. In stating the image, George Webber said:

America, in the fall of 1929, was like a cicada. It had come to an end and a beginning. On October 24th, in New York, in a marble-fronted building down in Wall Street, there was a sudden crash that was heard

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10 Ibid., p. 303.
throughout the land. The dead and outworn husk of the America that had been had cracked and split right down the back, and the living, changing, suffering thing within—the real America, the America that had always been, the America that was yet to be—began now slowly to emerge. It came forth into the light of day, stunned, cramped, crippled by the bonds of its imprisonment, and for a long time it remained in a state of suspended animation, full of latent vitality, waiting, waiting patiently, for the next stage of its metamorphosis.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 302-303.}

The months ahead, even the years, were callous and severe ones; but, Wolfe stated, they were a comeuppance for the crazed and ruinous life of the twenties, but the time was also to be a chance to begin anew.

The thirties were filled with acts of cruelty and violence, by-products of the depression. George Webber witnessed the "tragic spectacle" in Libya Hill.

In the days and weeks that followed the closing of the bank, Libya Hill presented a tragic spectacle the like of which had probably never before been seen in America. But it was a spectacle that was to be repeated over and over again, with local variations, in many another town and city within the next few years.

The ruin of Libya Hill was much more than the ruin of the bank and the breakdown of the economic and financial order. . . . [It] laid bare the deeper and more corrosive ruin within. And this deeper ruin—the essence of the catastrophe—was the ruin of the human conscience.

Here was a town of fifty thousand people who had so abdicated every principle of personal and communal rectitude to say nothing of common sense and decency, that when the blow fell they had no inner resources with which to meet it. The town almost literally blew its brains out. Forty people shot themselves within ten days, and others did so later . . . then
they turned like a pack of howling dogs to rend each other. . . .12

It was a sad exhibition, the sight of a powerful, rich nation brought to its knees, gasping for breath, felled by a single blow. This was the end result of the greedy capitalism that Wolfe hated, with its "crimes of wealth against the worker's life [by the] bloated surfeits of monopoly."13 Webber railed against the "pious hypocrisy of the press with its swift-forgotten prayers for our improvement, the editorial page moaning while the front page gloats."14 The newspapers, Wolfe felt, were capitalizing on the events, making money out of the suffering.

The crash and the depression were catastrophic but not fatal. America would recover and improve. In a general outlook on the depression, Webber ruminated thus:

Now they saw America—asaw its newness, its raw crudeness, and its strength—and turned their shuddering eyes away. "Give us back our well-worn husk," they said, "where we were so snug and comfortable." And then they tried word-magic. "Conditions are fundamentally sound," they said—by which they meant to reassure themselves that nothing now was really changed, that things were as they always had been, and as they always would be, forever and ever, amen.

But they were wrong. They did not know that you can't go home again. America had come to the end of something, and to the beginning of something else. But no one knew what that something else would be,

14 Ibid.
and out of the change and the uncertainty and the wrongness of the leaders grew fear and desperation, and before long hunger stalked the streets. Through it all there was only one certainty, though no one saw it yet. America was still America, and whatever new thing came of it would be American.  

The depression cut America open to the heart and the conscience, and the country had to find new beliefs and new hope to sustain existence. America could not hide in the past and in its legends of the way things used to be.  

There remained the problem of the future and the fact that America must find itself. To do this, stated Wolfe, America had, first of all, to accept the blame for her failure:

But it is not only at these outward forms that we must look to find the evidence of a nation's hurt. We must look as well at the heart of guilt that beats in each of us, for there the cause lies. We must look, and with our own eyes see, the central core of defeat and shame and failure which we have wrought in the lives of even the least of these, our brothers. And why must we look? Because we must probe to the bottom of our collective wound. As men, as Americans, we can no longer cringe away and lie. Are we not all warmed by the same sun, frozen by the same cold, shone on by the same lights of time and terror here in America? Yes, and if we do not look and see it, we shall be all damned together.  

The depression was only a huge, gaping sore that signaled the presence of an inner rottenness. The cure, Wolfe says, is to turn inward, to the spiritual. Man is responsible to himself and for his fellow man. America

15 Ibid., p. 303.  
16 Ibid., p. 308.
must rectify the malignancies of the general human community or perish. Hope lies in the future, Wolfe states, and the future must be faced with the knowledge gained from experience.

Wolfe offered no more specific solution to the problem of the need for an economic overhaul of the American way. In his expressions of hope and optimism, one can perhaps feel an underlying suggestion that Wolfe saw great promise in the reforms of the New Deal. Political measures, however, would not solve for Wolfe the basic problem, the seed of evil in man's soul. Wolfe probably did not know how or where to begin an economic reform. Rather, he felt that his role was to point up the wrongs. He would leave the reform to others. In fact, Wolfe's awareness of economic and sociological factors in American life was in these novels purely amateurish and rather surprisingly lacking. For instance, he has almost nothing to say about factory workers, day laborers, who surrounded him for several years of his life in the cities of the North. There is no mention of the tenant farmers of the South or the migrant workers. In fact, Wolfe tended to regard mainly those economic conditions which impinged directly upon him, and his rather brief treatment of the great depression reflects his own personal well-being.
during this period, for this was the time of his great success.

Wolfe's lack of interest in specific economic and sociological matters probably made his work have a wider appeal, a less topical interest than that of the many propagandists who wrote during the depression. Perhaps he was read by many as an escape from some of the sordid economical considerations of the time.

Wolfe had a keen appreciation of the most obvious results of industrial expansion—great cities; magnificent bridges, harbors, and boats; railroads; belching factories; skyscrapers. But he shows little understanding of or interest in the economic processes and practices which brought about these results. He is more likely to view the city lyrically from 500 miles up in the air with its "gemmy lights" than to make a detailed scientific analysis of its roots and causes, its human problems and its failures.
CHAPTER IV

THE CULTURAL LIFE OF AMERICA

In reference to Wolfe's writings on culture, the term "culture" is somewhat ambiguous. His examination of the cultural life of America is, generally, an examination of the refinement or nonrefinement of thought, manners, and taste of the people and, specifically, the artistic concepts and artistic realizations of America during the period of the twenties and the thirties. Wolfe concerns himself with how the people of America make use of the refinements of life that are presumably the results of training and education. In another sense, Wolfe examines the culture of America as the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another. In the latter sense, he points out different aspects of American culture as being good or bad. In the area of the fine arts, he gives attention to the artistic movements of the time, the mores of the people, and the direction that art is taking in the United States. Wolfe's approach to the question is negative; that is, he sees mainly examples of what culture should not be rather than what it should be. There are, however,
several lengthy perorations, outlining Wolfe's picture of the ideal state of culture.

