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Female Character in American "Lost Generation"

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A B S T R A C T
This article analyzes the depiction of female characters in the works of Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner within the literary movement of 'lost generation", as well as the approaches of these two writers in illuminating the female figure and their literary significance.

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Introduction. At the beginning of the 20th century, after the First World War, the cultural, social, and psychological changes that emerged were also reflected in literature. The American "Lost Generation" writers sought to depict in their works personal suffering, despair, and the search for new values in society. Within this context, the female image became an important theme: women were portrayed as complex psychological figures shaped by the experiences of war, gender relations, and social stereotypes. In the works of Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Dos Passos, Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, and other American writers, women appear as characters striving to adapt to social change, and at times, searching for their own path [1].

The writers of First World War literature are divided into two groups. The first group includes those who, due to their age, did not participate in the war but wrote about people who lived during the war: Aldous Huxley, William Faulkner, Virginia Woolf, and Leonid Andreyev. The second group consisted of direct participants in the war, who created artistic works based on their personal life experiences, conveying their feelings to later generations. These include Richard Aldington, Erich Maria Remarque, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Among the writers we are analyzing, one did not participate in the war due to his age, while the other took part in the war directly and created works from personal experiences.

Literature Review. In world literary studies, extensive articles and research have been devoted to the "Lost Generation," the uniqueness of the female image, and the depiction of women's psychology and inner world. For example, the characteristics of "Lost Literature" were studied by S. Palchikova, K. Poulsen, K. Shelton, and J. Veyre. On Richard Aldington's works, research was carried out by M. Graves, S. Kittredge, N. Gates, R. Galloway, A. Kershaw, R. Smith, O. Gill, and A. Sinyaya.

Research Methodology. The research is based on literary-analytical and historical-contextual approaches. Female characters are studied in connection with artistic interpretation and the social and cultural factors reflected in the works.

Results and Analysis. The "Lost Generation" writers were among the first to draw readers' attention to

what later became known as the "war syndrome" in the second half of the 20th century. Writers who survived the war produced many works about its devastating consequences. Even those who did not participate in the battles directly but experienced war from behind the front lines depicted its cruelty, hardships, and suffering in their works. Figuratively speaking, the smell of the bombs and bullets reached them as well.

The works of the "Lost Generation" generally revolved around three main themes: decadence, gender relations and infertility, and an idealized past.

Decadence. Decadence refers to a state of artistic and social decline, characterized by pessimism about the future, distrust in human reason and strength, and rejection of reality. In "Lost Generation" literature, this sense of despair stemmed from the breakdown between the individual and society. Former soldiers, regardless of race or religion, returned home unable to find their place in a materialistic world. For this reason, the "dead" were not those who died on the battlefield, but those who came home and failed to find themselves—these were the truly "lost." The central theme of this literary movement is hopelessness about the future and spiritual decline.

Decadence appears in the portraits of characters who indulge in drinking at lavish parties or wander aimlessly through city streets. The blending of the "Lost Generation" with the spirit of the "Jazz Age" highlighted this phenomenon even more vividly. For example, in Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises (Fiesta), decadence is a dominant theme.

Gender Relations and Infertility. Young men who went off to war, likening themselves to knights, returned home weakened both physically and psychologically. Unable to become fathers, they felt powerless before women—innocent yet guilty. This weakness often drove them into addictions to alcohol and drugs. In Hemingway's and Remarque's works, this social decline is depicted with historical and artistic realism. Many young men could not even express love to the women they cared for.

These issues contributed to women's increasing independence both in the family and in society. A striking example is the relationship between Jake and Brett in Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises (Fiesta).

The Idealized Past. For many veterans, the mind remained bound to an idealized past. The future appeared vague, often negative, and without hope. The perfect past was unattainable, while the future seemed meaningless [7;16].

