



## THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE THEME OF THE "LOST GENERATION" IN LITERATURE

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**Abstract:** American literature in the 20th century, like other literatures of the Western countries, was marked with complex and multi-valued phenomena. Reducing them into a common denominator means deliberately distorting the process of literary development. It is the decades which define some new direction or trend that relates directly to the certain social changes taking place in society or, perhaps, in country. The biggest surprise which the world, particularly that small part of it called the United States has never stopped dishing out of surprises since the First World War, started. That alone created a certain amount of an economic boom in America before the countries of the world plunged into world war. This fractured haphazard development of the American economy led it to a new depression in the later 20s-early 30s. This was the initial creation of an enormous army of unemployed and consequently active labor movements.

**Key words:** "Lost Generation", literature, critical realism, philosophy.

To the undulating social pendulum, literature responds extremely sensitively. The decade of the twenties and thirties was primarily characterized by intensive and rapid development of literature around critical realism. It produced some of the strongest social works of T. Dreiser and R. Lardner, S. Lewis and E. Sinclair, W. Faulkner and T. Wolfe, S. Fitzgerald and E. Hemingway, Dos Passos and D. Steinbeck, and many others. Regardless of the socio-political views and standpoints of these authors, their object was the same-worry and interest in regarding a single problem for them-namely, the problem of the human personality, human being-s-a human existing in society. True, each author attempted to solve it in his or her own way, relying on the individual experience,their personal philosophy.

Among these writers comes a group of artists who actually originated during that time, shortly after the First World War; they terminated whatever has been left by the



experiences as young people. This has actually had an effect on the creativity of these young people who participated in the war. It turned these along with their generation into shreds of confusion, the idea that all ideals died. It is exactly within this situation that the so-called "lost generation "was born with members distinguished such as S. Fitzgerald, E. Hemingway, W. Faulkner, and Dos Passos.

"Lost Generation, group of American writers who came of age during World War I and came to define their reputations as writers in the 1920s. This term is more widely used to refer to the generation after World War I. The generation was 'lost' because its inherited values were functionally obsolete in the postwar world and because of its spiritual estrangement from an America that, basking under Pres. Warren G. Harding's 'back to normalcy' policy, must have seemed hopelessly provincial, materialistic, and emotionally barren to its members.

This term encompasses such writers as Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Dos Passos, E.E. Cummings, Archibald MacLeish, Hart Crane and many others who made Paris the center of their literary activities in the 1920s. They were never a literary school. The attribution of the term Lost Generation is usually credited to Gertrude Stein, though it was popularized by Ernest Hemingway. According to Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* (1964), she had heard it in France by some garage owner who referred to the younger generation as "génération perdue". In talking with Hemingway, she turned that phrase back upon him and said, "You are all a lost generation". And he used her remark as an epigraph in *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), a novel which captures the attitudes of a hard-drinking, fast-living set of disillusioned young expatriates in postwar Paris"[45].

None of them directly involved in the war, yet all of them witnessed moral and ethical devaluation in the events after the war. The "lostness" was caused by the shattered illusions about the romanticism of war which had been implanted by patriotic frenzy. The estrangement of youth returning from-the trench was, moreover, the outcome of extreme disillusionment with life itself. Therefore, the works of the writers of the "lost generation" are, in a sense, the evidence of the problems confronted during those times (after the end of the Second World War, literary history is going to repeat



again, and the writers will come who would have experienced a much new human tragedy).

One of the first "testaments" happens in S. Fitzgerald's novel, *This Side of Paradise*, published in 1920, which describes young people ruined by having completely lost faith in mankind. Such wore-out disappointed youth of S. Fitzgerald will then have to blast through a life that was entirely devalued in the so-called "jazz age".

For quite a few years, authors were completely able to catch the war's meaning, the catastrophe brought about by it, and then write about it in their works. In fact such literature appeared in Europe, the actual scene of monstrous battles. Such are the novels of E.-M. Remarque "*All Quiet on the Western Front*", 1929, R. Aldington "*Death of a Hero*", 1929, D. Galsworthy "*White Monkey*", 1924, and A. Barbusse "*Fire*", 1926, etc.

W. Faulkner's novels, "*Soldier's Pay*", 1926, Dos Passos "*Three Soldiers*", 1921, "*Manhattan*", 1925, and 1919, 1932, made up with great emphasis some of the important readings on this occasion in American literature, but most specially E. Hemingway's novels: "*The Sun Also Rises*", 1926; and "*A Farewell to Arms*", 1929. E. Hemingway found himself farthest away from the hypocritical promises and political machineries of the ruling circles. M. Gaismar commented during this time "The twenties of America have tried to make some kind of deal with God, and who dares to say that moral loneliness and persecution did not lurk in the dark depths of this historical era, the era of the beautiful and the damned, which lay in wait for every corner horror and death, whose 'youth today, more than ever, seems irrevocably lost'".

However, while these typically take on a very cynical and pessimistic shade, they always remain for he, unlike many of his peers, drawn to the love of life and the constant search for its possible nourishment for his faith in man. The ethical credo of the entire poetics of the talents artist himself. He then became a model for many other writers. Not only the individuality of his work, but also objective reasons contributed to the emergence of this model: the clouds of Nazism were gathering in Germany, the preparations for World War II were being made.



Surely September 1, 1939 will become a stain of shame in the history of mankind: on that terrible day, the aggressive forces of imperialism threw the world into the abyss of its ruinous second great war. Indeed, of all wars that have ever taken place on this earth, none can compare in destructiveness and destructiveness to the second great war. The typhoon of war swept through vast territories of Europe, Asia, Africa, encompassing 61 nations, and over 80%, of world's population.... Year after year, the initiation of this bloody event reminds us of the long and testy trails that accompanied the nations during this conflict. And the question comes up every time, who is culpable in the death of those 50 millions, taken up into a six-year massacre.

