

Female Character in American “Lost Generation”

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Received: 28 January 2026 **Accepted:** 23 February 2026 **Published:** 17 March 2026

ABSTRACT

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.

Keywords: Lost generation, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, female characters, American analyses, narrative structure, 20th century literature, gender relations.

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the cultural, social, and psychological changes that emerged after the First World War were also reflected in literature. American writers of the “Lost Generation” sought to depict personal suffering, disappointment, and new social values in their works. Within this context, the image of women also became an important subject of study: female characters acquired complex psychological portraits formed within the context of war experiences, gender relations, and social stereotypes. In the works of American writers such as Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Dos Passos, Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot, women are portrayed as characters trying to adapt to social changes and sometimes striving to find their own path [1].

Writers of literature dedicated to the First World War are generally divided into two groups. The first group consists of authors who, due to their age, did not participate in the war but wrote works about people who lived during that period. These include Aldous Huxley, William Faulkner, Virginia Woolf, and Leonid Andreyev. The second group includes writers who directly participated in the war and created literary works based on their personal life experiences, conveying their feelings to future generations

through literature. Among them are prominent authors such as Richard Aldington, Erich Maria Remarque, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. One of the writers analyzed in our study did not participate in the war due to his age, while the other was directly involved in the war and created literary works based on his personal experiences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In world literary studies, numerous articles and research works have been devoted to the analysis of “Lost generation” literature, as well as the artistic specificity, psychology, and inner world of female characters. In particular, studies on “Lost Generation” literature and its distinctive characteristics have been conducted by scholars such as S. Palchikova, K. Poulsen, K. Shelton, and J. Weire. Significant research on the works of Richard Aldington has been carried out by literary scholars such as M. Graves, S. Kittredge, N. Gates, R. Galloway, A. Kershaw, R. Smith, O. Gil, and A. Sinyaya.

METHODOLOGY

The research is based on literary-analytical and historical-

contextual approaches. Female characters are examined in relation to their artistic interpretation in the analyzed works and the social and cultural factors that shape them.

Results and discussion. Writers of the “Lost generation” were among the first authors to draw readers’ attention to the phenomenon later called the “war syndrome” in the second half of the twentieth century. Writers who survived the war created numerous works about the war and its tragic consequences. Even those writers who did not directly participate in the war, although they were not on the front lines or in the trenches, were aware of the hardships, cruelty, and suffering of war while living behind the front, and they described these realities in their works. Figuratively speaking, the smell of burnt gunpowder and exploded bombs reached them as well.

In the works of “Lost Generation” writers, three main themes were often depicted. The first is decadence, the second is gender relations and infertility, and the third is the idealized past.

1) Decadence. Decadence is a collection of states of decline in artistic and social thought, characterized by a pessimistic view of the future, a lack of faith in humanity’s intellect and strength, and the inability to accept existing reality. In “Lost generation” literature, pessimism emerged as a result of the breakdown between the individual and society. Former soldiers who were not discriminated against on racial or religious grounds on the battlefield returned home but were unable to find their place in a society dominated by material values.

Therefore, it was said that those who returned home but could not rediscover themselves were the real “dead,” and they were the ones who had “lost themselves.” In short, the main theme of this literary movement was distrust of the future and spiritual depression. Decadence is reflected in the portraits of characters who indulge in drinking at luxurious parties or wander aimlessly through the streets. The fusion of “Lost Generation” literature with the traditions of the Jazz Age further highlighted the phenomenon of decadence. For example, decadence occupies a central place in *The sun also rises* by Ernest Hemingway.

2) Gender relations and infertility. Young men who went to war comparing themselves to knights returned home both spiritually and physically weakened. They were deprived of the happiness of fatherhood and felt powerless

in front of women. This weakness led them to destructive habits such as alcoholism and drug dependence as they attempted to cope with their sense of inadequacy. In the works of Ernest Hemingway and Erich Maria Remarque, this social decline is depicted on the basis of historical and artistic truth. Young men often could not even express their love to the women they cared about. Such problems also led to women achieving greater independence within the family and society. An example of this can be seen in the relationship between Jake and Brett in “*The sun also rises*”.

3) Idealized past. Former war participants were constantly preoccupied with memories of an idealized past. The future seemed vague and mostly filled with negative possibilities, offering little hope. That perfect past appeared unattainable for them, while the future seemed almost meaningless [7].

The writing style of Ernest Hemingway is simple and based on minimalism, and female characters are often depicted through physical appearance and brief dialogues. This style tends to convey their inner world indirectly through actions and external features rather than detailed psychological analysis. Moreover, female characters often carry symbolic meanings representing modernity, freedom, or even suffering.

One of the main female characters in *The Sun Also Rises* is Lady Brett Ashley. Brett is portrayed as an independent, attractive, and modern woman. She reflects the new values and relationship systems that emerged after the war. Brett’s open yet often ambiguous and complex character, combined with Hemingway’s minimalist style, reveals her inner emptiness and psychological devastation through dialogues with Jake:

Inner emptiness and love:

“We could have had such a damned good time together.”

“Isn’t it pretty to think so?”

Translation:

“Biz juda zo‘r vaqt o‘tkazishimiz mumkin edi.”

“Shunday o‘ylash qanday go‘zal-a?” [2]

This dialogue appears in the final lines of the novel and shows that Brett and Jake’s relationship is filled with disappointment. Brett wants to be with Jake, but life does not allow them to be happy together. This demonstrates her

realistic outlook and refusal to deceive herself.

Brett's independence and attitude toward men:

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

Translation:

"Men bolalarni hayotini barbod qiladigan ayollardan bo'lmoqchi emasman." [2]

Although Brett is popular among men, this popularity brings her both pleasure and suffering. She does not want to lose her independence.

