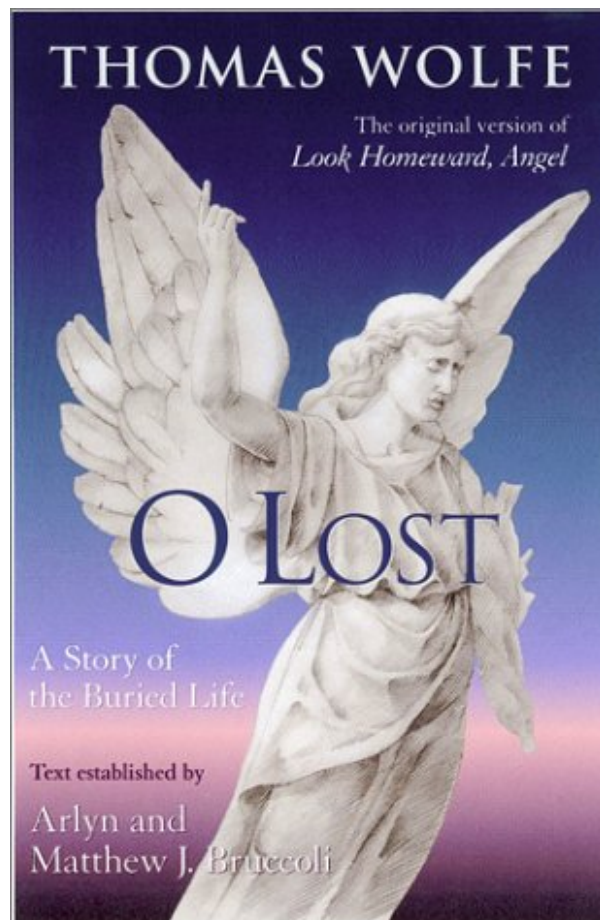


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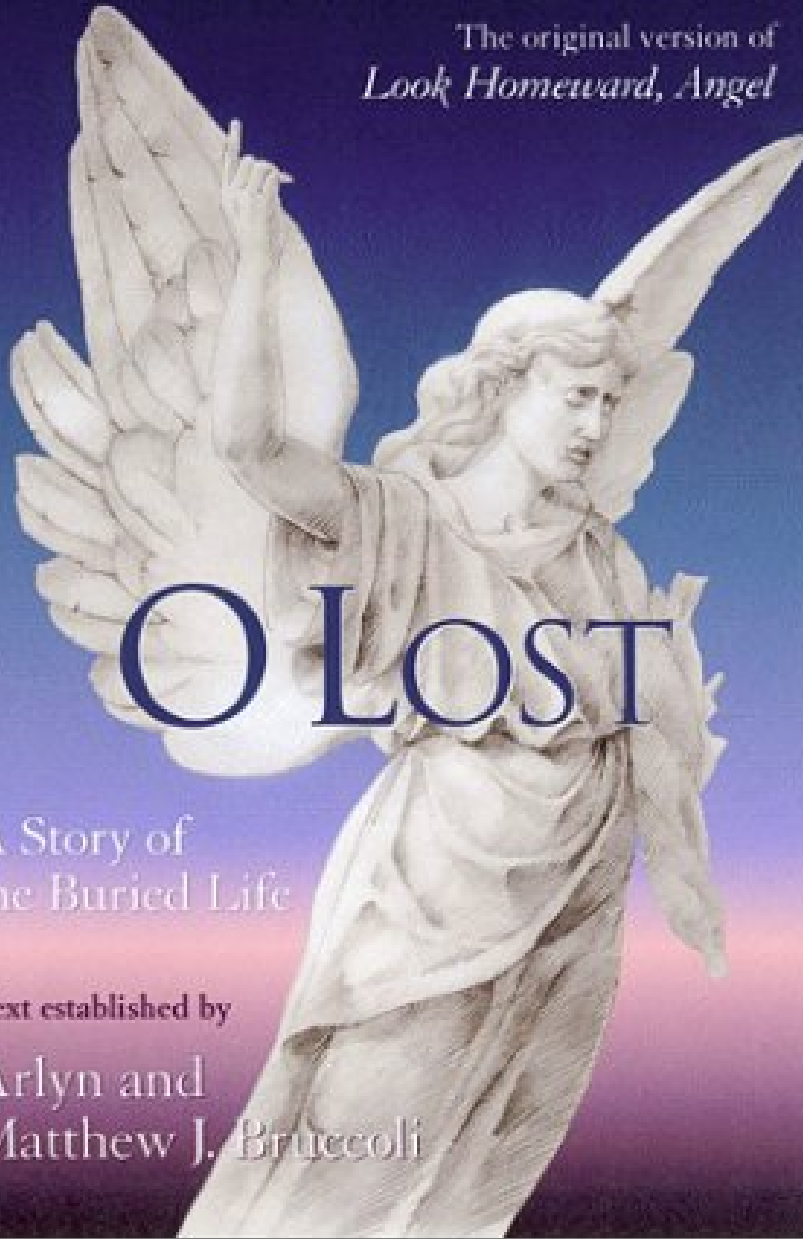


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THOMAS WOLFE

The original version of
Look Homeward, Angel



A Story of
the Buried Life

Text established by
Arlyn and
Matthew J. Bruccoli

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An unabridged version of *Look Homeward, Angel*. On original publication 66,000 words were omitted for reasons of propriety and publishing economics, using the carbon copy of the original typescript, the Bruccolis have established the original text.