From Wolfe's viewpoint, the "lost land" of America revealed itself most in its cultural life. Wolfe, in moments of pessimism, saw a land of an ignorant, simple, unknowing middle class and a decadent, deteriorating aristocracy, "a damned race of famished half-men." He seemed emotionally and personally involved in the cultural inadequacies of American life, as a citizen of both a small town and a large city, as an artist, and sometimes as a member of a fashionable New York circle. He penetrated both the average and the good of American culture and had numerous thoughts and opinions on each variety.

Wolfe's early idea of the meaning of culture was apparently that it had to do with the direct acquisition and assimilation of knowledge. His own passion for learning has been noted, and he felt that all Americans should have the same feeling, that they should try to be aware of the cultural heritage of western man and apply their knowledge to building a true and esteemed American culture. Only through knowledge, Wolfe felt, could the truth be gained. He felt that there was not enough real learning in American life, not enough of that knowledge that would nurture the spiritual side of man. This lack

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existed especially in the South and in the small town of his boyhood, which he felt to be somewhat representative of all small towns.

The cultural backwardness and sterility of Altamont and Libya Hill were partially responsible for Eugene Gant's and George Webber's fleeing to the North. A few of the people were pitiable in their efforts to produce some semblance of a cultural life, but most cared not at all. Some hung a few paltry and wretched religious prints in their parlors in a pathetic attempt to bring beauty into their homes. Very, very few of the people were acquainted with great works of literature. The theater was nonexistent. The South had very few authors, and it forced those it had to flee to the North to find recognition. H. L. Mencken, in 1924, noted this sharp sectionalism in American letters and the reason for it:

The Civil War, as everyone knows, bankrupted the South and made life a harsh and bitter struggle for its people. In consequence, the South became as sterile artistically, after Lee's surrender, as Mexico or Portugal, and even today it lags far behind in music, painting and architecture. But the war, though it went on for four years, strained the resources of the North very little, either in men or in money, and so its conclusion found the Northerners very rich and cocky, and full of a yearning to astonish the world, and that yearning, in a few decades, set up a new and extremely vigorous American literature, created an American architecture of a revolutionary character, and even
laid the first courses of American schools of music and painting.\textsuperscript{2}

Wolfe's feelings toward the culturally deprived South and the culturally affluent North were very different, but there was much that he detested about both. Eugene Gant's father, Oliver Gant, is Wolfe's best symbol of Southern culture. He was capable of a great deal, as witness his constant recitations of many of the great speeches of Shakespeare, but he preferred to spend his life in drunken debaucheries at the local brothel. He once had the ambition to become a sculptor, but all that he had to show was a beautiful marble statue of an angel that he refused to sell. Finally, after years of harboring his dream but never doing anything about it, he sold the statue to a "madame" to decorate the grave of a prostitute. His son, Eugene, vowed that he would never sell his angel.

Another important person in Eugene's life was Mrs. J. M. Roberts, who became Margaret Leonard in \textit{Look Homeward, Angel}. She recognized Eugene's particular genius at an early age, and though she had to fight Eliza Gant for the expensive tuition, she entered him in their private school and oversaw his existence for the next few years. It was she who introduced Eugene to the world of

literature and nurtured his love of books. In all of Wolfe's writings on the South and his home town, she is the only one who is truly cultured and who truly loved the fine arts, and there is no doubt that she had a profound influence on his life.

Wolfe's treatment of the South, as regards its cultural life, is not an extended one. Perhaps his feeling about this aspect of the South may best be summed up in the subtitle to *Look Homeward, Angel*, which he calls "A Story of the Buried Life." The most obvious interpretation indicates how Wolfe felt about the South. Here, Eugene felt buried. He encountered very little in the area of fine arts or philosophy; he heard no classical music and saw no plays. The people were all buried, isolated from the vibrant artistic consciousness of the great world. After later becoming a resident of the North, Wolfe felt that he could never go back to the South.

A great many, it must be owned, do return, but most of those are the sorrier and more incompetent members of the tribe, the failures, the defeated ones—the writers who cannot write, the actors who cannot act, the painters who cannot paint, the men and women of all sorts . . . who, although not wholly lacking in talent, lack it in sufficient degree to meet the greater conflict of a wider life . . . They hang on for a while, are buffeted, stunned, bewildered, frightened, ultimately overwhelmed . . .

If you cannot "make it" in the North, Wolfe implied, you will never succeed. For him, returning to the South symbolized complete and utter failure. Those who did return home became "the disillusioned soda-jerker, the defeated filing clerks, department store workers, business, bank, and brokerage employees" who rationalized their failure by throwing barbs at the big city. In this age of urbanization Wolfe's attitude still has a certain validity, but there is an unattractive, almost one-sided harshness about it out of keeping with his general human sympathies.

After leaving the South, Eugene, in Of Time and the River, encountered many people who had an influence on his life and his attitude toward culture in America. One of the first of these was Francis Starwick, whom he met at Harvard. Eugene was enormously attracted to this young aesthete, because he possessed all the qualities that Eugene desired for himself. Starwick was brilliant and polished and had a vast knowledge of the cultural world. He, too, was possessed with a desire to "sing America." Starwick was one of the first of Eugene's friends to introduce him to the wonderful world of art and sophistication that he so yearned for.

