

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Artistic Representation Of Female Characters In American “Lost Generation” Literature: A Comparative Study Of Ernest Hemingway’s A Farewell To Arms And F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby

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Abstract

The study analyzes how women are portrayed through various narrative techniques, character development, and symbolic imagery, reflecting themes such as freedom, disillusionment, love, and the search for identity in a rapidly changing society. Particular attention is paid to the complexity of female identities, their psychological depth, and their roles in shaping the moral and emotional atmosphere of the narratives. The research also explores how female characters embody both the ideals and the contradictions of modernity, revealing tensions between traditional gender expectations and emerging forms of independence.

The findings demonstrate that the artistic portrayal of female characters in “Lost Generation” literature not only contributes to the thematic richness of these works but also provides insight into the broader cultural and social dynamics of the postwar era.

KEY WORDS

Lost Generation literature, female characters, artistic representation, gender roles, postwar society, psychological portrayal, modernism, American literature, identity crisis, narrative characterization.

INTRODUCTION

The term “Lost Generation” attributed to a group of the writers who came of age during World War I in American literature and expressed profound disillusionment with traditional values, morality, and social structures. Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Robert Aldington and F. Scott Fitzgerald are among the most prominent representatives of this generation. Their literary works highlight and refer themes of alienation, loss, and emotional instability in postwar society.

While the male protagonists of Lost Generation literature have been extensively analyzed, the portrayal of female characters remains a crucial aspect that deserves deeper scholarly

attention. Female figures often function as emotional symbols, moral indicators, and reflections of societal expectations rather than fully autonomous individuals. This article aims to examine the artistic uniqueness of female characters in Hemingway’s A Farewell to Arms and Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby, focusing on their narrative roles, symbolic meanings, and representation of gender ideology in early twentieth-century American literature.

METHODS

This research employs a comparative literary analysis approach. The primary sources of the study are Ernest

Hemingway's novel *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925). Secondary sources include academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and literary criticism related to Lost Generation literature, modernism, and gender studies.

The methodology involves close textual analysis, character comparison, and interpretation within historical and cultural contexts. Particular attention is paid to narrative structure, characterization, symbolism, and the relationship between female characters and male protagonists.

RESULTS

The analysis reveals several significant findings:

1. In *A Farewell to Arms*, Catherine Barkley is portrayed as an idealized figure of love, devotion, and emotional escape from the horrors of war.
2. In *The Great Gatsby*, Daisy Buchanan represents materialism, emotional fragility, and moral indecision associated with the Jazz Age.
3. Both characters lack full independence and are primarily defined through their relationships with male protagonists.
4. Female characters function as symbolic constructs reflecting male desires, fears, and disillusionment rather than realistic representations of women's lived experiences.
5. The artistic portrayal of women reinforces the patriarchal worldview of Lost Generation literature.

DISCUSSION

Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms* embodies unconditional love and self-sacrifice. Hemingway presents her as a woman who willingly subordinates her identity to the emotional needs of Frederic Henry. Hemingway presents Catherine Barkley as a woman who willingly subordinates her identity to the emotional needs of Frederic Henry. This is evident when Catherine openly declares, "There isn't any me any more. Just what you want." Such statements demonstrate that Catherine consciously erases her individuality, redefining herself solely through her relationship with Frederic. Her emotional devotion, while portrayed as romantic, ultimately reflects a loss of female autonomy within a male-centered narrative. Her character serves as a refuge from the chaos of war, offering stability and tenderness. However, this idealization deprives her of autonomy and

individuality, reducing her role to that of an emotional support figure. Catherine Barkley's character exemplifies self-effacement, as she prioritizes Frederic Henry's emotional comfort over her own identity. By repeatedly expressing that her sense of self exists only in relation to him, Catherine becomes a symbolic figure of devotion rather than an autonomous individual. Hemingway's portrayal thus reinforces traditional gender roles common in Lost Generation literature.

Although Daisy Buchanan possesses charm and beauty, she lacks emotional strength and moral courage. Her tendency to withdraw from difficult situations rather than confront them reveals her passivity and dependence on wealth and social status. Fitzgerald uses Daisy's character to expose the moral emptiness behind upper-class glamour. Daisy's inability to take responsibility for her actions reflects the emptiness and superficiality of upper-class society. Fitzgerald uses her character to critique materialism and social inequality. Fitzgerald notes that she "vanished into her rich house, into her rich, full life, leaving *Gatsby*—nothing." This behavior demonstrates Daisy's moral fragility and emotional detachment, emphasizing her role as a symbol of superficiality and irresponsibility within the Jazz Age society.

Despite stylistic differences, both Hemingway and Fitzgerald depict women as passive and dependent. Their female characters reflect male-centered narratives and reinforce traditional gender roles. This similarity highlights a broader cultural tendency within Lost Generation literature to marginalize female agency.

CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis demonstrates that female characters in *A Farewell to Arms* and *The Great Gatsby* play a significant symbolic role in expressing the emotional and moral crisis of the Lost Generation. Catherine Barkley and Daisy Buchanan, though distinct in characterization, both represent idealized constructs shaped by male perspectives and narrative priorities. Rather than functioning as fully autonomous individuals, these women are portrayed primarily in relation to male protagonists, serving emotional, psychological, and symbolic purposes. Their artistic representation reveals the limitations placed on women in early twentieth-century American society and underscores the patriarchal ideology embedded in Lost Generation literature. Understanding these portrayals contributes to a deeper comprehension of gender dynamics and cultural

disillusionment in modern American fiction.

Catherine Barkley embodies devotion, self-sacrifice, and emotional escape in a world devastated by war. Her willingness to subordinate her identity to Frederic Henry reflects the romantic idealization of female submission common in Hemingway's works. In contrast, Daisy Buchanan symbolizes moral fragility, materialism, and emotional passivity within the affluent society of the Jazz Age. Fitzgerald employs her character to expose the emptiness and ethical decay underlying the American Dream.

Despite differences in social background and narrative function, both characters reveal the limitations imposed on women in early twentieth-century American literature. Their portrayals reinforce traditional gender roles and highlight the patriarchal ideology embedded in Lost Generation narratives. Ultimately, the artistic representation of women in these novels not only reflects individual authorial perspectives but also serves as a broader commentary on cultural disillusionment, gender inequality, and emotional instability in postwar American society.

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