PHILOSOPHIES OF DEATH IN THE WORKS OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD AND ERNEST HEMINGWAY

by

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To my mom, who we long to join in eternity, and my dad.
Inseparable in this life, so too will they be in eternity.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants. —Psalms 116:15

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ABSTRACT

At perhaps its most basic level, literature explores how to live, and philosophy, in part, examines what living means. Though seemingly paradoxical, the philosophers who deal extensively with and primarily study questions of existence are the philosophers who most often confront the matter of death. Three philosophers share commonalities among their framings of death: Horace (65 BC-8 BC), Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). Common to each philosopher is the inclusion of death as part of the framework of life and human experience.

While these philosophers pose intellectual answers to questions about existence in light of death, certain American authors provide possible answers through the stories they create in literature as they examine the human condition—the very nature of existing. Dubbed members of the Lost Generation, F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) and Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) wrestled with philosophical concerns in their fiction. World War I left Fitzgerald and Hemingway disillusioned and restless, with a desire to search, to wander, and to explore—desires which are reflected in the characters they created, characters who engage deeply in *living*.

As these two authors work out the question of how to live, they somewhat obsessively include the fact of life's finitude. The pervading topic of death peppers their narratives, and life seems to be dictated by death. Similarly, Horace, Kierkegaard, and Sartre see death as an informant to life and their philosophies reflect as much. For both the authors and philosophers, to understand how to view life, one must understand how to view death—an understanding which takes into consideration questions of how to exist, explorations of the human condition, and to what end meaning can be found. Their philosophies about death, which illuminates their

philosophies of life, are distinguishable and evident in the works of both Fitzgerald and Hemingway.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised. —Corinthians 15:51-52

Certain modern American authors are recognized for wrestling with philosophical concerns of existence.[1] These authors ask such questions as: *How should one exist? What does it mean to exist? How does one make meaning of life? What does it mean to be human?* Subsequently, they provide possible answers through the stories they create as they examine the human condition—the very nature of existing. After all, there is perhaps no better medium than literature to work out the question of how to exist. But the question of existence is complicated by the reality of death, arguably the most certain *and* uncertain of all human experiences. From these American authors who dramatize how to exist comes a somewhat smaller subgroup who also confront death.

Death is perhaps the most certain of all human experiences. Everyone who has come before us, everyone now amongst the living, and everyone to come in the future has or will experience death. Yet death remains a mystery, unknown and inexplicable. Its certainty is without certitude. We know not of its coming nor of what our encounter with it will be like. The reality that we cannot glean wisdom from those who have died before us about their experience with death and that they, likewise, cannot impart knowledge to us about their experience highlights the impenetrable and incomprehensible nature of death. But this reality, among others, has not hindered the study of death—far from it, as death has long been studied in a number of fields, among them medicine, science, sociology, theology, religion, philosophy, and literature.

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[1] These authors are wide-ranging, but for examples beyond Fitzgerald and Hemingway (mentioned below in scholarship of L.A. Rowland, Katherine Calloway, Colin Wilson, Marc Amfreville, etc.), see also Brian Treanor's "The Virtue of Simplicity: Reading Thoreau with Aristotle," (*The Concord Saunterer*, vol. 15, 2007, pp. 65–90) or Jacob Stratman's "Empathic Anger, Aristotle, and the Problem with Teaching Flannery O'Connor" (*Flannery O'Connor Review*, vol. 14, 2016, pp. 54–62).

Most similar of the grouping is perhaps the latter two fields, whose studies of death utilize differing methodologies but take a similar approach to understanding it.

Just as some American authors who wrestle with concerns of existence incorporate death in their works, so too do philosophers of existence—albeit some more directly than others. Philosophy and literature have long held a historical conversation, with one field contributing to the other. As the introduction to *Death in Literature* (Harokla and Kivistö) suggests, "If the purpose of philosophy is to prepare us for death or to be the practice of death" (according to Plato's *Phaedo*), then we might ask, "How can literature contribute to our existential concerns related to death?" (vii). We might also ask, what philosophical ideas of death are present in American fiction? This connection initiated the research that would become this project and lead to the philosophical and theoretical approach that underpins this study.

The interdisciplinary study here focuses on philosophical thoughts about death as they appear in modern American literature; more specifically, it explores what is to be made of life in light of death through selected readings of American fiction. Scholarly appreciation of interdisciplinary approaches implicitly supports this particular study, as does the historical conversation between philosophy and literature. Their relationship has long been one of reciprocity and has culminated in an impressive body of scholarship.[2] The connection between philosophy and American literature is by no means a new field of research; however, gaps exist in specificities—death being one. Scholarship examining philosophies of death in American literature is sparse because this focus is deemed "niche" and underdeveloped in the field. One potential reason for this underdevelopment is an unspoken requirement to limit examination of

[2] The point here is to acknowledge the shared history and relationship between philosophy and literature without divulging into details outside the scope of this project—such as addressing them as coming out of the same context or establishing one as a part of the context in which the other develops.

philosophy and literature to historical context. Works of fiction deemed existential in nature, for instance, are primarily limited to analysis alongside existential philosophies.[3] Such a limitation is a disservice to thanatological studies (especially considering philosophy and literature's unique connection) and has left this examination scarcely broached. Scholarship of two particular modern American authors has fallen short in this regard, exposing an overdue area of study. When analyzed closely, understandings of death with philosophies of Horace (65 BC-8 BC), Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) take shape in the works of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway, authors who undoubtedly work out the question of existence alongside the issue of death.

Common to Horace, Kierkegaard, and Sartre is their devotion to writing about philosophies of life and death. Two are existentialists (though from different centuries) and one wrote to "instruct and delight." Additionally, they share commonalities among their framings of death in that as they philosophize about death, their philosophies of life are thereby illuminated. Finally, and most distinguishingly, their understandings of death are evident in the works of both Fitzgerald and Hemingway. Thus, this project intends to provide interdisciplinary scholarship where almost none exists by presenting philosophies of death as taking shape in fictional form.

One of the most substantive studies of death and literature is Outi Harokla's and Sari Kivistö's *Death in Literature* (2014) which suggests that "literature can provide us with ways of approaching death and imagining it from different perspectives" (vii). Indeed, literature has proven this over the course of centuries, dating as far back as Cicero's *Tusculun Disputations* and Shakespeare's tragedies. Harokla and Kivistö's compilation of essays focuses on the ways in

[3] See Sidney Walter Finkelstein's *Existentialism and Alienation in American Literature* (1967), for example.

which literature "offers insights into death, dying and mortality" (viii). In their introduction, Harokla and Kivistö allude to a connection between philosophy, death, and literature: "If the purpose of philosophy is to prepare us for death or to be the practice of death, as Socrates put it in *Phaedo* 81a, then we might ask what is the relationship between death and literature? How can literature contribute to our existential concerns related to death as a characteristically private experience and a real loss in our lives?" (vii). This question is one that resonates in this study. Harokla and Kivistö do not establish any connection between specific philosophies of death and literature—even more specifically, American fiction—but their question establishes a pathway forward.

Some American scholars connect Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's works to philosophy and some deal with death—but not both philosophy and death. In "Hemingway and the Hero," for example, L.A. Rowland asserts that Hemingway's philosophical writings are not necessarily overt but are nonetheless present. She does not compare him to a particular philosopher but argues he developed his own philosophy through his code hero, who "must wring meaning out of a world devoid of any values outside of himself." She briefly alludes to Hemingway's view of death, writing that he "sees as crucial the manner by which the end is reached," but her primary focus remains on framing Hemingway as a philosophical writer. Katherine Calloway connects Hemingway to a specific philosopher in her essay, "'Pulvis et umbra sumus': Horace in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*." In it, Calloway presents Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* in the tradition of Horace. Her analysis lacks a close reading, focusing instead on broad elements of similarity and on topics such as wine, women, and song. While these topics are, indeed, evident in Horace's *Odes* and in Hemingway's *Sun*, they quite obviously do not involve death. Colin Wilson compares Hemingway to Jean-Paul Sartre, but his focus is predominantly social

alienation. Wilson sees Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) as a dramatized version of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1943).[4]

Other scholars, however, have studied death in Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's works—with good reason. While these two authors work out the question of how to live, they somewhat obsessively include the fact of life's finitude. Consider even just two short stories. Fitzgerald's "I'd Die for You: The Legend of Lake Lure" was only recently published in 2017, though it was penned in the 1930s. It was rejected by editors because they deemed its content too dark for publication—a suicide story. But Fitzgerald refused to tone down the suicide references. The story involves a tale of a young actress and a North Carolina mountain man, both of whom grapple with the reality of aging. Carly Delannux is rumored to have been the cause of a few women's suicides, but Atlanta Downs cannot imagine slaying herself for a man. Hemingway's "A Day's Wait" (1936) tells of a boy who falls ill, misinterprets the doctor's diagnosis, and believes he is dying. He waits to die and asks his dad at the end of the day what time he thinks he will die, at which time his dad corrects the boy's interpretation of his plight.

