



THE INFLUENCE OF EXPATRIATION ON AMERICAN LITERATURE

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Abstract. *This article considered the impact of expatriation on American literature. The author of the article presented brief information about the Lost Generation and the Beat Generation. The works of Henry James, who created a lot in this genre, were also analyzed.*

Keywords. *Extraterritorial, Lost Generation, Beat Generation, Expatriate Literature.*

ВЛИЯНИЕ ЭМИГРАЦИИ НА АМЕРИКАНСКУЮ ЛИТЕРАТУРУ

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Аннотация. *В этой статье рассматривается влияние эмиграции на американскую литературу. Автор статьи представил краткую информацию о потерянном поколении и поколении битников. Также были проанализированы произведения Генри Джеймса, много творившего в этом жанре.*

Ключевые слова: *Экстерриториальное, потерянное поколение, поколение битников, зарубежная литература.*

MUHOJIRLARNING AMERIKA ADABIYOTIGA TA'SIRI

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Annotatsiya. *Ushbu maqolada muhojirlarning Amerika adabiyotiga ta'siri ko'rib chiqiladi. Maqola muallifi Lost Generation va Beat Generation haqida qisqacha ma'lumot berdi. Bu janrda ko'p ijod qilgan Genri Jeymsning asarlari ham tahlil qilindi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *Ekstraterritorial, Lost Generation, Beat Generation, Muhojir adabiyoti.*

American literature has been profoundly shaped by the experiences of its authors abroad. The phenomenon of expatriation—writers living outside the United States—has not only diversified American literature but also provided new perspectives and thematic depth. From the nineteenth century through the modern era, expatriate writers have enriched the literary landscape, exploring themes of identity, belonging, and cultural contrast. Almost every country and culture in which the arts have been seriously pursued its literary exiles; its voyagers, expatriates, and emigres. Particularly since the Romantic period, though also repeatedly before it, a large part of literary experience and of literary creation itself has taken place outside the native land of author. Today this is a marked, recurrent feature of literature. Surveying the world of Nabokov, Beckett, Borges, of Mann, Brecht, and Joyce, George Steiner reminds us, in his book *Extraterritorial* (1972), what a large part of modernist literature has been written by the writer ‘unhoused’. A marked element of geographical displacement lies behind modern writing and, Steiner notes, this has frequently been not just a geographical but also a formal and a linguistic condition; modern art has been shaped by distance, multilinguality, and Babel. This, he remarks, is appropriate; is art speaking to the modern condition as we have come to feel it; is a response to ‘the problem of the lost center’. But it is not, he stresses, a new phenomenon: the Romantic notion of the writer enracine is perhaps more the exception than the rule (Malcolm Bradbury, 1978).



Expatriation has been a subject of debate throughout the entirety of the United States' history. The meaning of "expatriate" continues to change as more and more Americans live abroad. According to the United States government, to be considered an expatriate one must voluntarily renounce one's nationality and allegiance; however, the cultural meaning of the word has a less defined stance, including anyone voluntarily living overseas. The progression of this term is largely influenced by ever-changing American culture. Certain culturally relevant expatriates, such as the members of the Lost Generation and the Beat Generation, composed literary works, now considered to be American classics, while abroad. Both of these generations have greatly influenced the United States' literary realm in addition to shifting American culture. Examining the literature of these two expatriate movements will show how place is represented in their writings and how said place has come to change withstanding American culture.

The Lost Generation is a term created to describe the generation that was uprooted, both physically and mentally, by World War I. The term was popularized by Ernest Hemingway, and though that entire generation was "lost," it is often associated with the expatriate writers who congregated outside of the United States. The term "Beat Generation" was coined to address those who were tired and beaten down by the fearful society that followed World War II. The Beats came together as an anti-conformist group and predictably became social outcasts. The influence of the literature from both generations can be seen across the nation, as many works are studied in schools today, not to mention inspiring other art forms, including music, film, and television. The perceived freedom of creativity of the Lost Generation and the Beat Generation resonates with people presently, having a relevant cultural impact. Thus, this research is applicable to a variety of fields, including geography, psychology, and anthropology, as a nation must understand why its citizens are embracing expatriation and the impact that has upon a nation's culture.