Hemingway's Style and Female Characters. Hemingway's style is simple and minimalist. Female characters are often depicted through external appearance and short dialogues rather than full descriptions of their inner world. These characters frequently carry symbolic meanings—modernity, freedom, or inner anguish.

In The Sun Also Rises, Brett Ashley is presented as an independent, attractive, modern woman reflecting new values and social relations after the war. Her openness and complexity align with Hemingway's minimalist style, revealing inner emptiness and emotional ruin through her dialogues with Jake.

On inner emptiness and love:

- "We could have had such a damned good time together."
- "Isn't it pretty to think so?"

(Translation: "We could have had such a wonderful time together." / "Isn't it lovely to think so?" [2])

On independence and men:

- "I'm not going to be one of those bitches that ruins children."

(Translation: "I don't want to be one of those women who ruin children's lives." [2])

On emptiness and dissatisfaction:

- "Oh, darling, I've been so miserable."

(Translation: "Oh, darling, I've been so unhappy." [2])

Similarly, in A Farewell to Arms, Catherine Barkley represents a romantically idealized woman. She embodies the complexities of love and loss during wartime.

On love and devotion:

- "You're my religion. You're all I've got."

(Translation: "You are my religion. You're all I have." [3])

On fear and mortality:

- "I'm afraid of the rain because sometimes I see me dead in it."

(Translation: "I'm afraid of the rain, because sometimes I see myself dead in it." [3])

On losing herself in love:

- "There isn't any me. I'm you. Don't make up a separate me."

(Translation: "There is no me. I am you. Don't create a separate me." [3])

Through such portrayals, Hemingway presents women not only as romantic figures but also as symbols of emotional struggle, independence, and modern identity.

Faulkner's Style and Female Characters. In Faulkner's works, time, memory, and subjective feelings are central, and female characters appear as multi-layered psychological portraits. He situates women within the cultural and historical context of the American South, reflecting the tensions between traditional values, family obligations, and personal freedom.

In The Sound and the Fury, Caddy represents these tensions. Her character is revealed primarily through her brother Quentin's perspective, rather than her own monologues. Quentin's inner reflections reveal both love and shame surrounding Caddy's defiance of social and family expectations.

Quentin's reflection:

- "When I heard that Caddy had lost her purity, the world went dark before my eyes. Her actions brought shame upon our family. But I still love her, because she is my sister, my Caddy." [5]

Caddy's own perspective, however, shows her struggle for independence and defiance of imposed values:

- "I ran through the trees, my dress catching on the branches. I didn't care. I could still hear Quentin calling my name, his voice thick with anger and something else—something I couldn't bear to name. I wanted to be free. I wanted to be anywhere but here.

But no matter how far I ran, I could still feel the weight of their eyes, of their expectations. I was their shame, their burden, their sin. But I was also myself. And I would not let them define me." [5]

Through such depictions, Faulkner presents women as not merely victims but as active agents who shape their own values and lives, even while trapped within historical and cultural limitations.

Comparative Perspective. The difference between Hemingway's and Faulkner's approaches lies in their narrative style and depth. Hemingway, with his minimalist style, emphasizes the symbolic and external aspects of female characters, often leaving emotional gaps for the reader to fill. Faulkner, with his complex narrative structures and psychological detail, portrays women as deeply conflicted individuals, shaped by history, culture, and tradition.

Conclusion. All in all, female characters in Hemingway's and Faulkner's works appear through distinct approaches and styles. Hemingway, with minimalism and external detail, presents women as modern and independent, though sometimes superficial. Faulkner, through complex narrative structures and psychological depth, portrays women within historical and cultural contexts, showing their inner struggles and search for freedom.

Both writers, however, reflect the gender stereotypes and social relations of their time, while also presenting women as multifaceted figures whose portrayal remains a significant subject in modern literary analysis. Through these different approaches, readers gain a deeper understanding of the cultural, social, and psychological significance of women in the works of Hemingway and Faulkner, as well as their

contributions to modern literature.

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