Both tales reflect autobiographical elements; minute though they are here, these elements are evidence of the authors' much grander personal connection to death. Fitzgerald attempted suicide close to his fortieth birthday while staying in North Carolina as his wife Zelda received treatment in a mental hospital. He lived in fear of her harming herself as well, but in a letter to a friend, recounted a visit that seemed to lift her spirits. Hemingway's story is based on an experience with his son, and one that has been anthologized ad nauseum. While this study does

[4] Sean C. Hadley's "Don't Eat That, Lady—That's Mencken: H. L. Mencken & His Nietzschean Philosophy in *The Sun Also Rises*" would appear fitting of consideration in this grouping; however, his essay is not an analysis of existentialism, but rather, an explanation of how the structure of Hemingway's novel provides a critique of Mencken's hero, Nietzsche.

not intend to outline the authors' intricate personal connection to death, acknowledgment of such a connection supports the study of death in their works.

A few scholarly contributions have focused on death but without a philosophical lens. Shosuke Kinugawa's "'He's not dead—I know he isn't': The Narrative of Absence in F. Scott Fitzgerald's Short Stories" connects Fitzgerald's resistance to the death of loved ones in the author's own life to his short stories (88). In "Hemingway's Aged Characters as Symbols of Death," Deng Tianzhong argues that Hemingway's "old characters, or more specifically, his characterization of their life in old age, are closely related to his deep concern with death" (103). But these analyses of death are devoid of any philosophical acknowledgement. Marc Amfreville's "A Fantasy in Black: The Death Drive in Fitzgerald's Lost Stories" comes closer, providing a psychoanalytic reading of three of Fitzgerald's short stories, yet his argument is that Fitzgerald intended to displace existence, returning it to what came before being. While Amfreville does acknowledge death in three of Fitzgerald's short stories, he does not consider Fitzgerald's thoughts on death as connected to his thoughts on life, intimating that Fitzgerald disregarded the search for fulfilment.

Most other scholarship exploring death in Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's works focuses on World War I.[5] This scholarship provides reason enough for why Fitzgerald and Hemingway were consumed with the subject of death. Their experience during a war-torn era undoubtedly affected their works and death's presence in them. After World War I, many authors moved abroad to join other American expatriate writers living in Paris during the 1920s—Fitzgerald and

[5] Of note are articles by William Adair, Ahmed Honeini, and T.S. Licari which address memory of war, allusions to war, wounded soldiers in war, and the suppression of war experience. In this dissertation, war deserves acknowledgement as to its impact on both Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's life and how that impact appears in their works. It is, however, discussed alongside a philosopher—in this case, Horace—and specifically connected to the war's implications on death's presence in the authors' earlier fiction.

Hemingway among them. World War I had left this group disillusioned and restless—with a desire to search, to wander, to explore—but to what end they did not always know. Their searching, wandering, and exploring were reflected in the characters they created, sometimes in true autobiographical fashion, and their characters engage deeply in *living*. They experience felt emotion, intense conflict, and explorative learning; they engage fully in *being*; and, ultimately, they restlessly search for meaning. It was Gertrude Stein who named this group the "Lost Generation"; she took the phrase for herself, "applying it to Hemingway and his cohort of expatriate writers" (Brody, *The Expatriates* 382). The twenty- to thirty-something-year-olds living in Paris in the 1920s were "eager to test the boundaries of life" (359). In many of their works, life seems to be dictated by death. Their characters experience all facets of what the human condition entails alongside encounters with death. Still, while death figures prominently in Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's works, it has not been a significant point of interest—especially of philosophical interest—among scholars.

A few philosophers have paid particular attention to death (with some having devoted titles to it). Yet of this selection, few examine living in the context of death. Even fewer tracings of philosophers were evident in Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's works. Some philosophers more readily broach the topic, with philosophies developing all the way back to ancient times. In *Phaedo* (360 BCE), Plato (427–347 BCE) espouses death as separation of the soul from the body, believing the soul to be immortal. His successor Aristotle (384–322 BCE) describes death in *Nichomachean Ethics* (350 BCE) as a reminder of mortality, a reminder that could be used as a tool by which to live virtuously and purposefully. Epicurus (341-270 BCE) and Epicureans thereafter believed death to be separate from life, whereas Zeno of Citium (334-264 BC) and the

Stoics embraced death as part of life.[6] Philosophizing about death became popular writ large again centuries later. Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) focused on death across his works, believing that philosophy would practically perish without death. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) equated death to a matter of choice, and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) emphasized death as a constant possibility, unique to each person.[7] Still more recent philosophers have continued studies of death. Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), for one, sees death as neither opposite life nor its culminating achievement, professing death to both limit life and spur it onward. Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) professed death an "unjustifiable violation".[8]

Scholarship has followed up on these philosophies with innumerable analyses and evaluations. Peter Ahrensdorf analyzes Plato's discussions of death as a defense of philosophy against religion (both theoretically and politically), and A.G. Long sees Plato as "suggesting that people do not need to be certain about the outcome of death if they are to face it without fear" (89). Nikos Kokosalakis explains that both Plato and Aristotle acknowledge "the problem of immortality of the soul" (403), but their approach to this conclusion differs greatly. Epicurean thought, according to Long, "can be used in the service of a skeptical agenda" (90). Adam Buben professes Heidegger's insights of immortality as positive and affirming. Dawne McCance has connected Derrida's studies of death to Nietzsche, extending them to a study of genetics. Again, these analyses, compilations, and studies are unending. I offer Bernard Schumacher's conclusive "fact" that "death is evaluated in several ways in philosophy: as something indifferent, as a good

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[6] See also H. Fathi and M. Shahmoradi's "Stoicism on Death" (in *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, vol. 18 no. 46, 2014, pp. 297-312) and Eric Olson's "The Epicurean View of Death" (in *Journal of Ethics*, vol. 17, no. 1/2, June 2013, pp. 65–78).

[7] See chapter forty-one, "On Death," in Arthur Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* (1818); chapter nine of part one, "Of Voluntary Death," in Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1885); and chapter five, "Being-towards-death" in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927).

[8] See Jacques Derrida's *Life Death* (edited by Pascale-Anne Brault, Peggy Kamuf, and Michael Naas, University of Chicago Press, 2020) and Simone de Beauvoir's *A Very Easy Death* (Pantheon, 1985).

(in itself or depending on the circumstances), or finally as an evil (in itself or depending on the circumstances)" (*Death and Mortality* 7).

Of scholarship, I found none to indicate the significance of death as those of Horace, Kierkegaard, and Sartre when considered alongside Fitzgerald and Hemingway. This intertextual study explores philosophical texts of the three philosophers in order to establish points of contact between them and F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway. Since no scholarship has previously made these connections, no one scholar's previous study presents a direct starting point. I rely on philosophical texts to inform my readings, observations, and analyses. As a result, my study is largely analytical.

Horace (65 BC-8 BC) intended his meditations on death in his writings to be cast as a steadying influence. As a poet who wrote about philosophy—and *how* to live—Horace's writings address how one should exist in the world. His belief in making the most of life became a pulsing theme in his writings, alongside admonitions to accept suffering as it comes and avoid worrying about the future. Indeed, Horace advocated for "trusting as little as possible to the future" (*Odes* Book I) but not at the peril of the present. On the contrary, Horace valued living a quiet life, one of contentment and moderation. He deemed these efforts the responsibility of the individual, such as in his "Epistle to Augustus," where he emphasizes that consoling the sick and helpless should be efforts humans make for each other, similar to the same moral responsibility that Sartre would later explore. Through his meditations on death, Horace emphasized the importance of the present and the uncertainty of the future. Horace wrote about death to meditate on it, to illuminate its reality, and to call attention to its unpredictable nature.

So, too, did Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), meditate on death, but in such a way as believing this life not to be the end. In his studies, he asked, "What is existence?" and posed firm answers. Philosophizing about what it means to be alive led him to philosophize about death itself. He wrote about life, how humans live, and the problem of existence. He wrote about *being*, viewing human life from the inside rather than from an objective point of view where most phenomenological studies halt. Kierkegaard diverged from certain phenomenological thought, such as that of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, whose systematic philosophy (divided into Logic, Nature, and Spirit) was built solely on rational principles. Kierkegaard, however, maintained that subjectivity is not rational. He identified two truths: objective truth (involving *what* is said) and subjective truth (involving *how* something is said). As the creator of his own world, the individual is also responsible for that world. Kierkegaard wrote about how we *choose* to live, emphasizing human responsibility, which Sartre returned to a century later. (In fact, Sartre took this to its limits, declaring war itself to be an individual's responsibility.) So far as he saw life, Kierkegaard rightly regarded death as an ever-present risk, emphasizing despair as part of the human condition. Despair can be overcome to discern the meaning of life, the idea for which one is willing to live and die. Kierkegaard believed death to have impelling power in life.