Inner emptiness and dissatisfaction:

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

Translation:

"Oh, jonim, men juda baxtsiz bo'ldim." [2]

Brett often expresses her feelings through short but emotionally heavy sentences. This corresponds to Hemingway's style—words spoken without excessive explanation yet carrying a significant emotional burden.

In *A Farewell to Arms*, the character Catherine Barkley appears as a romantically idealized female figure. She embodies the complex relationship between love and loss and illustrates the emotional conflicts experienced during wartime. The following quotes reveal aspects of her character:

Dialogue between Catherine and Frederic (love and loss):

"You're my religion.

You're all I've got."

Translation:

"Men uchun sen mening dinimsan. Menda faqat sensan." [3]

This statement shows Catherine's deep love for Frederic and her attempt to fill the emotional emptiness in her life. Her love becomes the only point of stability amid wartime losses and suffering.

Catherine's fear and search for comfort in love:

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

Translation:

"Men yomg'irdan qo'rqaman, chunki ba'zida unda o'zimni o'lik holda ko'raman." [3]

Catherine perceives rain as a symbol of approaching tragedy and loss. Her fear reflects the uncertainty and anxiety of wartime life. At the same time, she seeks comfort in love.

Catherine's loss of self in love:

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

Translation:

"Men degan narsa yo'q. Men — sensan. Mendan alohida bir men yaratma." [3]

This quote shows that Catherine sees herself as inseparable from Frederic, losing her identity in love. Her emotions reveal the emotional contradictions of wartime life and the salvational power of love.

These statements illustrate Catherine Barkley's complex inner world, her conflicting feelings between love and loss, and her emotional state during wartime. Her character appears as a romantically idealized female figure, demonstrating the complexity of human emotions during war.

Hemingway constructs female characters through concise yet symbolic details. Although their inner world is not fully described, readers can sense their suffering, search for freedom, and psychological state after the war. Through these characters, women are portrayed not only in terms of love and relationships but also as modern individuals. They embody independence, mutual freedom, and personal choice; however, their inner complexity often remains only partially explored [4].

In the works of William Faulkner, time, memory, and subjective emotions are depicted in multifaceted ways. Female characters are portrayed as complex psychological figures with multiple layers. Faulkner examines female

characters within the context of the American South, reflecting complicated relationships connected with traditional values, family obligations, and historical trauma.

In *The Sound and the Fury*, the character Caddy illustrates complex psychological and social transformations of women. She represents the conflict between social and family norms and personal freedom. In the novel, Caddy's inner experiences and family conflicts are mostly revealed through the perspective of her brother Quentin Compson. Her personal thoughts and monologues rarely appear because she does not directly express her own point of view. Instead, Quentin's memories and internal monologues reveal Caddy's desire for personal freedom and her resistance to social norms.

“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.”

Translation:

“Kaddi iffatini yo‘qotganini eshitganimda, dunyo ko‘zimga qorong‘i bo‘lib ketdi. Uning bu qilmishi oilamiz sha‘niga dog‘ tushirdi. Lekin men uni hali ham sevaman, chunki u mening singlim, mening Keddinim.” [5]

This internal monologue reveals Quentin's complex attitude toward Caddy and the conflict between family values and personal freedom.

“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.”

Translation:

“Men daraxtlar orasida yugurdim, kiyimim shoxlarga ilinib qoldi. Menga baribir edi. Hali ham Kvintinning meni chaqirayotgan ovozini eshitar edim, g‘azab va yana nimadir – nomini tilga olishga botinolmaydigan bir his bilan. Men erkin bo‘lishni istardim. Bu yerdan boshqa istalgan joyda bo‘lishni. Lekin qanchalik uzoqqa yugursam

ham, baribir ularning nigohini, ularning mendan kutgan narsalarini his qilardim. Men ularning sharmandasi edim, ularning yuki, ularning gunohi. Ammo men o‘zim ham bor edim. Va men ularga o‘zimni aniqlashga ruxsat bermas edim.” [5]

Through the character of Caddy, Faulkner depicts a woman's struggle between personal freedom and social limitations.

In Faulkner's works, women are often portrayed through their inner struggles and their attitudes toward historical and cultural circumstances. They are presented not only as victims but also as active subjects shaping their own lives and values.

Faulkner portrays female characters as multidimensional figures whose inner emotions and conflicts are deeply explored. Through his narrative style, women are shown experiencing personal tragedies, social responsibilities, and conflicts in relationships. They often attempt to find their place within complicated situations shaped by Southern traditions and historical heritage. As a result, they are depicted not merely as victims but also as agents of social change [6].

When discussing the differences between these two writers in portraying female characters, it can be said that Ernest Hemingway emphasizes simplicity and minimalistic expression, focusing on symbolic and external aspects of female characters. His characters are often shaped by external circumstances such as war and social conditions, creating a sense of emotional emptiness for the reader. In contrast, William Faulkner uses complex narrative structures, internal monologues, and detailed psychological descriptions to analyze female characters more deeply. His characters are shaped within historical and cultural contexts and reveal conflicts between traditional and modern values.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the representation of female characters in the works of Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner reflects different artistic approaches and expressive techniques. Hemingway's minimalist style emphasizes external features and presents women as modern and independent but sometimes somewhat superficial figures. Faulkner, on the other hand, employs complex narrative structures and psychological detail to portray women

within the context of inner struggles, historical heritage, and cultural traditions.

Thus, in the works of both writers, the female image reflects not only the gender stereotypes and social relations of their time but also represents an important analytical subject demonstrating the complex and multifaceted nature of female characters in modern literature. Through this analytical approach, readers can better understand the distinctive features of female representation in the works of Hemingway and Faulkner, their cultural and social significance, and their contribution to modern literature.

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