
THOMAS WOLFE: A SHORT GLIMPSE TO THE AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

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Abstract

Thomas Wolfe is a writer whose literary activity have garnered significant attention, particularly for his portrayal of the Southern region of the country during the 20th century. In the following paper an important stage in the author's life is discussed.

Keywords: Thomas Wolfe, writer, authenticity, novels, stories, 20th century, aspect.

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Wolfe's literary works have garnered significant attention, particularly for his portrayal of the Southern region of the country during the 20th century. One of the author's remarkable skills lies in his ability to provide a psychological perspective on the reality of the past century. Unlike others, the author did not romanticize or yearn for the past; instead, he genuinely reflected a critical attitude towards life. This trend of realism also influenced the writer's works, coinciding with a period when modernist traditions took precedence in the country. In this paper, we will try to look at a short period of the writer's biography.

Thomas Wolfe's name holds a prominent place among the American realists of the 20th century. Scholars have extensively examined the connections between Thomas Wolfe and other realist authors in terms of their expression of realistic attitudes, interpretation of similar emotions arising from the prevailing reality, and their portrayal of the concepts of personhood and identity in literature. Moreover, there have been notable comparisons made regarding the choice of topics by these authors.

One key aspect that has captured the attention of theorists is Thomas Wolfe's unique aesthetic perspectives. His individuality in artistic approach, along with the distinctive structural, genre, and methodological characteristics of his works, has been a subject of considerable analysis. Theorists as M. Danelia, A. Turnbull, T. Mitchell, B. McElderry, L. Field, R. Kennedy, J. Phillipson, H. Muller, H. Bloom, J. Mauldin, and J. Scotchie have delved into the specific features that set Thomas Wolfe apart from his contemporaries, shedding light on his artistic vision and the distinctive qualities that make his works stand out in the literary landscape.

MAIN PART

Thomas Wolfe, born in 1900 in Asheville, North Carolina, USA, left behind a rich literary legacy that revolves around his own life, family, and personal experiences. His body of work includes a collection of short stories and four major novels. Among them, the characters of Eugene Gant and George Webber have become widely recognized and celebrated in the world of literature, much like the author himself.

One distinctive aspect of Thomas Wolfe's work is the authenticity derived from his own life experiences. His family members were often portrayed as characters in his writings, lending a sense of realism to his narratives. The writer's reactions to the realities of life were eloquently expressed through the voices of his main characters. This infusion of personal experiences and emotions added a profound significance and essence to his prose. Each character and image delved deep into the inner world of the people they represented, allowing readers to hear the echoes of their hearts and gain a deeper understanding of the human condition.

In the biography of Thomas Wolfe, biographer Andrew Turnbull highlighted the significant role played by Margaret Roberts, who had a transformative impact on the author's life. Margaret Roberts not only recognized and nurtured Thomas Wolfe's writing talent but also instilled in him a deep love for literature. Her influence was instrumental in the realization of the author's unique creative abilities.

Andrew Turnbull depicted Margaret Roberts as a captivating figure who held a special place in Thomas Wolfe's youth. In describing her impact, Andrew Turnbull referred to Margaret Roberts as "the fairy godmother of Tom's youth" (Mitchell; 16). This metaphor suggests that Roberts possessed a magical quality in her ability to inspire and guide Thomas Wolfe, shaping his literary journey and contributing to his development as a writer.

As the director of the Orange Street School, Margaret Roberts's husband played a significant role in Thomas Wolfe's life. It was during a creative essay writing competition held by the school to identify talented students that Margaret Roberts, who later became the inspiration for the character Margaret Leonard in the author's writing, praised his creative work. She expressed her assessment by exclaiming, "This boy, Tom Wolfe, is a genius! And I want him for our school next year" (Mitchell; 16).

This recognition and endorsement of Thomas Wolfe's talent by Margaret Roberts served as a pivotal moment in the emergence of his unique abilities as a writer. Her belief in his exceptional abilities and her desire to have him study at their school provided Thomas Wolfe with validation and encouragement at a crucial stage of his development. It was a defining factor that contributed to the nurturing and growth of his literary talent.

Later on, Thomas Wolfe fondly recalled that the years he spent at the Orange Street School were the happiest and most valuable period of his life. The memories of his time there hold a

special place in his heart, evoking a sense of joy, fulfillment, and perhaps even a formative influence on his personal and intellectual growth. The positive experiences and valuable lessons Thomas Wolfe gained during his time at the school likely contributed to his fond recollections. The atmosphere, the teachers, and the educational environment shaped his worldview and provided him with a strong foundation for his future endeavors. The impact of those years remained with the author, leaving a lasting impression on his life and shaping his perception of that period as a cherished and significant chapter. “I was without a home—a vagabond since I was seven—with two roofs and no home. I moved inward on that house of death and tumult from room to little room, as the boarders came with their dollar a day, and their constant rocking on the porch. My overloaded heart was bursting with its packed weight of loneliness and terror; I was strangling, without speech, without articulation, in my own secretions—groping like a blind sea-thing with no eyes and a thousand feelers toward light, toward life, toward beauty and order, out of that hell of chaos, greed, and cheap ugliness—and then found you, when else I should have died, you mother of my spirit who fed me with light” (Mitchell; 17) . In his memoir, Thomas Wolfe reflects on his childhood and youth, recalling moments when he felt a lack of peace in a household characterized by separation and turmoil. During those times, he experienced immense loneliness and fear, as if he were voiceless and devoid of meaningful connections. However, it was during this period of darkness that he encountered Margaret Roberts, who became a guiding light in his life. Describing his journey, Thomas Wolfe compares himself to a blind sea creature with countless tentacles, reaching out for light, life, beauty, and order amidst boundless chaos, envy, and pettiness. It was through the presence and influence of this remarkable woman that he found solace and warmth. He speaks of her with deep affection, referring to her as the “mother of his heart”, emphasizing the profound impact she had on his psyche. Margaret Roberts, through her nurturing and caring nature, provided the future writer with the emotional support and stability he craved. Her presence and guidance became a source of light and warmth in his life, helping him navigate through the challenges and insecurities he faced during his formative years.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this factual information and personal experiences that Thomas Wolfe drew upon provided the artistic power that resonated with readers in his classic novels and stories. Despite his relatively short life, the author managed to capture the hearts of people in American literature, especially during the tumultuous and turbulent years of the 20th century.

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