

The Four Lost Men: The Previously Unpublished Long Version, Including the Original Short Story

Thomas Wolfe



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This is the never-before-published extended version of Wolfe's short story in memory of his father."The Four Lost Men" is the first publication of the long version of Wolfe's story of familial and national reflection set during World War I. Wolfe supplies a moving portrait of his dying father, as well as a rich mediation on American history and ambitions on the verge of America's entry into a broadening global conflict. Discussion of the title characters - Presidents Garfield, Arthur, Harrison, and Hayes - provides opportunity for assessment of the mood and promise of the nation, as well as reflection on the obstacles that had obscured paths toward untapped American potential. Garfield, Arthur, Harrison, and Hayes, the four Republican presidents who followed Grant during the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction eras, were all Civil War generals and self-made men, though none experienced a particularly distinguished term in office. These presidents are iconic figures in the stories and political musings of the narrator's dying father. In his efforts to understand their importance to his father, the teenaged narrator comes to appreciate the act of storytelling that redefines these men in his father's memory and, in turn, redefines his father in the his own memory.Originally published as a short story of 7,000 words in "Scribner's Magazine" in 1934 - and later abridged by 1,000 words for reissue in the 1935 anthology "From Death to Morning" - Wolfe's expanded tale is published here for the first time in its intended form and full length of some 21,000 words. Editors Arlyn and Matthew J. Bruccoli have employed the same methods to reestablish this text as they used to wide acclaim in their centennial edition of "O Lost: The Story of a Buried Life", the unabridged version of Wolfe's "Look Homeward, Angel". The reestablishment of the long version of "Four Lost Men" opens an undeveloped area of scholarship into Wolfe's short fiction and serves as a model for restoring other such works.

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