4Ibid.
The climactic point of the episodes dealing with Starwick came when Eugene accidentally met him in Paris, and the two, accompanied by two Boston female sophisticators, began a round of sightseeing and revelry. Eugene felt out of place and much the country bumpkin compared to Starwick, and he was also beginning to despise and pity Starwick. His attitude changed for two reasons. The first was that Eugene became jealous of Starwick's success with the women, for both girls were attracted to Starwick rather than to Eugene. Also Eugene saw qualities in Starwick that he had come to hate. Much of Starwick's polished manner had degenerated for Eugene into merely an affected way of talking and acting. Starwick had given up his ambitions and was now content with idleness and roaming and sneering at the country he once loved. He had become a cynic, and Eugene could no longer agree with his views. Starwick exhorted Eugene as follows:

Do you think that you will really gain in wisdom if you read a million books? Do you think you will find out more about life if you know a million people rather than yourself? Do you think you will get more pleasure from a thousand women than from two or three—see more if you go to a hundred countries instead of six? And finally, do you think you'll get more happiness from life by "getting your work done" than by doing nothing? My God, Eugene—his voice was weary with the resigned fatality of despair that had now corrupted him—you still feel that it is important that you "do your work," as you call it, but what will it matter if you do or don't? You want to lead the artist's life, to do the artist's work,
to create out of the artist's materials—what will it matter in the end if you do this, or nothing?5

This sentiment was completely opposite to Eugene's own romantic lust for experience and knowledge, and to his devotion to his own creative work. Eugene became disillusioned with Starwick, and would have nothing to do with him. Starwick's cynicism was completely alien to Eugene's own faith in culture and knowledge. He seemed to agree at first that society had done an injustice to Starwick, but he came to change this opinion and to realize that Starwick's failure was not necessarily the failure of society. He separated himself from his friends in Europe and returned to New York, determined not to let himself fall into the same way of thinking.

Thomas Wolfe felt that New York City was the pinnacle of all cultural activity in the world. In Of Time and the River, Eugene Gant pondered the cultural make-up of the city:

In New York the opportunities for learning and acquiring a culture that shall not come out of the ruins, but belong to life, are probably greater than anywhere else in the world.

This is because America is young and rich and comparatively unencumbered by bad things. Tradition, which saves what is good and great in Europe, also saves what is poor, so that one wades through miles of junk to come to a great thing.

In New York books are plentiful and easy to get. The music and the theatre are the best in the world.

5Wolfe, Of Time and the River, p. 709.
The great trouble with New York is that one feels uncomfortable while enjoying these things—in the daytime a man should be making money.\textsuperscript{6}

New York was the city of the greatest opportunity in the world, and Eugene had dreamed of it all his life. The young Eugene, who had thirsted for culture, now found that he was surrounded by it. He was tremendously excited by the abundance of culture in New York, but he was also saddened by the fact that the Americans, because of their thirst for money, could not completely enjoy their wealth of culture. Eugene saw in this great city an opportunity for America to begin to build a rich, wonderful civilization.

Wolfe's third novel, \textit{The Web and the Rock}, is concerned mainly with George Webber's search for "the good life." The main episode relates Webber's sporadic and tempestuous love affair with Esther Jack, the Aline Bernstine of Wolfe's actual life. Esther is a well-known stage designer and a member of fashionable New York society. Through Esther, Webber, the provincial, penetrated the cultural elite of New York—the celebrities, the theater, and the parties. There was much about this life that was good:

\begin{quote}
It was a world of luxury, comfort, and easy money; of success, fame, and excitement; of theatres, books, 
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., p. 669.
artists, writers; of delicate food and wine, good restaurants, of warm, generous, and urbane living; and it all seemed wonderful, happy, and inspired to him now.7

The "now" in this passage must be emphasized, for Webber became disgusted and disillusioned with this circle and spent much invective against the debased nobility of the merchant city. As Wolfe had Eugene Gant say, "their outer cleanliness became the token of an inner corruption."8

A rich man's library became the symbol of Wolfe's feelings about the people who inhabited this world:

Each in his little niche of shelf securely stored—all of the genius, richness, and whole compacted treasure of a poet's life within a foot of space, within the limits of six small dense richly-garnished volumes—all of the great poets of the earth were there, unread, unopened, and forgotten, and were somehow, terribly, the mute small symbols of a rich man's power, of the power of wealth to own everything, to take everything, to triumph over everything—even over the power and genius of the mightiest poet—to keep him there upon his little foot of shelf, unopened and forgotten, but possessed.9

To Wolfe, this was a loathsome thing. The rich did not really care whether or not they actually read the books. Being characteristically American, they felt possession to be the important thing, and this gave Wolfe a feeling of immense sadness. Here was another sign of the lost

8 Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel, p. 491.
9 Wolfe, Of Time and the River, p. 589.
land. He saw more, during the roaring twenties, that intensified this feeling:

It was a time when smart people were going around saying that ragtime or jazz music were the real American rhythms, and likening them to Beethoven and Wagner; that the comic strip was a true expression of American art; that Charlie Chaplin was really a great tragedian and ought to play Hamlet; that advertising was the only "real" American literature.10

A lost and wandering people were attempting to assert their true culture, but instead they gave forth only false and ridiculous impressions. Some tried to find themselves in foreign culture, but they could not possess it. It was not theirs, and so they, too, failed. Now, in the twenties, suddenly released from years of taboos of a stale and genteel tradition, Americans were trying to invent a culture of their own with the meager materials at hand. They did not have the patience to build one, so they simply took all the meretricious fads and movements that had come with the new moral and social freedom of the jazz age.