One of the closest existentialist philosophers in both time and location to Fitzgerald and Hemingway is Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), a leader in the existentialist movement during the modern era. Sartre drew on Martin Heidegger's concepts of existence and being—"existence precedes essence" and being-in-the-world—and saw death as recognition of one's own mortality. Both Fitzgerald and Hemingway were living where and when existentialism was on its ascent—Paris in the 1920s—and their works were produced both before and during the French existentialist movement. While I do not subscribe to limiting analysis of literature and

philosophy to the philosophical movement occurring during their time of publication, I do not discern any reason to ignore its relevancy. The philosophical and literary movements in vogue during Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's time display similar touch points, so it makes sense then that interconnectivity would exist. In fact, Sartre had an appreciation for some of the prevalent literary voices of his time period, naming Hemingway as one of "the greatest literary development[s] in France between 1929 and 1939" (*American Novelists* 112). Sartre grew up in Paris, went to Parisian schools, and spent time studying phenomenologists such as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Max Scheler. As an existentialist, Sartre placed great importance on responsibility, believing man to have many choices and mankind to have a moral responsibility to uphold (though he was not a moralizer, teaching right from wrong). Further, Sartre argued that "you can always make something out of what you've been made into" (Flynn 375). Because of this stance, Sartre emphasized death's interruption of one's future. For Sartre, death is about annihilation, and he admonished waiting for death. Instead, he advocated for creating meaning through freedom as the focus of existence.

Horace, Kierkegaard, and Sartre's approaches to living were informed by their views of death. Fitzgerald and Hemingway are implicitly indebted to their philosophical understandings, which is evident in their fiction. I name this debt implicit since neither author left uncontestable evidence that they drew from these philosophers or studied them in any depth. But I take the same approach as Calloway, who says of *The Sun Also Rises*, "Although it is highly unlikely that Hemingway conceived the novel as a work in the tradition of Horace specifically, its similarities to Horace's *Odes* provide an interesting subject for study" (120). Again, to ignore connections

that can be made of the same topic between disciplines, even if across time, limits the innovative study of literature and philosophy, as well as thanatology.

This study begins by presenting Horace's understanding of death, followed by an acknowledgement of death's prevalence in the lives of Horace and the two American authors in order to recognize its significance in their lives and impact on their works. Horace was plagued with the pervasiveness of death in day-to-day life, as life expectancy for his society was less than half the number of years as that of Fitzgerald and Hemingway's, yet because of World War I, Fitzgerald and Hemingway had reason enough to be continually aware of death's nearness. Close readings of Fitzgerald's short stories "I.O.U." (1920) and "The Ice Palace" (1920) and Hemingway's novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) will elucidate how Horace's understanding of death is reflected in them, paying particular attention to the applicability of Horace's *carpe diem* directive. These fictional works are presented after a discussion of World War I's effect on that generation—not because they are stories about war but because they were published soon after the end of the war when death was much on the mind of each author.

Examinations of the two remaining philosophers' understandings of death as apparent in Fitzgerald and Hemingway will follow a similar format. I will present Kierkegaard's holistic understanding of death in accordance with his existentialist views. For Kierkegaard, to understand how to exist was to understand the thought of death. This holistic understanding is conceived across a selection of his works because death is interwoven into the very fabric of Kierkegaard's body of writing. Close readings of Fitzgerald's novel *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922) and Hemingway's short story "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" (1936) will follow to illuminate Kierkegaard's philosophy of death as taking shape in fictional form. Alongside his stylistic choice of fusing death into *The Beautiful and Damned*'s language, Fitzgerald's young

couple progressively embodies particular notions of Kierkegaard's philosophy, a progression which can be traced through their downfall to their demise. The second close reading will hone in on Kierkegaard's discourse about death's decision as it develops in Hemingway's story about a man's lingering encounter with death.

Sartre's understanding of death is tightly bound with his theory of meaning. As this is the case, I will distill his theory of meaning on which his philosophy of death is dependent. Close readings of Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and Hemingway's short story "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" (1936) will follow. Just as Sartre's philosophy of death is tied up in his theory of meaning, Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's characters explore specific elements of Sartre's theory of meaning *alongside* death.

My intent is to present the philosophers' understandings as they *are*—not what they *could* or *might* be; therefore, I will refrain from analyzing the philosophers' understandings of death. This is challenging with Sartre in particular. But much as Sartre explains affection's relation to action to be a "vicious circle" in "Existentialism is a Humanism," his understanding of death seems to be somewhat of a vicious circle as well. For example, in Sartre's view, death is meaningless, yet we are still responsible to make meaning in life. Put another way, we are responsible to make meaning *in light of* death. Yet Sartre does not explicitly make such an assertion. He does, however, maintain that meaning is to be made in life *in light of* death, diverging from Horace and Kierkegaard's stance that meaning is to be made in life *because of* death. For the latter two, one must understand how to view death in order to understand how to view life. For Sartre, one need not pay death exorbitant attention but should, indeed, pay much attention to life. These nuanced differences will be highlighted in the presentation of each philosopher's understanding of death.

Scholars should continue to shape the conversation about death—to evaluate its nature, critique its meaning, and decide what intertextual assumptions can be made. Consideration should also be given to other philosophers who delve into the topic of death (perhaps those previously discussed) and how their understandings of it are dramatized in other works of fiction as well. Just as Fitzgerald and Hemingway engage with the problem of existence through their depictions of death, so too might others contribute to and further our understanding of thanatology. In the end, readers will see that experiences with death can frame the journey that is life.

CHAPTER I: HORACE, FITZGERALD, AND HEMINGWAY

Then the dust will return to the earth as it was. And the spirit will return to God who gave it. —Ecclesiastes 12:7

Since the Augustan Age, the writings of the Roman poet Horace (65 BC-8 BC) have survived centuries due to both his talent at crafting the written word and the wisdom he imparts through his words. His sharp focus on universal themes of the human condition have immortalized his works as a poet who wrote about philosophy—and *how* to live. Horace's writings address how one should exist in the world, but they also confront the matter of death, and it is through writing about death that his philosophies of life are most clearly illuminated. Horace intended his meditations on death to be a steadying influence, musings which are reflected in both the works of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway. This chapter will present Horace's understanding of death, followed by an acknowledgement of death's prevalence in the lives of Horace and the two American authors to recognize its significance in their lives and its impact on their works. Then, close readings of Fitzgerald's short stories "I.O.U." (1920) and "The Ice Palace" (1920) and Hemingway's novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) will elucidate how Horace's understanding of death is reflected in them, paying particular attention to the applicability of Horace's *carpe diem* directive.

Horace was not the first or only ancient philosopher to pay particular attention to death. Greek, Stoic, and other Roman philosophers habitually ruminated on death. Plato, for example, believed death to be an understandable human fear while simultaneously believing it to be the crowning achievement of life. Aristotle thought death to be most painful for a virtuous person and the end of both the body and the soul, seeing the two as inextricably linked.[9] The Stoics were also ever-mindful of death; Seneca, who likely felt the nearness of death throughout his life due

[9] See Plato's *Apology of Socrates* (390 BC) and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. (350 BC).

to his bad health, believed death should not be feared; to overcome such a fear, one was to think about, contemplate, and accept death. This belief, of course, coincided with the Stoics' adherence to acceptance, that hardships of life should be met without complaint.

Horace shares some common beliefs about death with his philosophical predecessors, but his primary view of death centers on its role as a steadying influence and an informant on how to live. Life is brief, and the hour of its end is unknown. We do not escape death, and we must make the most of life. Death's prevalence in Horace's writings serve as a constant prompt: the more often one is reminded of death, the more one is apt to make the most of each day. The following few pages outline Horace's understanding of death.

The Brevity of Life and the Unknown Hour of Certain Death

Death was ever-present in the ancient world since civilians were not expected to live to old age. Of the Roman males who turned twenty-two years old, only half saw the age of fifty-two and only one-third of females continued to fifty-two years old (Horace and Harrison). Seemingly because of the immediacy and looming prospect of death, ancient philosophers discussed human existence and its end ad nauseam. Donald Norman Levin traces Horace's concentration on death in his essay "Horace's Preoccupation with Death," stating, "What concerns him again and again is the transitoriness of human existence … preoccupied not so much with years as with their fugitive character, not so much with the individual master as with the fact that his earthly existence must necessarily be brief" (315). This "preoccupation with death" was well-founded since life, on average, was far briefer in Horace's society than today's.

It was not only the matter of life's brevity on which philosophers fixated. Death's unpredictability was a point of interest among philosophers in ancient societies, Horace being

one of them. In *How to be Content* (2020), Stephen Harrison cites Plato's *Apology of Socrates* to assert that "philosophers are preparing for death through life by generating the right mentality with which to face their own demise," which Horace later continued by "emphasiz[ing] the need to exploit life since death comes at any time" (75), thereby emphasizing life's unpredictability. Like his predecessors, Horace knew death to be certain, yet unpredictable; inescapable, yet unknown.

Horace's *Odes* address the nature of death directly, with the first three setting up Horace's explanation of how one should consider death. Horace dedicates the first of four volumes to his "protector" and "Friend, fountain of honor" (1.1-2), Maecenas, and makes clear that it is as a poet he wishes to be considered—"Count me among the poets, and I feel like a god— / Bumping the stars with my exalted head"—(1.33-34). Then he wastes no time addressing the hardships of life: environmental, "all this vicious snow and hail" (2.1), "floods ravening / over the lost land" (2.11-12); war, "this endless game of war … battle clang and glare of helmets" (2.40-41); sickness and famine, "a corps / Of new diseases, and dearth" (3.33-34). He sets up such casualties to inevitably lead to "dreading imminent death" (3.20) and a quickening of the threat: "So death, remote and slow before, / Sooner than necessary began" (3.35-36). Horace asserts death comes sooner than expected, but it is to be expected.