Literature is majorly concerned with the war and holds a special place in American literature. This is of course, by the fact that for the civilian American, the fierce battle against Nazism did not turn into what it was for the peoples of Europe. The Second World War also did not end into a national disaster for them, like the First World War. This particular circumstance led to defining the characteristic features of the US literature on the Second World War. It is the tragic problems of our time that lead such warworks. The attitude towards war among the American writers in the early days of the forties differed. Some became anti-fascists, while some had a most peculiar perception of the world war, leading them to extreme pacifism. For example, in the writings of Norman Mailer, James Jones, John Hersey, the soldier acts against a simple American, who does not seem to understand the anti-fascist aspect of the war. "An American novel about the Second World War," says the American critic D. Waldmyer, "in it, 'evil' is represented 'in two faces': fascism, against which the war was fought, and fascism in the home itself"[46].

It would be impossible not to mention those works published during the war that demolished the already existing ideologies of misanthropic fascism. They seem to have been made into "human documents." Among them are "The Cross and the Arrow," by Albert Maltz, who portrayed his resistance as the best that German people have to Hitlerism, "Guards on the Rhine," Lillian Helman and many more.

Works emerging after 1945 mainly reflected reactions to post-war America from authors who took part in the new war. As appropriately stated by the American critic J.



Bryant, these are termed as socio-political military novels[13]. They include N. Mailer's "The Naked and the Dead", S. Hein's "Crusaders", I. Shaw's "Young Lions", and D. Jones's "From Here to Eternity" which are deep-rooted within the radical political idioms of the 30s while carrying socio-political ideas. The major problem in those novels is the opposition of class interests. Most of the writers mention a time of depression. The tightly regulated fascist machine, which brutally snuffed out any glimmer of resistance, levelled the personality completely, and this alarmed American writers who were forced to examine the practices of the representatives of the ruling circles in their own country. Almost all of the novels have at their center a war not between army and enemy but between command and soldier. Thus, the army reflects and sometimes, like a lens, magnifies the class contradictions in American society of that time.

In fact, the newer writers-who joined the fold of literature after the war-are more loss in concern with the individual than with how that individual would manage to make America truly democratic. All try in various ways to make sense of the problem and to write about it. But whatever else may apply, in all these works, one and the same core is apparent; in all novels, a hero rises up, but almost always, defeat ensues. True, the idea runs through all of these works that it is better to rebel than to give up, even though an open and uncompromising hero cannot stand the surrounding conditions and dies (Prue, Glenn, Noah).

The war novel has almost evolved into a moral laboratory, raising questions of guilt and complicity, power and protagonist relationships. Anti-war novels only did not end wars, according to Leslie Fiedler, but proclaimed to the world the loss of honor in Western culture, "after the first and then after the second world war". James Jones (1921-1977), the most distinguished name in American literature almost dedicated entirely to the problems of war and peace, came up while all the talk was being muted in 1951, the year the publication of his novel From Here to Eternity stirred quite a revolution. It was noted, many years later, by A.Mulyarchik in his work Postwar American Novelists that "Many of the themes that later went on to fashion and even become commonplace in postwar American prose had been made famous by Jones in his first novel". Convex scenes of army life present alienation and lack of communication skills,



anonymity, depersonalization; all these sociopsychological categories and the calculations leading to them.

Entitling or titling the anti-militarist novel which made its way into existence while there was still hot going the Cold War would not be at all far from accurate; such openness it had in its caustic, condemnatory message to readers and critics alike. To speak of these early years of the 1950s as the "period of tacit consent" would hardly be overstated when "McCarthyism" left a bloody legacy behind in American literature. Americans were earnestly searching for a way to escape from another crisis that had somehow sunk into their bone and tissue.

The complete collapse of the individual was the constant torment of their minds. In such environmental situations, some individuals found refuge in reprinted books of Heidegger, Sartre, Camus, Freud; some others found it among Eastern religions like Buddhism, Zen Buddhism. Some considered it their sacred duty to make the people know the bitter truth about war and its consequences.

Jones, a participant of Second World War, who knows very well about the military machinery of his Country, has brought forth in all his "splendor" the contemporary US Army of those years, though events narrated in his first novel refer back to the beginning of the Second World War. It is quite obvious that the writer is highly worried about the fate of his compatriots after the war as it was with the writers of the "lost generation" who saw through realities of World War I and were anguished by the disarray in their life which came after the war. "For the novelists of the generation of Hemingway and Dos Passos," wrote Ihab Hassan, "the First World War became a symbol of general ruin, as well as personal disappointment. But the next generation entered World War II with even fewer illusions; and what they saw in its indescribable cruelties became for them not only the collapse of the old order, but also a terrible prophecy of the future.

American critic Maxuel Gaismar said in his article "Reflections on Modern American Prose": While war and the army have been described by several historians in American letters with a force that can hardly be matched, Jones's novels "From Here to Eternity" and "Thin Redline" are likely to be regarded among the best by readers. He referred to



them as not only the best America's works on the past war, but also as landmarks in modern prose itself. Jones's "World War II" ("WW II"), published in 1975, and the posthumous appearance of "On the first call" ("Whistle," 1978) by the writer's friends yet again proved that Jones remained steadfast unto the end in his creed. It includes From Here To Eternity, Among Us in the Land of the Living and A Thin Red Line within the trilogy on what the author has called War.

To summarize them, these authors, then, write about the Lost Generation's life in the post-war world, together with ethical and moral issues.

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