Wolfe analyzed the people of this world thoroughly and was strongly repelled by much of what he saw. There were, first, the "brilliant, successful men and beautiful women [who] were among the best and highest that the city

had to offer,"¹¹ but there were also the homosexuals and sexually promiscuous who occupied places of somewhat dubious nature in successful circles. As George Webber wondered:

Was it something in the spirit of the times that had let the homosexual usurp the place and privilege of a hunchbacked jester of an old king's court, his deformity become a thing of open jest and ribaldry? However it had come about, the thing itself was indubitable. The mincing airs and graces of such a fellow... were the exact counterparts of the malicious quips of ancient clowns.¹²

The revulsion was made more acute by the sexually promiscuous Park avenue ladies with their "million-dollar soul yearnings and their fancy fornications."¹³ At parties, their obvious offering of their bodies was, as Wolfe stated, "so open, so naked, so shameless that it almost made him sick."¹⁴ Wolfe was certainly no celibate and his morals were not of Puritan strictness, but he could not condone such a constant display of depravity. There was no meaning, no hint of love or even a lesser emotion in these relations. "At these repeated signs of decadence in a society which had once been the object of

¹¹Wolfe, You Can't Go Home Again, p. 246.
¹²Ibid., p. 247.
¹⁴Wolfe, You Can't Go Home Again, p. 247.
his envy and his highest ambition, Webber's face had begun to take on a look of scorn.\textsuperscript{15}

George Webber, with his typical Wolfean emotion, railed at Esther Jack and her . . . whole damned crowd of million-dollar Jew and Gentile aesthetes . . . . With your twaddle about "Have you seen this?" and "Have you read that?"--with your bilge about books and plays and pictures, moaning about art and beauty and how it is the thing you all are living for, when none of you care a good God-damn for anything but keeping in the swim! Ah, you make me sick. . . . \textsuperscript{16}

And, in truth, they were a pitiful sight. What was wrong with them? Webber believed that it was mainly boredom, boredom with everything.

The highest intelligences of the time--the very subtlest of the chosen few--were bored by many things. They tilled the waste land, and erosion had grown fashionable. They were bored with love, and they were bored with hate. They were bored with men who worked, and with men who loafed. They were bored with people who created something, and with people who created nothing. They were bored with marriage, and with single blessedness. They were bored with chastity, and they were bored with adultery. They were bored with going abroad, and they were bored with staying at home. They were bored with the great poets of the world, whose great poems they had never read. They were bored with . . . the children who starved, and with the injustice, cruelty, and oppression. . . . They were bored with living, they were bored with dying . . . . \textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., pp. 247-248.


\textsuperscript{17}Wolfe, You Can't Go Home Again, p. 217.
They had made enough money and did not have the courage or the will to do anything else. They were a dead race, oblivious of both the happiness and the cruel suffering of life around them. Wolfe states, however, that in October of 1929 they got their comeuppance.

Just how far decadence could go was symbolized and satirized in one of Wolfe's characters, the sad, probably lonely, promiscuous Amy Carleton. Webber was amazed at how one moment she was the picture of innocence but within a few days

... one might come upon her again in the corruptest gatherings of Paris, drugged fathoms deep in opium, foul-bodied and filth bespattered, cloying in the embraces of a gutter rat, so deeply rooted in the cesspool that it seemed she must have been bred on sewage and had never known any other life.18

Wolfe ridiculed the romantic stories which represented her downward plunge as beginning in a moment of daring when, as a debutante, she lighted a cigarette in full view of the leading matrons of the town. Now, she was kept around by the society leaders as a conversation piece and as an object of pity, the ladies and gentlemen carefully detailing every new sexual escapade and speculating on her next move. To them, she was a victim of tragic circumstances. To Webber, she was a ridiculous and pathetic creature, who had fashioned her own destiny. Wolfe said of her: "She

18 Ibid., p. 237.
had tried everything in life—except living. And she could never try that now because she had so long ago, and so irrevocably, lost the way. So there was nothing left for her to do but die." For Webber, she was the symbol of another tragic, lost American and a symbol of human frailty. That an Amy Carleton could exist was another sign that something was wrong in American society, at the heart of its glory.

Wolfe deplored the casual and false meting out of fame observable in New York society. George Webber noted that the circle had deposited, for the moment, fame on the shoulders of Rosalind Bailey.

They had formed themselves into a clique, which at that moment was supreme, and at the head of this clique, crown jewel of its reverence, object of its idolatry, was the poetess, Rosalind Bailey.

She was at once the idol and the victim of the time that had produced her . . . and she did not know how fast and fleeting was her fame.

. . . . It was perhaps a symbol of the time that they needed some such image as this winged fame to preserve for them the illusion of eternity. At a time when all seemed to come, to go, to vanish, and to be forgotten with tragic haste—when today's enthusiasm would tomorrow be as dead and stale as last week's news—they felt the need of some more certain value that was sacred and that would endure.20

The character Rosalind Bailey was based on Elinor Wylie, a poetess and novelist of the twenties. Wolfe considered

19 Ibid., p. 239.
Wylie a trifling talent, and he deplored the heaping on her of far too extravagant praise. Rosalind Bailey, Webber felt, gave the circle the illusion of art and grandeur; she would pass into obscurity. She would also add to Webber's growing disillusionment with much of New York culture.

The culmination of this disillusionment came in an episode in You Can't Go Home Again entitled "Piggy Logan's Circus," and here Wolfe achieves the heights of satiric excellence in picturing the decadence and absurdity in a so-called cultural atmosphere. It is an episode of clutching horror and morbid fascination. The story is told by George Webber, and the setting is another hollow gathering of the faithless, truthless elite at the home of Esther Jack. To this collusive congregation comes Piggy Logan and his celebrated circus of wire dolls. Wolfe based this damming and devastating picture on Alexander Calder, who later became famous for his scultured mobiles.

Logan enters the room, grunting under his burden, and deposits a huge bundle of wire animals and circus performers. He fastens big circus posters around the room and sets up a complete three-ring circus, with an array

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21 Walser, p. 100.
of trapezes, flying swings, elephants, horses, sword-swallowers, clowns, and ringmaster. Webber can hardly believe the spectacle that he is witnessing. Here are a group of supposedly astute intellectuals watching, with a kind of misguided reverence, the antics of a pitiful giggling moron. Furthermore, they christen this sacrilege with the title, "art."