The fourth poem succinctly unpacks Horace's thoughts on life and death in only five stanzas. Unlike the first three, the fourth poem begins by looking to the return of the spring season, a time when new growth begins and sea trade starts again. Winter melts away, meadows become green "Under a spring moon" (4.6), and crowns are to be bound "with emerald myrtle or with quivers / of blossom freshly hatched from the ice-shelled earth" (12-13). But a sudden change occurs in the fourth stanza—and death knocks at the door:

> Death, pale and impartial, stands at the door;
> enters with equal indifference the squatter's shack
> and rich man's villa. Oh lucky Sestius!
> Life's too short for all but the simplest dreams; (16-19)

Horace stipulates that even amid a season of newness, death lurks. His anthropomorphized death is present even in moments that fully contrast; spring brings new life, whereas death puts an end to it, a reminder of the insecurity of life's pleasures. Further, death does not differentiate between the poor or the rich, the lowly or the noble; eventually, no one escapes death's approach. Finally, his conclusion that life is too brief for more than simple dreams sheds light on what would become a topic of much more depth in later writings.

In the fourth volume of *Odes*, Horace returns to using seasons to illustrate and warn of death's certainty. The seventh poem is addressed to Torquatus, a member of a great family whose lineage positions him with advantages in life, but Horace reminds him that his high station in life will have no influence on death. This poem begins with the spring. The snow is gone, the "trees grow out new hair" (7.2), but again, in the midst of the season that brings new life, Horace warns, "You won't live always, warn the year and the hour, / seizing the honeyed day" (7-8). He then immediately addresses the coming three seasons:

> Cold softens in breezes, spring fades into summer's heat
> no sooner felt than doomed
> when autumn pours out its harvest fruits, and soon
> ice-solid winter steps back. (9-12)

The seasons' cyclical nature is certain, and so is death: "we're nothing but dust and shade. / Who knows how many tomorrows the gods will add / to today's small sum?" (15-17). Life is brief and

the hour of its end is unknown. Horace explains to Torquatus that once he has died, nothing can bring him back to life—not his family name, his virtue, or his speeches. Death is inescapable.

Horace focuses on the inescapability of death most directly in the third poem of his second volume. He implores his addressee, Quintus Dellius, to be mindful that death comes to all, reminding him that he is mortal too. He tells Dellius that he will have to leave the pasture he purchased and that his heir will inherit all the wealth he has built, and that it makes no difference "Whether descended from great houses, / Or drifting unprotected under the naked / Sky, it's all one" (21-23). Horace concludes similarly with Dellius as he does later with Torquatus:

> we are sacrifices
> To Death, not well-known for compassion.
> We are obliged and herded. The lot is
> Inside the urn; the ball with our number
> Will roll out. And what we'll get
> Is an everlasting absence from home. (27-32)

The same messaging appears: death will come, though we know not when. Interestingly, Quintus Dellius changed political sides so many times that he was named the generation's professional political survivor, but Horace encourages him to keep his "soul serene" and "remain moderately unmoved" (1-2) because the wealth he has gained must be left.

Horace's commentary on death with this same messaging appears throughout all four volumes of *Odes*. Due to their frequency, these meditations serve as a steadying influence—and a humbling one. In "Names and Death in Horace's 'Odes,'" Michael Paschalis not only proves the prevalence of death in Horace's *Odes* by delving into the references Horace makes to death, but he goes so far as to study the names "which are found in contexts containing primarily

meditations on death" (181). He finds in Horace's *Odes* "the quick flight of time and the inevitability and finality of death," naming "the inevitably of death a favorite subject of Horace's *Odes*" (181). He explicates eight poems from *Odes*,[10] examining names in them as having been selected on the basis of their etymology and their "functions as embryonic narratives or descriptive statements" (190). Horace meditates on death so frequently that scholars have been able to study even the most specific details within just his *Odes* alone.

One of Horace's most well-known works, *Ars Poetica* (*Art of Poetry*), is a testament to his preoccupation with death. Written in 19 BC, a few years after his first three books of *Odes*, the poem uses some of the same metaphors as *Odes*.

Though *Ars* is about poetry—not death—many of the examples Horace uses involve death:

> Just as woods change their leaves in the fullness of the years, falling one by one … so perish words with age, after flourishing and thriving when newly born, like youths. We ourselves, and our works, are debts owed to death. Whether Neptune protects the fleets in the land's embrace from the North Winds, a kingly task, or the marsh, long-unproductive and suitable for oars, sustains cities nearby and feels the weight of a plough, or the stream (now taught a better course) has changed a course threatening crops, such things made by mortal men shall perish. Much less likely is it that the esteem and favour granted to modes of speech could live and endure. Many terms shall grow back which now have fallen away, and those now held in esteem shall fall, if our poetic practice so approves. (135)

[10] These include 2.14, 4.7, 1.4, 1.7, 3.21, 9.33, 1.4, and 1.3.

Over the years the leaves change from full to falling; so too do words perish. Horace contrasts new life ("newly born") with perishment ("perish words with age"). We will die, as will our works. He names various accomplishments men achieve, only to end in perishing. The honor one receives in life is even less likely to survive. But the cycle will begin again ("terms shall grow back"), and eventually, even the greatest will fall.

Horace continues in *Ars* to remind of death's constant possibility and reality. He explains that poetry must stir emotions, causing laughter and sadness: "All people's faces respond with laughter to those who laugh, so do they cry in response to those who cry. If you want me to cry, you must first cry yourself. … Grim words are appropriate to a gloomy countenance. … Nature shapes us within for every aspect of life's fortunes. She gives us pleasure, or drives us to wrath, or brings us to earth with the profound anguish of grief" (136). In other words, grief is a part of life and comes with death. Then, as he makes his point that poets should seek true feedback, he uses an example of mourners at a funeral: "Just as hired mourners at a funeral say and do more than those who are grieving from the heart, in the same way a mocker makes more of a show than the man whose praise is sincere" (143). Even in a poem not solely about the end of life, Horace still makes a practice of bringing death into the conversation.

Carpe Diem

Horace wrote so often of death's timing as unknown but its coming as certain that it became a steadying influence in his writings. However, his meditations were not simply for the sake of meditating on death. In his article pointedly titled "Horace's Epistles," Donald L. Wasson writes, "[Horace's] letters and verses advocate being content with a person's lot in life and not worrying about what the future may bring. But in contrast to this, he remained keenly

aware of the inevitability of death." Horace maintained a practical approach to poetry—believing it to be a craft that should both "instruct and delight" (the now-famous Horatian platitude)—thereby directly connecting his instruction not to worry about the future to the fact of death's certainty. Horace *uses* his obvious stance that death is inescapable, unpredictable, and comes sooner than expected to serve as an informant on how to live. The more one is reminded of death, the more one lives to make the most of each day—a belief which became a pulsing theme in his writings. His meditations on death appear alongside his instructions for how to live—not to worry about the future, to live a quiet life, and to be content with moderate means.

Horace's first book of *Odes* popularized his admonition to make the most of life. In his eleventh poem, he addresses Leuconoë and tells her she should not ask what her end—or his—will be: "Far better just / to take what heaven might allot us, whether / it's winters galore, and more, until we're stiff / or only this one wintertime to end all others" (11.4-7). He encourages her to seize the day— "*carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero*" (11.8)—and to think less of tomorrow and more of the present moment. Notably, Horace's *carpe diem* contrasts with philosophers of his day who, as Levin remarks, "turned the fact of human mortality into an excuse for unabashed and unrestrained hedonism" (317) *and* with today's modern twist on the phrase that has evolved into an excuse to be impulsive and take unwise risks. On the contrary, in the same poem Horace advocates to "get wise" (11.9) while also seizing the day.

Around 20-19 BC, Horace wrote a series of twenty letters to various friends containing advice for them, much of which echoes his *carpe diem* admonition. Wasson says that like Horace's *Odes*, the *Epistles,* "tried to persuade his friends to live a thoughtful and moderate life, avoiding both stress and excess." He had a "desire for a sensible life" and loved the solitude of his own villa, finding comfort and reprieve from worldly worry there. In his fourth Epistle, he

writes to his friend and fellow poet Albius Tibullus, telling him that time wastes away in the middle of ones hopes and fears, so it is better to "think every rising sun will be thy last" (4.16). In other words, do not worry about the future because death will come expectedly. Wasson explains that "the poet warns him that the gods have given him wealth and the ability to enjoy it but then reminds him of the possibility of death at any time." Horace goes on to write that Tibullus will be more grateful with such a mindset because life will seem longer: "And so the grateful unexpected hour / Of life prolong'd, when come, will please the more" (4.17-18). If every day is the last, worries about the future are null and void.

Six epistles later in a letter to Fuscus Aristius, his city-loving friend, Horace emphasizes that a quiet, moderate life is the best way of life. He says the country is preferable to the city, naming "the quiet country is the fittest place" (10.17); there, the winter is the warmest, the sun is highest, and the wind is calmest in the country. Horace advocates for a quiet, content life rather than that of a lord, who is "still a slave" (10.54), and tells Aristus to be content: "Content Aristus with thy present store, / Thou wilt live wisely and not wish for more" (10.60-61). He explains that striving for more "than just enough" will overtake a person's mind. The goal for Horace is to stay focused on the present and, at the same time, to live moderately. Levin explains that because Horace so clearly saw all men headed to the same fate, he could also see what was of meaningless pursuit, stating that "if the distinctions between noble and humble birth, between wealth and poverty, between fame and obscurity are meaningless in the face of man's mortality, there is no point in seeking to become wealthy or famous" (316). This viewpoint was due in part to his continual focus on life's briefness, and his awareness that "weighted against the brevity of human existence any sort of ambitious planning must be deemed an exercise in futility" (316).