Migration is the physical movement of humans, as individuals or as groups, from one place to another. People migrate daily; an opportunity in a new place can outweigh the promise of a current place. Inevitably, migration leads to a social and cultural exchange between differing populations. The cultural phenomenon that occurs via migration has transformed into a concept geographers refer to as cultural migration (Hannah Skahill).

In order to understand the influence of the Lost Generation and the Beat Generation, it must be established that expatriation is not coterminous with migration. According to the United States Government via the Survey of the Law of Expatriation, “expatriation is the voluntary renunciation or abandonment of nationality and allegiance,” (Yoo, 2002).

The Lost Generation

The cultural influence of American expatriates can be measured through their literature. Place, as depicted in the expatriate literature of the Lost Generation and the Beat Generation, is very influential within American culture. These writers brought aspects of international cultures into their writings, introducing customs and alternative ways of thinking to the American public. Most of this global influence came from Europe. Europe was viewed as “the Mecca of culture; in order to live the painter’s life, the writer’s life, the far-flung devotee yearned to go and become, there...it was Europe that beckoned, Europe that counted,” (Gordimer, 2010). The expatriates of the Lost Generation created a cultural, literary community specifically in Paris following the end of World War I. Many of the expatriates expressed disappointment with the “standardization and mediocrity of American Modernity,” (Green, 2009); those who had fought in Skahill, 12 the war could not readjust to post-war society in the United States. Doctor Leslie Petty, a professor at Rhodes University in Memphis, Tennessee, explained in an interview that expatriates left the United States because:



“They were searching. This is a kind of standard narrative about modernism; there was so much disaffection and disillusion after the First World War...Hemingway in particular, and Stein, all of them, wanted a place where they felt free to create and experiment. And all the values that [the United States] had claimed to be about, honor and patriotism and fairness...just seemed to kind of go out the window after the First World War and it seemed very restricting and puritan and not much else to the expatriate writers, so...they felt alienated from [the United States] and also wanted to have the freedoms they associated with Paris, especially, and France and Europe in general,” (Petty, personal communication).

The Beat Generation

Much of the work produced by the Lost Generation has been considered significant by literary critics and the American public for quite some time, inspiring generations; this inspiration extended beyond creativity. There is “a common strand...through the comments of twentieth century American writers when they explain why they felt compelled to become expatriates... life in the United States...had become intolerable,” (McMahon, 1964). Much like how the Lost Generation was established after World War I, the new counter-culture crowd, the Beats, arose after World War II:

“A new explosion of historical writing in the 1960s and 1970s turned the focus to the 1920s writers, helping to reinvigorate a fascination with the concept of expatriation...the 1920s Americans in Paris and their 1950s cousins became the center of attention of a new generation of historians, themselves critical of American politics or culture and captivated anew by the stories of those who had left the United States in the interwar years or after World War II,” (Green, 2009).

The Beat Generation mirrors the Lost Generation in a number of ways. Both are groups of American writers, both object to the American culture of their time, and both groups shared a large sense of wanderlust. The Beat Generation, with all



its similar characteristics to the Lost Generation, took on the idea of expatriation for themselves. By this time, the “image [of an expatriate] was often far from flattering...into the 1960s, ‘expatriate’ was still frequently a pejorative term...those who left the United States during the Vietnam War era as draft evaders or conscientious objectors came in for their share of opprobrium...and the critical implication of the term was summed up by the frequent misspelling: ‘expatriot,’” (Green, 2009). The Beat Generation’s work was certainly influenced by the members of the Lost Generation, namely Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, and Ezra Pound. Carl Solomon, a writer amongst the Beats, is even described by James Campbell, author of *This is the Beat Generation*, as being “raised in Brooklyn but...he grew up intellectually in Paris,” (Campbell, 1999).

Expatriate Literature

Place is very influential in the literature written by American expatriates. While it is clear that the various countries the expatriate writers explored changed them as individuals and even as whole generations, the extent of their influence within the United States is less apparent. It is not something that can be quantified; rather, it is observed. Following both World Wars, the United States had major cultural shifts towards consumerism; commodities and material items became the central focus of the masses. Ranging from clothing to alcohol, post-war American society embraced excess in an attempt to grapple with the horrors the wars had created then left over. Society in the United States made every attempt to distance the pain the war had caused by focusing on the tangible rather than dealing with the root of their problems.