The travesty continues. Piggy Logan dons a costume and begins trotting his little menagerie of animals around the three rings. There are many magnificent acts, the climax of which is a frightful sword-swallowing act. To simulate this production, he uses a wire and rag doll and a hairpin, methodically working the hairpin down the doll's throat, giggling foolishly all the while. Webber comments upon the performance:

It was a curious spectacle and would have furnished interesting material for the speculations of a thoughtful historian of life and customs in this golden age. It was astounding to see so many intelligent men and women—people who had had every high and rare advantage of travel, reading, music, and aesthetic cultivation, and who were usually so impatient of the dull, the boring, and the trivial—patiently assembled here to give their respectful attention to Mr. Piggy Logan's exhibition.22

As a lawyer, not at all dazzled like everyone else, says at the conclusion of the performance, "It's like some puny

22 Wolfe, You Can't Go Home Again, p. 265.
form of decadence." But to Wolfe, it was not puny at all. It was monstrous.

After Piggy Logan had finished his nauseating performance, there came an "unscheduled climax" to the party. The apartment house in which Esther lived caught fire and they were forced to evacuate. It was not a bad fire, but the lives of two elevator boys were lost. Esther Jack and her sophisticated companions showed very little concern. Webber was not extremely shocked at their blasé attitude, for after Piggy Logan, nothing could shock him. However, it was enough. His love affair with Mrs. Jack and with this high form of culture was over.

For he had learned tonight that love was not enough. There had to be a higher devotion than all the devotion of this fond imprisonment. There had to be a larger world than this glittering fragment of a world with all its wealth and privilege. Throughout his whole youth and early manhood, this very world of beauty, ease, and luxury, of power, glory, and security, had seemed the ultimate end of human ambition, the furthest limit to which the aspirations of any man could reach. But tonight, in a hundred separate moments of intense reality, it had revealed to him its very core. He had seen it naked, with its guards down. He had sensed how the hollow pyramid of a false social structure had been erected and sustained upon a base of common mankind's blood and sweat and agony. So now he knew that if he was ever to succeed in writing the books he felt were in him, he must turn about and lift his face up to some nobler height.  

\[23\] Ibid., p. 267.
\[24\] Ibid., p. 298.
He could stand it no longer. He was betraying himself, his promise, his hope, and his vision of America.

Yes, that was it! . . . That was the very core of it! Could he as a novelist, as an artist, belong to this high world of privilege without taking upon himself the stultifying burden of that privilege? Could he write truthfully of life as he saw it, could he say the things he must, and at the same time belong to this world of which he would have to write? Were the two things possible? Was not this world of fashion and of privilege the deadliest enemy of art and truth? Could he belong to the one without forsaking the other? Would not the very privilege that he might gain from these, the great ones of the city, come between him and the truth, shading it, tempering it, and in the end betraying it?25

He knew it would. The two were incompatible. A rotten cultural state was the true enemy of the artist. These people could not bear anyone who would dare to write the truth about them. He could not sell out to them, for "if that happened to him, how then, could he sing America?"26

He had seen what fame, success, money, and flattery had done to Lloyd McHarg, and he did not want that to happen to him. McHarg and Wolfe's society friends had been stern lessons to the young man in search of a dream. Their individual American Dreams of wealth and luxury had proved to be false images that tarnished very quickly and had perverted them into something horrible.

Webber, musing over the state of the people he had seen, came to this conclusion:

25Ibid., p. 249.  
26Ibid., p. 250.
Their speech was casual, quick, and witty. But they did not say the things they knew. And they knew everything. They had seen everything. They had accepted everything. And they received every new intelligence now with a cynical and amused look in their untelling eyes. Nothing shocked them any more. It was the way things were. It was what they had come to expect of life.

Ah, there he had it! That was part of the answer. It was not so much what they did, for in this there was no appreciable difference between themselves and him. It was their attitude of acceptance, the things they thought and felt about what they did, their complaisance about themselves and about their life, their loss of faith in anything better.27

George Webber could not accept such an attitude. He could not rid himself of the hope that was in him, the "typical American" that was the essential Thomas Wolfe. He could never lose his faith in a new America.

Thomas Wolfe's presentation of the cultural life of America is, on the whole, disheartening. The culture of the South and of the small town is sterile. The culture of the North is, in many ways, equally so. The culture of America reveals its inhabitants to be either simple-minded peasants or depraved aesthetes. Throughout history, artists have been the mainstays of great civilizations, treated with respect and esteem. Such is not true in America, states Wolfe. Many of America's greatest men have been neglected, for example Poe and Dreiser, or they have been relegated to the position of court jester.

27 Ibid., p. 248.
America cannot point back with great pride to a Homer, Chaucer, or Shakespeare. But it is a comparatively new nation. Give America time, Wolfe seems to say. It has the promise and the physical means and will some day establish a great art.

American culture in general, as Wolfe sees it, is never in the past, in tradition, but in the future just ahead, in some Utopia that will soon be reached. In this respect, it has much in common with the American Dream.

In Wolfe's time, there was much American culture that was muddled because of the adoption of foreign philosophies and viewpoints. This showed itself in the Bohemianism, Freudianism, radicalism, and orientalism. Wolfe deplored this wandering from the nation's own essence and origin. This was a search for the wrong things, states Wolfe, and instead America should be trying to establish an American tradition, searching for the good things in America. Wolfe felt that there were many things about America that could and should be told, for instance folk tales and legends, and the Negro's folklore and songs. Wolfe stated that:

Instead of whining, that we have no traditions, or that we must learn by keeping constantly in touch with European models, or by keeping away from them,
we should get busy telling some of the stories about America that have never been told.  

If America was to be found, to establish a tradition to help it become an orderly and firmly established nation, it must have the help of its artists. Instead of running off to Europe, as did the expatriates of the twenties, the artists must stay and build from what is at hand.

Wolfe considered culture of the greatest importance in the make-up of the American individual and the nation as a whole. Twenty-five years have passed since Wolfe made these judgments and matters have not substantially changed. Piggy Logan is still here, in the form of "pop art," art formed from garbage dump refuse, and pornography peddling authors of such works as *Peyton Place* or *The Carpetbaggers*. As Wolfe pointed out, Americans should have the taste not to allow such things as these to exist. At the same time, the world now looks to America as the leader in art and literature, and America has produced much great art. Wolfe's indictment of America as a paradox of good art and worthless junk is still true.