His sixteenth Epistle is addressed to Quintus, another of Horace's friends, a letter in which he outlines what will make for a happy life. He writes, "what that gives to day, / To morrow if it please it takes away" (16.42-43). Wasson paraphrases Horace's words to Quintus: "For he who will be covetous will also be anxious: but he that lives in a state of anxiety will never in my estimation be free." Horace concludes, according to Wasson, with the thought "that an individual who is immersed in increasing his fortune has deserted the path of virtue. In the end, he tells Quintus that 'Death is the ultimate boundary of human matters'." These are the matters which concern Horace throughout his writings on death and how to live a life without worry, a life of peace and contentment.

The Aftermath of World War I: "A 'Death Wish' Culture"

Horace undergirds each reference to death with the same goal: meditate on death as a steadying influence and as an informant on how to live. F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway mimicked this meditation in their own writings. In that, they were similar to Horace: death's presence overwhelmed their young adult lives. Horace was plagued with the pervasiveness of death in day-to-day life, as life expectancy for Horace's society was less than half the number of years of Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's, but they had reason enough to be mindful of death's nearness.

In May 1918, just a few months before World War I's end on November 11, 1918, Winifred Kirkland's "New Death" appeared in *Atlantic Monthly* and describes the experience the world had suffered since July 1914. The first paragraph of her piece recounts the swift change that occurred in society after the war: "By an analogous use of the word new, one may direct

attention to the change in standards that is being wrought in everyday living by the present concentration upon death" (577). She elaborates on the shift that occurred after the war:

> Never before in history has death been so prominent a fact. Always before it has been possible to avoid thinking about it. To-day no one can escape the constant presence, before his mind, of dissolution. The most casual concerns flash forth at unexpected moments in startling focus against the present holocaust of ruin. (577)

This generation had never seen the prominence of death in *their* history, and death had touched what seemed like every part of their society.

World War I had, indeed, affected nations and culture at large. Paul Brody notes in his book *The Real Midnight in Paris*, "Some historians have described a sort of 'death wish' culture, where young soldiers embraced the futility and fatality of trench warfare" and these effects were felt long after (13). He goes on to describe that the world's economy suffered, nations went bankrupt, and "an indefinable something was lost, never to be recovered. Everyone struggled to make sense of the new world and, if possible, extract meaning from the violence of the war" (15). This search for meaning, influenced by the war, exists in both Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's fiction, though much more overtly in the latter's war stories. Hemingway was more personally and directly impacted by the war than Fitzgerald, but no one, Fitzgerald included, escaped the effects of the war and the havoc it had wreaked on the world.

In World War I's aftermath, Fitzgerald and Hemingway took refuge abroad. Though they lived as expatriates, they carried the mental wounds from war time with them. In *The Expatriates*, Paul Brody provides insight into the lives of writers who left America after the war's end and explains the effect the war had on each writer before their move abroad. Fitzgerald grew up with a mother who "spoiled him endlessly," as he was "raised with wealth and privilege

from an early age" (226). This privileged upbringing and elitism took form in Fitzgerald's work—stories of extravagant living and wealthy lifestyles—like other elements of his life, making his work, at times, autobiographical in nature. Brody explains that Fitzgerald "used his written characters to understand his own life, and often used the writing as a personal therapy. By casting the situations and people from his own life onto the page, he hoped to gain a deeper understanding of his own journey" (229). One part of his young adult journey was World War I.

Fitzgerald did not serve in the war, but his life was drastically affected by it. While at Princeton, news of many enlistees came to Fitzgerald, and he left for Fort Leavenworth in 1917 for basic training. He went to Camp Sheridan in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1918, where he met Zelda née Sayre, who would become his wife after a long courtship and a breakup. (In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald uses his and Zelda's meeting story as Jay and Daisy's [231].) The war ended before he was deployed overseas, so he was not able to fight for his country (a regret he is said never to have made peace with). He was delayed proposing to Zelda because of financial hardship from the war.

Contrastingly, Hemingway was much more directly involved in the Great War than was his compatriot Fitzgerald. In 1918, the Red Cross was actively recruiting for ambulance drivers near the frontline. At the time, Hemingway may not have known the job he was signing up for, but his reckoning came quick. He left for Paris in May and was sent to the frontline in Italy in June. That July, he encountered a mortar blast that peppered his legs with shrapnel, shells meant to enter and exit a target en route to their next one. He underwent emergency surgery, recovered in an Italian hospital, and was sent back to the States at the beginning of 1919 (Brody, *The Expatriates* 153-154). Years later in 1942, Hemingway compiled an anthology of war stories, and in it, he wrote, "When you go to war as a boy you have a great illusion of immortality. Other

people get killed; not you. … Then when you are badly wounded the first time you lose that illusion and you know it can happen to you" (vi). Understandably, war shattered any illusions about mortality for Hemingway, and those illusions followed him into his writing.

After returning to America, Hemingway recuperated at his parents' home in Oak Park, and, that summer, took two friends to Michigan where his family kept a cottage. He had spent time hunting and fishing there as a child, and from this trip stemmed the idea for his short-story "Big Two-Hearted River," the last story in his collection, *In Our Time*. Like Fitzgerald, Hemingway could "seamlessly weav[e] together personal experience, secondhand accounts and imaginative fancy" (Brody, *The Expatriates* 167). Nick Adams, the stories' main character, has come home from war, but the injuries that Nick has from war are never mentioned though they "loom below the surface" (Putnam). Death is a part of several of the stories in this collection, beginning with "Indian Camp," which Brody says unsurprisingly deals "with the most inevitable and dramatic of topics: death" (*The Expatriates* 184). The original version (before the addition of "Big Two-Hearted River") concluded with a story about Sam Cardinella, a criminal in Chicago whose hanging Hemingway read about as a child (180). Most scholars believe Hemingway witnessed the events in these stories, believing them "a testament to his skill at breathing the spirit of reality into what was ultimately only fiction." He titled the collection based on a "description of the feeling and subject matter" (175): *In Our Time*.

Due in one part to his experiences in the war and another part to his nature, Hemingway chased death in his own life. After marrying Hadley Richardson and settling in Paris, he left for Genoa in 1922 to cover the Economic Conference for the *Star*, a news publication he was working for at the time. World War I had left Europe unsettled, and Hemingway began writing about the connection between politics and economics, which the editors of the *Star* praised

(Brody, *The Expatriates* 167). The war and its after-effects did not deter Hemingway, but rather, seemed to draw him in. In September of that year, Hearst's International News Service asked Hemingway to go to the war zone in Greece to serve as a foreign correspondent. He was having nightmares, experiencing anxiety, and frustrating his wife with leaving, but he went anyway (168-169).

A year later, he left again, this time for Germany as an on-ground journalist in dangerous areas hundreds of miles away from his then home (*The Expatriates* 175). Sometime after he returned, Hemingway himself realized "his journalistic writing and his fiction writing both orbited a common center, each feeding the other" and he himself saw "that a common theme of violence and death permeated much of his recent fiction" (177). Then, in 1923, Hemingway continued work on *In Our Time*. Brody says the collection "was the idea that 'in our time,' there is random violence and death" (177). That same year, Hemingway discovered bullfighting in Spain and the running of the bulls in Pamplona. Fighting in bullrings was, as some scholars believe, Hemingway's chance to show courage after his quick return from war (188). Others, such as Brody, wonder if his trauma from war experiences "spurred him to seek out danger, testing his mettle time and again in order to feel alive" (*Real Midnight* 45). In *Death in the Afternoon* (1932), Hemingway himself described bullfighting as the sport that gave him the feeling for which he had been searching—one of life and death. Hemingway's trip back to Spain in 1925 filled his head with more bullfights and material to use in his compositions, spawning *Fiesta*, the first draft of what would become *The Sun Also Rises* (*The Expatriates* 202-206).

Fitzgerald's Preoccupation With Death: "An honest agreement to die"

Published posthumously, the short story "The I.O.U." was actually one of the earliest that F. Scott Fitzgerald ever wrote. After it was rejected by *Harper's Bazaar* in 1920, Fitzgerald left it alone; its unveiling came when *The New Yorker* published it in 2017, almost 100 years later. Similar to Horace's *Ars Poetica*, Fitzgerald's "The I.O.U" is not *about* death; rather, it weaves in and out of the subject of death, referencing it ad nauseam. On its face, it is a story about the publishing industry and the blurred lines between fiction and nonfiction, which the narrator, a publisher, notes early in the story: "Non-fiction is a form of literature that lies half-way between fiction and fact" (7). In a 2017 collection of Fitzgerald's lost stories, editor Anne Margaret Daniel explains in her editorial note that "the story is a happy satire of a new business with which he had just become familiar—the publishing world. Even as a young man and writer, though, Fitzgerald was never light. The story is set in a post-World War I world of disappointment and death" (1). Like Horace, who makes numerous references to death in *Ars*, so too does Fitzgerald use death as a consistent player in this tale.