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90 of 91 people found the following review helpful.

This Is It!

By A Customer

As Pat Conroy writes on the rear jacket panel of this book, "'O Lost' is the greatest news for Thomas Wolfe lovers since the publication of 'Look Homeward, Angel.'" The statement is not hyperbole. This is it--the original manuscript that Wolfe delivered to the offices of Scribners, the version around which have swirled controversies and questions ever since and yet which has remained unseen by the public until now. Was Thomas Wolfe a sort of idiot savant, a wildly impulsive and uncontrolled writer who desperately needed the firm professional hand of a Maxwell Perkins to bring form and control to his inspired ramblings? Or was he simply a genius, so far ahead of his time that even the likes of Perkins could not comprehend what he had in the innovative and unconventional manuscript of "O Lost"? On the basis of this new edition, it might be said that he was a bit of both.

For the lover of "Look Homeward, Angel," the tired phrase "essential reading" is an understatement. There is magnificent new material here (this version is 66,000 words longer than LHA). For me, the most notable appears at the beginning--a long section detailing the early life of W.O. Gant, lovingly rendered, heartbreakingly real, writing so vivid that it must be admitted that Perkins made a terrible mistake in cutting it; it is as good as anything Thomas Wolfe ever wrote. Too, the famous kaleidoscopic scene in which we see dozens of Altamont residents waking one morning in 1908 as newspapers are delivered is here much longer, much more inclusive, with far more wonderful character sketches--writing so pure that it seems to capture for all time what a certain time and place was.

Now, in all fairness, it must be admitted that some of the new material is substandard. There are any number of self-referential jokey asides that Perkins was well-advised to eliminate; they are always mistakes. The material is also sometimes annoyingly disorganized, as in the beginning of Chapter 8, when Wolfe writes: "We believe, reader, we told you some time ago that Julia had meanwhile begun to think of Dixieland, but we have perhaps forgotten to mention that the foregoing conversation, as well as a number of the preceding

events, took place in Dixieland, and that Julia had altogether ceased to live with Gant." Well, gee! Thanks for telling us, Tom! This kind of thing is amateurish, and showed clearly that Wolfe did in fact benefit from editing.

But how much? Alas, as a Thomas Wolfe devotee of many years, I cannot state that "O Lost" represents, for me, the definitive form of the manuscript. It is certainly the longest! But is it, as this edition's editors claim, a "greater work" than LHA? I think that will be up to the individual reader. For me, there is a point at which "much" becomes "too much"; certainly a lot of the new sections in Part III are rather tedious (or perhaps only seem so because we're used to the faster conclusion of LHA?). Despite the editors' claims, for instance, I do not feel that the final, indelible scene between Eugene Gant and Ben's ghost was "butchered" by Maxwell Perkins; indeed, I find the longer version presented here to be bloated and aimless, unlike the sharp and unforgettable version in LHA.

In the end, the duel between "O Lost" and LHA should probably be called a draw. (The next time I read this novel, I suspect I will utilize the standard LHA edition--but with frequent consultations to "O Lost.") Remember, Wolfe worked closely with Perkins and accepted his edits, so LHA should in no way be considered a bastardized or incorrect version of the author's intentions. But the joy here is that readers can, at last, decide for themselves. Thank you, Arlyn and Matthew J. Bruccoli, for preparing this new edition. Every lover of Thomas Wolfe is in your debt.

33 of 34 people found the following review helpful.

Time regained

By James Nelems

What a wonderful book. It's too bad so many readers today know only Tom Wolfe, not Thomas Wolfe. Even though it has been at least 10 years since reading *Look Homeward Angel*, I knew almost immediately when I came to the new sections. They add a depth to the novel, bringing in the whole town and relatives, rather being only about Eugene Gant. My favorite Wolfe readings involve trains; the experience about time stopping for a moment when you look into the eyes of someone looking directly at you into the train, is exactly as I remember my earlier train rides. What are they doing now, that the train has passed? Other 800 page books might be dull, but not this one. Having been given it as a present recently, I am very surprised and disappointed that it is already 'out of print.' More people should know about *O Lost*!

29 of 32 people found the following review helpful.

By God, he has genius!

By A Customer

Thomas Wolfe is undoubtedly one of the, if not THE, greatest writers of the Twentieth Century. He is so underappreciated. *O Lost* is the correct title (finally) to his first novel, *Look Homeward, Angel*. It was always intended to bear this title, and rightfully so, for if you read it you will understand how lost he was as a child, an adolescent, and a man. His story of the Gants is incredibly gripping and touching...hang in there the speed picks up once you get into it. It will give you so much insight on the South and the trials of a young man torn between his city, his family, and his ambitions. Thank God for Thomas Wolfe.

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