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CHAPTER V

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT IN AMERICA

Until the last few years of his life, Thomas Wolfe was not greatly concerned with the political life of America. He was too busy with other things: success as a writer, love affairs, traveling, and teaching. However, as he grew older and began examining the economic system of the United States, he naturally became more aware of politics and the theories and mechanics of government. A trip to Nazi Germany at the beginnings of the rise of Hitler also sharpened his insight into political reality to such an extent that the Eugene Gant of *Look Homeward, Angel* and the George Webber of *You Can't Go Home Again* are two completely different persons in their interest in this area of human activity.

As a boy growing up in Altamont, Eugene took his view of politics from his parents and their comments on the political world. His father, Oliver, was constantly denouncing Democrats and "the hated taxes."¹ His mother, Eliza, greedy as she was, especially loathed giving up

¹Wolfe, *Look Homeward, Angel*, p. 16.
part of her income to the government. To the Gants good
government meant prosperity and low taxes. Such a concep-
tion was, and still is, common in the United States; in
fact, this rather limited view might be called average.
Eugene's only experience with an election or with politics
of any sort in his early years involved a fierce battle
between the "wets" and the "drys" in Altamont, in which
his father, as an ardent "wet," was deeply concerned.

Eugene studied government as a required course in his
early college years. He found it dull, as some English
majors do, but he also felt that he had discovered a very
curious fact about American politics.

At last, thought Eugene, I am getting an educa-
tion. This must be good writing, because it seems so
very dull. When it hurts, the dentist says, it does
you good. Democracy must be real, because it is so
very earnest. It must be a certainty, because it is
so elegantly embalmed in this marble mausoleum of
language. Essays for College Men—Woodrow Wilson,
Lord Bryce and Dean Briggs.

But there was no word here of the loud raucous
voice of America, political conventions and the Big
Brass Band, Tweed, Tammany, the Big Stick, lynching
bees and black barbecue parties, the Boston Irish,
and the damnable machinations of the Pope as exposed
by the Babylon Hollow Trumpet (Dem.), the rape of the
Belgian virgins, rum, oil, Wall Street and Mexico.\(^2\)

Here Wolfe indicates a disenchantment with certain aspects
of American democracy, particularly the popular conception
of it as a panacea. He seems to be aware of the

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 330.
discrepancies between idealistic theory and practical applications. Honored old documents and high-sounding (if somewhat stuffy) textbooks concealed the evil workings of the party machines, the power of big business in government, and the series of corrupt scandals that shook the Harding administration. The campaign promises of the party platform and the carrying out of those promises were two very different things; America's blithe acceptance of the disparity was to Wolfe a part of the hypocrisy of life in the twenties.

As Eugene Gant grew older, he began to see that politics, as practiced by those governing and those governed, was an institution dear to the hearts of American men almost like a sport. Politics was discussed, debated, and fought over with great fervor. It was just like baseball, with slightly more serious consequences. Eugene, on one of his train trips, made this observation about American politics:

It was at just that season of the year when two events which are dear to the speculations of the American had absorbed the public interest. These events were baseball and politics, and at that moment both were thrillingly imminent. The annual baseball contest for "the championship of the world" was to begin within another day or two, and the national campaign for the election of the American president, which would be held in another month, was moving daily to its furious apogee of speeches, accusations, dire predictions, and impassioned promises. Both events gave the average American a thrill of pleasurable anticipation: his approach to both was
essentially the same. It was the desire of a man to see a good show, to "take sides" vigorously in an exciting contest—to be amused, involved as an interested spectator is involved, but not to be too deeply troubled or concerned by the result.5

The American political scene, thought Eugene, was only a vast arena in which men vie for office, power, and reputation as athletes vie for points on a scoreboard.

In listening to a conversation on politics, Eugene also detected the same note that he found in every other part of American life—that of greed. As one of the men on the train stated, "... what we want from them is just the same: all we can get for ourselves, a free grab with no holes barred, and to hell with the other fellow."4 The same greed that motivated the materialistic economy of the nation motivated the choosing of its leaders.

For the next ten years or so of his life, Wolfe was scarcely interested in the affairs of government in America. He was, of course, aware that America was a democracy, and he was aware of all the beautiful connotations that word had. He knew that the government did not interfere with his life in any dictatorial fashion and that he was comparatively free in his life. But he also felt that there were people who were exploited and

3Wolfe, Of Time and the River, pp. 36-37.
4Ibid., p. 42.
mistreated in America, and that this was not in keeping
with the ideals of American democracy.

... in spite of all this high-sounding talk about
"service," "ideals of leadership," and "democracy,"
one could not see that it made such actual difference
in the way things were. Children still worked fourteen hours a day in the cotton mills of the state.
Tens of thousands of men and women and children were
born, suffered, lived, and died in damnable poverty,
bondage, and the exploitation of the tenant farm.
One million black inhabitants of the state, about a
third of the entire population, were still denied the
rights of free suffrage—even though "the second
greatest man since Jesus Christ" Woodrow Wilson fre-
quently declared that that right was one of the
proudest triumphs of Anglo-Saxon law, and of the
nation's own great constitution.\(^5\)

American government did not live up to its promises and
in this respect it was a fraud. The poverty, misery, and
squalor were a part of the established formula of life,
and all the pretty phrases had not changed things very
much. Wolfe seemed to feel that there was nothing he
could do to help. He noted that every generation had its
pure, young idealists who "marched forth from Pine Rock
bearing the torch, prepared to bare their breasts and to
die nobly, if necessary, at the barricades, no matter what
sinister influences menaced them, or what overwhelming
forces outnumbered them"\(^6\) to save the world from the evils
that would defeat democracy. But these noble souls rarely

\(^6\)Ibid., p. 224.
made a dent in the established pattern of life. He felt that he could not make any difference, at this time in his life, and so he concerned himself with other things. As Herbert Muller states:

Political interests are not required of artists, to be sure; but the young Wolfe apparently regarded them as an insignificant manifestation of life, or even unbecoming the artist. Such casual reflections as he does indulge in his youthful letters to his mother are chiefly vulgar prejudices, or smart ideas picked up from Mencken.7

However, over the next few years of Wolfe's life, a radical change took place in his way of regarding political activity.