Throughout *Ars,* Horace explains that poetry must stir emotions, causing laughter and sadness, and he reminds readers of death's constant possibility and reality. Perhaps it is these reminders of death amid a stir of emotions that continue to draw readers to Fitzgerald. As Erin Blakemore points out in the short essay "Why We Still Can't Quit F. Scott Fitzgerald," literary enthusiasts are still asking what F. Scott Fitzgerald's appeal is to the modern audience, especially considering the fact that *The Great Gatsby* continues to sell at least 500,000 copies each year with no indication of slowing. Many commentators have said and continue to note that his works are plagued with loss, so "[p]erhaps it's the tension between his personal excesses—alcoholism, infidelity, and an early death—and the wistful way he translated his era's restlessness into prose. … They want what they can't have; when they do not get what they want, they find that they

didn't really want it in the first place." Blakemore poignantly reminds us that in Fitzgerald's world, "every party is a tragedy" and "[w]hen the music stops, everything falls apart." Generally, scholars have labeled "The I.O.U." a satire, seeing it as a story in which Fitzgerald critiqued the nonsense of the publishing industry. Blakemore, however, speaks of the story with a more serious attitude—one that is warranted. She says a tone of "desperation" laces the story.

Set in first person, the narrator explains he has published a book, *Aristocracy of the Spirit World*, by a psychic researcher named Dr. Harden who had "a fundamental seriousness underlying his attitude" (3). Three weeks after the book published on April 15, the narrator leaves New York on a train to Joliet, Ohio, to visit Dr. Harden. He shares the book with several passengers on the train, one of whom he believes to be either a medium or columnist and comments that the "hero, so to speak, has evidently spent most of his time since his death dictating it to his uncle" (5). The unnamed reader and publisher converse about where the nephew must be—paradise or purgatory—for him to be able to communicate with the uncle. Then the reader mentions that he is perhaps in Yonkers, which the publisher baulks at, saying, "But he's not in Yonkers," to which the reader responds, "No, he's not. In fact he has lately crossed from Ohio into Pennsylvania" (5). The publisher questions if he feels "his astral presence" and the young man intensely replies: "My name, sir, happens to be Cosgrove P. Harden. I am not dead; I have never been dead, and after reading that book I will never again feel it quite safe to die!" (6). The publisher has unknowingly published a falsified story, one based on a dead man who is, in fact, alive. Even worse, Dr. Harden's story has not painted Cosgrove in a respectable light.

After Cosgrove reveals himself as the very-much-alive nephew, references to death pepper the text. To Cosgrove's revelation, the publisher gives a "cry of grief" (6) and sighs

"profoundly and tragically" (7) after hearing Cosgrove's "experiences since he had been reported dead" (7). Cosgrove recounts running into a friend in New York who "fainted dead away" upon seeing him, but once revived, told Cosgrove "the most astonishing story about himself" (7). Then, when the narrator arrives to Dr. Harden's home in Ohio, Miss Thalia, the woman in love with Cosgrove who also believes him dead, rebukes Dr. Harden for writing about Cosgrove as he has, saying, "He was brave and square and quiet. He died of wounds in a foreign town and passed out of sight as Sergeant Harden, 105th Infantry. A quiet life and an honorable death" (10), and further, blames Dr. Harden for not having "any respect for the dignity and reticence of death" (13). Miss Thalia is a relatively minor character in the short story, yet her commentary includes meditations of death in a sincere, heartfelt way. This experience of Cosgrove's death and rebirth has given her a second chance to spend her life with him. She echoes Horace's comment on hired mourners in *Ars*: "Just as hired mourners at a funeral say and do more than those who are grieving from the heart, in the same way a mocker makes more of a show than the man whose praise is sincere" (143). Fitzgerald uses Miss Thalia as a mourner who grieves from the heart and Dr. Harper as a mocker.

While framing his rather lighthearted narrative around death, Fitzgerald subtly explores more direct statements of its truth. To salvage the book and stay out of the press, the narrator specifies that ten thousand dollars a year go to Cosgrove should he leave for ten years (and no one be the wiser that he lives). By that time, the publisher anticipates that Dr. Harden will be dead, at which time, the lie that Cosgrove is dead would no longer matter:

> "I may be dead. I sincerely trust so."
>
> "Suppose he's not dead in ten years?" demanded Cosgrove suspiciously.
>
> "Oh, I'll die," the Doctor reassured him quickly. "That needn't worry you."

"How do you know you'll die?"

"How does anyone know anyone will die? It's just human nature."

Cosgrove regarded him sourly.

"Humor is out of place in this discussion. If you'll make an honest agreement to die, with no mental reservations—"

The Doctor nodded gloomily.

"I might as well. With the money I have left I'll starve to death in that time." (14)

Dr. Harden reflects the connection Horace made between works and death in *Ars Poetica*: "We ourselves, and our works, are debts owed to death" (140). As the doctor gloomily answers his nephew's question about the nearness of his own death, he replies with a Horace-like meditation: "How does anyone know anyone will die? It's just human nature" (14). Dr. Harden's time of death is unknown, but he recognizes its inevitably.

Fitzgerald concludes his story with a statement of profound truth: "Love is a sure thing—it takes a living man to love" (16). To his readers, Fitzgerald subtly calls them to love while they are able—and living. With "I.O.U.," Fitzgerald builds any entire short story based on a man's falsified death, and though "The I.O.U." does not have a grief-stricken or strenuously serious tone, its premise still resides on the fact of death being a part of life. Fitzgerald's purpose is not to make light of death—quite the contrary. By basing a story on death, he brings it to light, making evident the fact that death will, indeed, come.

Death That Influences and Informs: "'Spect to die any minute"

On May 22, 1920, the *Saturday Evening Post* published F. Scott Fitzgerald's short story "The Ice Palace," one of the first to appear in the *Post* and later included in the collection of

short stories, *Flappers and Philosophers* (1920). “The Ice Palace” is a story of a Southern girl who pursues the life she thinks she wants, only to realize she wants the life she already had. It is a story about dreams and disillusionment, the North and South, and the symbolic nature of warmth and cold. It is also a story in which Fitzgerald incorporates death into its very fabric.

David Ullrich nominates Fitzgerald as a philosopher of culture in his essay “Historical Method and the (Re)construction of Memory in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s ‘The Ice Palace’.” He first acknowledges the limited scholarship available on “The Ice Palace,” citing only one out of thirty-seven sources to have solely published on it, as study on the story has largely been ignored. His claim that Fitzgerald had an “understanding of culture” (417) in post-war United States is both true and relevant. In this story, Fitzgerald takes the great influence death had on his culture and reflects Horace’s primary view of death’s role: one of steadying influence and an informant on how to live. Death operates as a steadying influence specifically for the “The Ice Palace” protagonist and becomes an informant on how she will live out the rest of her life.

Georgia native Sally Carrol Happer is nineteen years old, beautiful, and restless, as she “gazed down sleepily” (49) while watching a Ford truck drive up to her house. Its driver, Clark Darrow, is a hometown man who would gladly marry Sally Carrol. Yet even amongst the playful nature of the beginning of this tale, death appears, the first reference occurring during Clark’s approach to the house. He puts his car in park which is followed by “a plaintive heaving sound, a death-rattle, followed by a short silence” (49)—a description of someone taking their last breath. This death-rattle is sandwiched between Clark parking next to the steps and Sally Carrol gazing

at Clark from her bedroom window, a description that *uses* death but is arguably not *about* death.[11]

Two months after Sally Carrol and Clark's ride to the country, Harry Bellamy "came down from his Northern city" to pursue Sally Carrol after having met her in Asheville, North Carolina the previous summer. On the fourth and last day of his visit, the two walk "half-unconsciously toward one of her favorite haunts, the cemetery" (56). Sally Carrol suggests they go in, and after walking to the top of a hill, they pause at a grave that reads "Margery Lee" who was twenty-nine years old when she died. Sally Carrol laments that Margery apparently never married but is convinced she was sweet. Though Harry told Sally Carrol he is not mournful by nature before beginning this trek, this grave has an unexpected, mournful effect on him—"an unexpected lump came into his throat" (57-58)—and the reality of a young woman dying early in life makes both of them sad. Next, Sally Carrol takes Harry to the Confederate dead, specifically the last row, marked "Unknown," which she points out while "her eyes brimmed with tears" (58). Here, she reflects on dreams that have died with the dead:

> [P]eople have these dreams they fasten onto things, and I've always grown up with that dream. It was so easy because it was all dead and there weren't any disillusions comin' to me. I've tried in a way to live up to those past standards of noblesse oblige—there's just the last remnants of it, you know, like the roses of an old garden dying all round us—streaks of strange courtliness and chivalry in some of these boys an' stories I used to hear from a Confederate soldier who lived next door. (59)

[11] This description echoes that of Kirkland's description of death as "the constant presence" that "no one can escape" (577). He shares his era's "preoccupation" with death and makes its presence "pervasive" and "profound" (577), positioning the car, an object in no way representative of death, in direct association with it.