Similarly, the Beat Generation's literature provided the United States with opportunities to escape post-World War II shock and Cold War anxiety by exploring (both physically and within their writing) various landscapes, and even mindscapes: the “...study of best-selling American novels over the 30 years following World War



It shows that the best sellers' attitude toward life organized around careers in large corporations shifted from one of enthusiastic affirmation to questioning, rejection, and finally nihilism," (Griswold, 1993). The Beat Generation marks the shift in American culture from modernism to post-modernism. The influences of countries like India, Mexico, and Morocco provided the Beats with the means to step away from a culture based largely on consumerism and embrace ideas of spirituality and simplicity, reconnecting with the earth and questioning long withstanding notions of what society may dictate as correct or incorrect:

"Buddhism attracted [the beats] because it seemed to make sense of the central facts of...experience (suffering, impermanence) and to affirm...intuition that life was dreamlike and illusory. Perhaps more importantly, by locating the origin of suffering in desire, the Buddhist sutras seemed to offer a way out," (Prothero, 1991).

The Beats translated the influence of outside places into their writing, having a major impact upon American culture. Following the early stages of the Beat Generation, 1950s United States "saw the beginning of the rejection of a home-centered lifestyle by significant numbers of American men. It was this decade that was marked by the beginnings of a 'flight from commitment' as growing numbers of men either stayed single for longer periods of time or left their families, searching for gratification in a hedonistic lifestyle based on the growing number of consumer durables that were starting to dominate the [United States] market," (McDowell, 1996). Without the exploration of geography outside of the United States, the Beats would not have been nearly as influential of a force. What they took from other countries (such as Buddhism or the idea of consciousness) they brought to the United States through their literature, helping transition the United States into a post-modern society; "their resistance through mobility simultaneously reflects and challenges hegemonic cultural values," (McDowell, 1996). Without the Beats, we would not have The Beatles or Bob Dylan, who helped further what the Beats were



all about to an even more massive scale. Transitioning into a post-modern society included significant cultural changes within the United States, including the rise of the feminist and civil rights movements.

The effects of both the Lost Generation and the Beat Generation can be seen in present day as the United States continues to fight the longest war within its history. There has been resurgence in the subject of both the Lost and Beat Generations. This is no surprise; American culture is reverting back to these two groups because the disillusionment felt with American society following World Wars I and II directly mirrors the sentiments felt today by many Americans. The War on Terror has been going on for over a decade now; it is no wonder that society has become reinvigorated with the idea of American expatriates. The Lost Generation and Beat Generation are presently subjects of various forms of media, including movies, television, music, and literature. Within the last two years, there have been several films released surrounding these expatriates, including *Midnight in Paris*, *Hemingway and Gellhorn*, *On the Road*, *Ginsberg*, and *Howl*. Even the advent of the rap genre of music is a reflection of these expatriate writers (more specifically in the style of the Beats); rap uses a style similar to the cut-ups of Burroughs, using a stream of conscious style and associating words to create something seemingly nonsensical but actually meaningful.

The tradition of American writers moving abroad can be traced back to the nineteenth century. One of the earliest and most notable examples is Henry James. Henry James was an American-British author. He is regarded as a key transitional figure between literary realism and literary modernism, and is considered by many to be among the greatest novelists in the English language.

He is best known for his novels dealing with the social and marital interplay between *émigré* Americans, the English, and continental Europeans, such as *The Portrait of Lady*. His later works, such as *The Ambassadors*, *The Wings of the Dove*



and *The Golden Bowl* were increasingly experimental. In describing the internal states of mind and social dynamics of his characters, James often wrote in a style in which ambiguous or contradictory motives and impressions were overlaid or juxtaposed in the discussion of a character's psyche. For their unique ambiguity, as well as for other aspects of their composition, his late works have been compared to Impressionist Painting.

His novella *The Turn of the Screw* has garnered a reputation as the most analysed and ambiguous ghost story in the English language and remains his most widely adapted work in other media. He wrote other highly regarded ghost stories, such as "The Jolly Corner".

James published articles and books of criticism, travel, biography, autobiography, and plays. Born in the United States, James largely relocated to Europe as a young man, and eventually settled in England, becoming a British citizen. James was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature.

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