Wolfe went to Germany in 1935 for pleasure and for the specific purpose of observing the new political order in that country. Look Homeward, Angel had been published in Germany and the royalties had been steadily mounting. German law, however, forbade that any money be taken out of the country; Wolfe therefore decided to go to Germany and spend as much of his earnings as possible. When he arrived, he found a country vastly different from the one he had visited five years before. The old Germany was a country of the civilized order. There had been poverty, but there had also been a beauty, a peacefulness, and a spirit of resurgence abroad in the land. For hundreds of

years, the painting and the literature and the music of Germany had enriched both its own culture and the culture of the world, and Wolfe in his earlier period was particularly sensitive to these values. Just five years later a strained, constant, concealed fear permeated the people. The later Wolfe, George Webber of You Can't Go Home again, noticed fleeting looks of terror and pleading in many eyes. There were vague rumors of the fact that violence and murder were often perpetrated by the government. Those singled out most often were, of course, those of the Jewish race, and for Jews especially, fear was fast becoming a way of life. George was not long in realizing that this nation was mortally ill, and "it was a plague of the spirit—invisible, but as unmistakable as death." Wolfe, You Can't Go Home Again, p. 573.

For the first time in his life he had come upon something full of horror that he had never known before—something that made all the swift violence and passion of America, the gangster compacts, the sudden killings, the harshness and corruption that infested portions of American business and public life, seem innocent beside it. What George began to see was a picture of a great people who had been psychically wounded and were now desperately ill with some dread malady of the soul. Here was an entire nation, he now realized, that was infested with the contagion of an ever-present fear. It was a kind of creeping paralysis which twisted and blighted all human relations. The pressures of a constant and
Infamous compulsion had silenced this whole people into a sweltering and malignant secrecy until they had become spiritually septic with the distillations of their own self-poisons, for which now there was no medicine or release.  

George had witnessed and had heard of many evils in America, but they paled by comparison with Nazism. Here was an evil so enormous that the human soul would never be able to completely comprehend it. Here was "something old and genuinely evil in the spirit of man . . . and it shook his inner world to its foundations."  

The full horror of the poison of Germany and of the evil in man's spirit was brought home to George by an incident on the train as he was leaving the country. Sharing the compartment with him and a few others was a tense, fidgety, frightened little man. He was arrested at the border and discovered to be a Jew who was trying to save both his money and his life. As the train pulled out for France, George caught a last glimpse of the doomed man. 

As the car in which he had been riding slid by, he lifted his pasty face and terror-stricken eyes, and for a moment his lips were still of their anxious pleading. He looked once, directly and steadfastly, at his former companions, and they at him. And in that gaze there was all the unmeasured weight of man's mortal anguish. George and the others felt somehow naked and ashamed, and somehow guilty. They all felt that they were saying farewell, not to a man, but to humanity; not to some pathetic stranger,

9Ibid., p. 571.  
10Ibid., p. 636.
some chance acquaintance of the voyage, but to mankind; not to some nameless cipher out of life, but to the fading image of a brother's face.

The train swept out and gathered speed—and so they lost him. 11

The tragedy of a nation and a race was etched in the expression on the little man's face.

In the perversion that had befallen Germany, George saw a universal evil and not one that belonged only to Germany. This evil was a part of man—an animal-like brutality imperfectly concealed by politics, by science, by ideology. In summing up Hitlerism, George Webber said:

Hitlerism, he saw, was a recrudescence of an old barbarism. Its racial nonsense and cruelty, its naked worship of brute force, its suppression of truth and resort to lies and myths, its ruthless contempt for the individual, its anti-intellectual and anti-moral dogma that to one man alone belongs the right of judgment and decision, and that for all others virtue lies in blind, unquestioning obedience—each of these fundamental elements of Hitlerism was a throwback to that fierce and ancient tribalism which had sent waves of hairy Teutons swooping down out of the north to destroy the vast edifice of Roman civilization. That primitive spirit of greed and lust and force had always been the true enemy of mankind.

But this spirit was not confined to Germany. It belonged to no one race. It was a terrible part of the universal heritage of man. One saw traces of it everywhere. It took on many disguises, many labels. Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin—each had his own name for it. And America had it, too, in various forms. For wherever ruthless men conspired together for their own ends, wherever the rule of dog-eat-dog was dominant, there it bred. 12

11 Ibid., p. 629. 12 Ibid., p. 636.
What he had seen in Germany was a soul-sickening discovery for Wolfe. It disturbed him greatly, and it made him afraid. It did not, however, destroy the Wolfean optimism that always returned, but it made that optimism seem more urgent than ever. He left Germany, the land of "glory, beauty, magic, and ruin," longing for America where there was at least free, fresh air to breathe.

George Webber returned to America quite a different person from the young Eugene Grant, who had once innocently and indifferently remarked that:

He was quite content with any system which might give him comfort, security, enough money to do as he liked, and freedom to think, eat, drink, love, read, and write what he chose. And he did not care under what form of government he lived--Republican, Democrat, Tory, Socialist, or Bolshevist--if it could assure him these things. He did not want to reform the world, or to make it a better place to live in.13

Wolfe's later protagonist was convinced that Nazism, or some like malignancy, could happen in America. He had already seen the seeds of it in the gangsterism of the time, and what else was Hitlerism but gangsterism? He felt that the materialistic instinct of the American could easily be perverted or seduced into accepting a dictatorship. He was afraid, afraid for himself, but more afraid for his beloved America. He stated, "I realized fully, for the first time, how sick America was, and saw too,

13 Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel, p. 491.
that the ailment was akin to Germany's—a dread world-sickness of the soul. "

He nevertheless now felt more strongly than ever that America was the hope of the world. The soul-sickness in America was not beyond hope. America could still find itself.