Their walk through the cemetery spans four pages of this short story, easily making it one of Fitzgerald's extended meditations on death. Sally proclaims to Harry, "Even when I cry I'm happy here, and I get a sort of strength from it" (59). Ullrich describes the cemetery as "representing a collective cultural memory" (420). Ullrich further notes that this cemetery has more of an impact on Sally Carrol than even her parents or peers. The cemetery reminds Sally of what has been—the fate of all humans—and what will be, someday, for her as well—a representation of Horace's thoughts on death being an ever-present reminder in life. Just as Horace reiterated the point that each human is journeying toward death, Sally Carrol's journey through the cemetery is a similar reminder.

On her first morning visiting Harry and his family in the unnamed Northern city, Sally Carrol spots two children making a snowman. When she asks Harry if she can go help them, he responds, "You dream!" (65). She cannot play in the snow; that is a dream, not a reality. Put in context with Sally Carrol's explanation of dreams during their walk in the cemetery—"You see, people have these dreams they fasten onto things, and I've always grown up with that dream. It was so easy because it was all dead and there weren't any disillusions comin' to me" (59)—she knows what it is to be aware of a dream and not be disillusioned by it. Sally Carrol echoes Horace, using a dream in her explanation of life's certain end—"Life's too short for all but the simplest dreams / soon you'll be lodged in one of Pluto's black / airless rooms" ("Liber/Book I" 4.16-19). While this could foreshadow her encounter with death in the ice palace, it is also evidence of death as a steadying influence: Though she still acknowledges the dream's presence, Sally Carrol never gives into being overcome by the dream because she knows such a dream does not merit attention considering the brevity of life.

When Sally Carrol meets Harry in his Northern city, she arrives in time for the first carnival in ten years, this year with an ice palace. On the night they go to the ice palace, she notices that Harry's wintery Northern city seems abandoned at night, and while walking through the cold, her mind wanders to thoughts of her grave: "Oh, if there should be snow on her grave! To be beneath great piles of it all winter long, where even her headstone would be a light shadow against light shadows. Her grave—a grave that should be flower-strewn and washed with sun and rain" (77). As they explore the palace, she gets separated from Harry in one of the darkened downstairs passages and begins to panic: "She was alone with this presence that came out of the North. … It was an icy breath of death; it was rolling down low across the land to clutch at her" (83). She continues searching, worried she might "freeze to death and lie embedded in the ice corpses she had read of, kept perfectly preserved until the melting of a glacier. …she felt things creeping, damp souls that haunted this palace, this town, this North" (83). Sally Carrol, panic-stricken, falls on the ice and waits for her death to come. But Margery Lee, the dead twenty-nine-year-old in Georgia's cemetery, appears and sits next to her: "It really was Margery Lee, and she was just as Sally Carrol had known she would be, with a young, white brow, and wide, welcoming eyes" (84). All the references to death have built to the climactic moment when Sally Carrol comes face-to-face with death, both her potential own and the deceased Margery Lee. Finally, Harry and a search party find Sally Carrol as she screams she wants to go home.

Margery Lee is arguably the most notable figure in the story and seems to be an embodiment of a meditation on death. When she is first mentioned while Sally Carrol and Harry walk through the cemetery, they acknowledge and are both saddened by her youth in death. Upon approaching her grave, a stillness and silence is noted: "[O]ver most of the graves lay silence and withered leaves with only the fragrance that their own shadowy memories could

waken in living minds" (57). Sally Carrol identifies her as "somewhere between, but excluded from, both a domestic setting and private life and society at large and public life" (Ullrich 421). This "liminal position" places Margery Lee in a position to appear to Sally Carrol when she is near death herself. Margery Lee's shadowy memory wakens Sally Carrol when she sits with and comforts her as she waits for death in the ice palace. Fitzgerald uses this encounter with death, both Sally Carrol's own near death and Margery Lee's presence, as a steadying influence culminating in a change in the trajectory of Sally Carrol's life.

Ullrich asserts that "[t]he cemetery and the ice palace function as equivalent metaphors for death" (425)[12] and believes Fitzgerald refused "the sensational option of having his character freeze to death" (433) and "rejects a dramatic, but improbable, reversal of the spirited and independent Sally Carrol" in favor of portraying a woman who returns home with "an existential awareness that real growth is inevitable and painful" (433). Yet one should not conclude that her "final position portrays a modernist woman isolated from every society she has inhabited" and leaving her in a "no-win situation" (433). Rather, death has operated as a steadying influence in Sally Carrol's story up to the night of her near-death experience and encounter with the dead in the ice palace. That night, she recognizes death to be certain; at this turning point death becomes an informant on how she should live. The concluding pages of "The Ice Palace" almost perfectly mirror Horace's understanding of death.

After she is rescued in the ice palace, the story jumps to April. Sally Carrol sits in the same window seat as the September prior, watching Clark drive to her door. When Clark asks her what she is doing, she responds, "Eatin' green peach. 'Spect to die any minute" (86). Sally

[12] Ullrich is not focused on death in his essay, though he does acknowledge its significance. He is concerned with Fitzgerald's representation of cultural memory through memorials and monuments, specifically the cemetery in the South and the ice palace in the North, and how they shape the two main characters.

Carrol has awakened to Horace's "imminent death" ("Liber/Book I" 3.20), as though she understands Horace's words to fellow poet Albius Tibullus to "think every rising sun will be thy last" (*The Odes* 4.16). She is aware of the reality of death's presence and possibility. After returning from the North and entering the spring season—where the snow is gone, the "trees grow out new hair" (4.7.2), in the midst of the season that brings new life—she echoes Horace: "You won't live always, warn the year and the hour, / seizing the honeyed day" ("Liber/Book IV" 7-8). Ironically, she eats an unripe peach, a peach in its earliest life, while she expects to die.

Since returning, Sally Carrol seems to have decided upon living a quiet life and being content with moderate means. Ullrich describes Sally Carrol as having been "positioned between alternative deaths—the 'languid paradise of dreamy skies' (48) and the 'tombing heaps of sleet' (65)" (433). Indeed, she had said she was bored of Tarleton before leaving for the North and told Clark, "I want to go places and see people. I want my mind to grow. I want to live where things happen on a big scale. …tied down here I'd get restless. I'd feel I was—wastin' myself" (54). However, since returning, she has come to appreciate Horace's admonitions for a quiet, content life; she has settled into believing "the quiet country is the fittest place" (*The Odes* 10.17). After her near-death experience in the ice palace, death has worked as a steadying influence in Sally Carrol's life, directing her home, where she feels most at peace.

Hemingway's Exploration of 'Carpe Diem'

Early in his career and after moving to the other side of the world, Ernest Hemingway penned *The Sun Also Rises,* published in 1926. Hemingway was drawn to danger, causes of death, and death itself—all elements that birthed his 1926 novel. He had been introduced to bullfighting in 1923, an adventurous interest to him and the crux of this novel. Hemingway

explores death in various forms throughout *The Sun Also Rises*. The topic appears casually, sometimes in conversation, but also directly, as with bullfighting. Thrust into the day-to-day happenings of Pamplona's fiesta, the characters bear witness to the risk of death after having lived with all such reminders of death during World War I. None are strangers to death, and it has evidently reframed their approach to life. Such a reframing is reminiscent of Horace's meditations and ruminations on death as a steadying influence. This book explores Horace's *carpe diem* advice, as the characters both heed and diverge from his advice.

Hemingway's characters believe in making the most of each day, yet actions often stray from Horace's apprisal. Similarly, this group actively avoids concerns that belong to the future, though not with the wisdom Horace advocates his readers should acquire. They chase adventure and run from boredom, whereas Horace advocates contentment in the pastoral and living a quiet life best found in a country setting. Yet these deviations from Horace's advice do not undermine Hemingway's acceptance of Horace's philosophy. To the contrary, Hemingway creates characters who see death as a motivating factor for choosing how to live and explore *how* to seize the day. Horace advocated for accepting what may come, but he did so amid suffering; he advocated for avoiding worries of the future, but he did so amid virtues; he advocated for contentment, but he did so amid pastoral tranquility and moderation. Hemingway advocated for accepting what may come, but he did so amid drinking and fast-paced living; he advocated for avoiding worries of the future, but he did so amid risk-taking and thrill-seeking adventures; he advocated for contentment, but he did so by juxtaposing the pastoral to impulsive emotions and dangerous living.[13]

[13] Some scenes in *The Sun Also Rises* diverge from Horace's instructions, yet that is Hemingway's precise point. Hemingway was, in some respects, depicting what life would become if only part of Horace's teachings were implemented—those that appear fun momentarily and lack thought in the long-term. Regardless, Hemingway's characters take Horace's advice to make the most of each day and not trust the future at the helm.

In his seven-chapter essay "The Lost Generation," Paul Brody outlines the ways of the Lost Generation and names Hemingway one of its frontrunners. It was Gertrude Stein who titled this group the "Lost Generation," the most often told version of that story being when she mentioned to Hemingway that her mechanic had called his assistant such. She took the phrase for herself, "applying it to Hemingway and his cohort of expatriate writers" (382). Brody explains that the twenty- to thirty-something-year-olds living in Paris in the 1920s were "eager to test the boundaries of life" (359). Though their reasoning for testing life's boundaries differs from Horace's, the result in one particular area is the same: avoid worrying about the future. Brody continues his explication of the Lost Generation, saying, "A passion for the arts, especially literature, united them under a common cause. In all their guises, the Lost Generation shared another thing – they experienced firsthand the seismic shift in culture that signaled the painful birth of the Modern World" (358). This generation, lost though they might have been, witnessed, underwent, experienced, and arrived in the Modern World. Their arrival to this world is one guided by Horace's *carpe diem*.