In America, it seemed to me, it was not mortal, not incurable—not yet. It was desperate, and would become more desperate still if in America, as in Germany, men became afraid to look into the face of fear itself, to probe behind it, to see what caused it, and then to speak the truth about it. America was young, America was still the New World of mankind's hope, America was not like this old and worn-out Europe which seethed and festered with a thousand deep and uncorrected ancient maladies. America was still resilient, still responsive to a cure—if only—if only—men could somehow cease to be afraid of truth. For the plain and searching light of truth, which had here, in Germany, been darkened to extinction, was the remedy, the only one, that could cleanse and heal the suffering soul of man.

Democracy was becoming more than a vague, textbook abstraction for Wolfe. Having seen the opposite of democracy, he could now understand it better. As Muller states, "... democratic faith remains a faith, not a self-evident, universal truth. As a faith and a hope Wolfe announced it."

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14 Wolfe, You Can't Go Home Again, p. 659.
15 Ibid.
16 Muller, pp. 186-187.
Wolfe's new ideas about democracy and American government were more realistic yet more idealistic. Democracy, he now felt, was more than just a convenient form of government; it was the right of all men on earth. He also knew that there is a great deal of difference between theory and practice. Frederic Carpenter states:

Therefore the ultimate evil—the "enemy" of Thomas Wolfe's American idealist—is not defeat, nor tragedy, nor death itself: but the denial of democracy and freedom. Eternal progress may be illusory, and the American dream of a perfect equality impossible; but the illusion is nevertheless "true" for "Man-Alive" and the dream indispensible. . . . At the beginning of his career, Wolfe had proclaimed his disbelief in all privilege and equality. Now at the end he affirmed triumphantly the American ideal of freedom and equality which he had gradually realized in all his life and writing.17

He had been gradually working up to this idea all his life. The young Wolfe who had proclaimed the precept that all men are created equal rather foolish, now affirmed that the people in America must believe in this precept.

He now felt that something must be done, but he had no specific political program. The answer, he felt, lay in the people who were leaders. Political action could save America, but instead the practice of politics was infected with many of the evils that characterized the national life. If America is to find itself, he stated,

"these roots would somehow have to be eradicated . . . if man was to win his ultimate freedom and not be plunged back into savagery and perish utterly from the earth."\textsuperscript{18}

The answer lay in the spiritual part of man, the part that was at present the most remote from politics. The greed and the selfish instincts that govern the lives of Americans must be replaced with some finer instinct. Wolfe could only hope that man is capable of such a change.

\textsuperscript{18} Wolfe, \textit{You Can't Go Home Again}, p. 637.
CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

It is virtually impossible to separate Wolfe the lover of America from Wolfe the critic; the two are inextricably mixed. Wolfe's adverse criticism of America springs from his love for America; in many instances, he has both love and hate for the same feature of his favorite subject—his country, his homeland. Conflicting forces in Wolfe's personality caused this fluctuation between love and hate. Wolfe was a mass of paradoxes, contradictions, conflicts, tensions. Egocentric and self-consumed, he was always a youth in outlook. And as an idealistic youth wishes his home, his parents, his community to be perfect, Wolfe wished and expected, perhaps demanded, America to be perfect. He was extremely emotional, and his antitheses of feeling sometimes seem violent when placed side by side. Wolfe's over-all reaction, however, can be described in Romeo's words, "Here's much to do with hate, but more with love";¹ for Wolfe kept, to a remarkable degree, his youthful idealism and optimism.

¹William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, I, i, 173.

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There were many things that Wolfe loved passionately about America. Primarily, he loved its size, its all-encompassing magnitude and abundance. Wolfe himself was a huge man, gargantuan in size and appetite. He naturally saw bigness as a virtue; he celebrated the bigness of New York City and of the mountains and plains. Bigness is also associated with the heroic and the epic, the larger than life, and Wolfe wrote much of the time in the epic mood.

The diversity of America was a challenge to Wolfe. There were excitement, tension, and conflict in American life that again mirrored the same qualities in his own make-up. There was a sense of growth, life, movement, and change in the land; the future lay promisingly ahead and brought out the prophetic strain in Wolfe's image of himself. Wolfe's work is full of physical details about America, vivid sense impressions, many appearing more than once—the music and power of machines, odors of city and country, majestic rivers, vistas of natural scenery and the national parks.

The things that Wolfe detested about America were more closely akin to human traits. He hated the greed, the money-grubbing and selfishness of many of the people. He despised economic barriers and injustice, the exploitation of the poor by the rich, a theme that is with him rather
general and unspecified. He disliked the cultural poverty and indifference of the provincial and the narrowness and cultural hypocrisy of the urbanite. Political corruption and ineptitude, violence and lack of restraint, the regimentation of city life and the loss of identity—these were all a part of the America that Wolfe regarded as evil.

Wolfe consciously tried to express America, but his method was lyrical rather than statistical and informational. He was unrestrainedly impressionistic rather than precise and thorough; poetic and literary rather than journalistic or sociological. The element of self-love in his view is strong. Wolfe loved America because he was born in it. He needed a home; it was important to him in the way that Ithaca was important to Ulysses. He needed an America that would be his home, a home of strength and wisdom to which his beliefs and powers could be united. Wolfe possessed perhaps a wider literary background than any other famous twentieth century American author, and his approach to America as a home is rooted in literary tradition.

Wolfe absorbed greedily all kinds of impressions of contemporary America, and, though what he saw in society was often tangential to his own interest, he was very perceptive in his recording of the bad side. He wanted to
expose these evils, these failures, these shortcomings so that they could be corrected. He saw America as an idea, an idea that would stand against all the degeneration, sloth, and weakness of all other countries. His love for America deepened over the years of his life. It may, at times, have faltered, but it was never completely lost. He kept to the last the idealism, the hope that was so completely a part of him. Shortly before his death, he wrote a moving affirmation of his faith:

I believe that we are lost here in America, but I believe we shall be found. . . . I think the true discovery of America is before us. I think the true fulfillment of our spirit, of our people, of our mighty and immortal land, is yet to come. . . . I think I speak for most men living when I say that our America is Here, is Now, and beckons on before us, and that this glorious assurance is not only our living hope, but our dream to be accomplished. 2

2Wolfe, *You Can't Go Home Again*, p. 669.
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