At its open, Hemingway quotes Gertrude Stein: "You are all a lost generation" (2). Stein had pinpointed his and his Paris compatriots' never-ending sense of searching, constant wandering, and hunt for "more" in life. *The Sun Also Rises* has been deemed an existential text—one about life, about searching, about struggling to make meaning out of life. Hemingway uses Ecclesiastes 1.4-7 in the epigraph, setting the tone of the book:

> One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever. . . . The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to the place where he arose. . . . The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again

> according to his circuits. . . . All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. (2)

From the onset, Hemingway addresses life, death, and the cyclical nature of both using this passage from Ecclesiastes, a book of the Bible with existential themes.

Katherine Calloway's essay "'Pulvis et umbra sumus': Horace in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*" provides a throughline from Horace to Hemingway and focuses on broad elements of similarity with her assertion that "the text of *The Sun Also Rises* repeats the themes and subject matter of Horace's *Odes* to a remarkable degree—extensively enough, I contend, to suggest that Hemingway had in fact read Horace and drew on that reading as he wrote *The Sun Also Rises*" (121). She analyzes shared topics between Horace's *Odes* and Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, such as wine, women, and song, but she also connects these two works to the book of Ecclesiastes, writing, "The Chief focus of both [*Odes* and Ecclesiastes] is the precept that prompted Hemingway to use Ecclesiastes 1.4-7 in the epigraph of the novel: life is short, but the earth will endure and continue as it always has" (127). In all three books, "the sun's rising and setting is cyclical and predictable" just as the "'brief space' of each generation" (128-129). Calloway believes *The Sun Also Rises* resembles *Odes* even more closely than Ecclesiastes, saying that both Horace and Hemingway "return persistently to the theme of life's brevity and the earth's permanence" (127). Though Calloway does not directly address their commonality of persistently returning to death, the shared "theme of life's brevity" (127) implicitly brings the topic of death to the forefront.

A mere seven pages into Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, Robert Cohn tells Jake Barnes, "I can't stand it to think my life is going so fast and I'm not really living it" (6). Just having returned from New York with a renewed sense of life, Robert attempts to talk Jake into

traveling with him to South America, asking, “Don’t you ever get the feeling that all your life is going by and you’re not taking advantage of it? Do you realize you’ve lived nearly half the time you have to live already?” (6). From the onset, Robert invokes Horace’s point that life moves quickly, necessitating us to “pluck the day.” Robert then clearly hits the point: “Do you know that in about thirty-five years more we’ll be dead?” (6). When Jake confesses this to be a fact he does not think about, Robert reprimands him, simply saying, “You ought to.” (7). Robert echoes Horace’s emphasis that life is brief and one should make the most of each day—“*carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero*” (“Liber/Book I” 11.8)—laying a foundation for the *carpe diem* theme to be traced through this book.

Being the generation to have lived through World War I and its aftermath, this group had been introduced to death’s pervasiveness in their day-to-day lives—reports from war, friends going to war, and serving in war themselves. This pervasiveness spills over into their conversations with death often mentioned in passing references, as though death’s presence always hovers above them. Sometimes these references are in jest. After Robert asks Jake if he has considered going to South America anymore, Jake asks Robert what he knows about Lady Brett Ashley, a character who will play a significant role in both these men’s lives. Jake says he does not think she will marry without love, and Robert retorts that she has twice. Jake tells Robert to “go to hell,” Robert is offended, and Jake says, “Oh, don’t go to hell. Stick around. We’re just starting lunch” (29). Later, Frances, Robert’s alleged girlfriend, talks with Jake to tell him she thinks Robert is not in love with her. When Robert rejoins their conversation, Frances tells Jake that she “made him get rid of” (37) his secretary, which Robert did to please her. She follows this confession saying, “Well, I suppose that we that live by the sword shall perish by the sword” (37). Not only does Frances, a secondary character, bring up death, but she also

references the Gospel of Matthew (26:52)—perhaps somewhat of a callback to Hemingway's earlier Biblical reference, Ecclesiastes.

Such casual references continue throughout *The Sun Also Rises*, mostly through informal dialogue in a myriad of instances: when Bill asks Jake as they walk down the Boulevard: "Here's a taxidermist's. Want to buy anything? Nice stuffed dog?" (52); when Jake looks at pictures on the wall of an inn's dining room: "There was one panel of rabbits, dead, one of pheasants, also dead, and one panel of dead ducks" (82); when Bill drinks coffee with Jake: "Caffeine puts a man on his horse and a woman in her grave" and tells him, "You drink yourself to death" (86). In the wine-shop, Brett's question about Robert's whereabouts receives responses from Bill and Mike involving death: "I think he's dead," then "He's not dead. … I know he's not dead. He's just passed out on Anis del Mono" (120). Mike tells Jakes that "Brett is dying to know" (135) about Romero, and Brett remarks "I'm a goner" (140-141) four times after falling in love with Romero. The characters casual and frequent references to death create its constant presence in their lives.

When Bill Gorton, another American war vet, and Robert go on a fishing trip on the Irati River, the trip is veiled with references to death. Jake describes catching and killing the trout, saying, "He was a good trout, and I banged his head against the timber so that he quivered out straight" (89), followed by descriptions of preparing the fish: "I slit them all and shucked out the insides, fills and all, and tossed them over across the river" (90). The book Jake brings on this trip and reads while resting under a tree is about death: "The book was something by A. E. W. Mason, and I was reading a wonderful story about a man who had been frozen in the Alps and then fallen into a glacier and disappeared" (90). When Bill rejoins Jake, a man by the name of Bryan is brought up, but Jake promptly replies to Bill: "He's dead. I read it in the paper

yesterday. … Yes. Bryan's dead" (91). The two meet an Englishman named Harris who confesses that he's "not had much fun since the war" (97), a time of death. In terms of narrative, these references to death are unnecessary; they do not technically contribute to the characterization or the rising action. They do, however, further prove Hemingway was pointedly referencing death in what is reminiscent of Horace—an always present, looming presence.

Death is diverse in *The Sun Also Rises*, appearing casually in some references, direct in others, heavier in most, and still dark and ominous in others. When Jake retires to his room one evening very early in the book, he puts on his pajamas, gets in bed, and blows out his lamp, only to discover he cannot sleep because his mind returns to images of the war: "My head started to work. The old grievance. Well, it was a rotten way to be wounded and flying on a joke front like the Italian" (22). He thinks about the Italian hospital; readers do not explicitly find out until sixty pages later—when Bill mentions that some believe him to be impotent—that Jake had some kind of accident in the war. (Though Jake denies this claim, it would explain why Lady Brett Ashley says she cannot be with Jake.) The first allusion to Jake's accident occurs when Georgette and Jake ride in the taxi. Jake has her "put her hand away," so she asks if he is sick. He replies that he is, and she says, "Everybody's sick. I'm sick, too" (10). Georgette's comment that "everybody" is sick is a reminder of everyone's mortality, as sickness leads to death.

Though gatherings, drinking, and cafes fill his days, Jake's mind is still plagued by war. During the night, Jake tells himself "not to think about it" to no avail, as he cannot stop thinking: "I lay awake thinking and my mind jumping around" (23). Ominous feelings seem to follow Jake throughout the book (even later into the bull-fighting section). One night when Jake takes a cab from the Hotel Crillon to Café Select, he describes the part of the ride that "always made dull riding" (80), yet this is not just a boring cab ride for Jake. He describes, "It was like a certain

stretch on the P. L. M. between Fontainebleau and Montereau that always made me feel bored and dead and dull until it was over. I suppose it is some association of ideas that makes those dead places in a journey" (80). He juxtaposes his feeling that he "cannot stand to ride along" Boulevard Raspail to Robert's disdain for Paris as a city. He wonders at Robert's inability to enjoy Paris, but he cannot understand it. Even though Jake despises this ride, so much so that he describes it as making him feel "dead," he still hails Paris—almost as though he still wishes to live.

Lady Brett Ashley carries her own sense of doom in the novel, which affects Jake's demeanor as well. In chapter three, the group convenes at the Bal, and Jake and Brett leave together, citing boredom as their exit reason. Once in the taxi, Brett confesses to Jake she has "been so miserable" (17) and Jake takes note of her eyes: "She was looking into my eyes with that way she had of looking that made you wonder whether she really saw out her own eyes. They would look on and on after every one else's eyes in the world would have stopped looking" (18), adding too that "sometimes they seemed perfectly flat" (19). The addition of "own" is notable because Hemingway famously uses adjectives sparingly, making the times they are used purposeful. The phrase "her own eyes," then, seems to imply that Jake wonders if Brett sees the world through others' eyes, perhaps not making decisions based on what she wants but on what society tells her she should want. Eyes also "stop looking" when they pass on from this world, making Jake's statement a veiled reference to death. Similarly veiled in chapter five, Jake tells Brett he loves her, but by then, she has become involved with a man named Count Mippipopolous. She leaves to let the Count up to the room, and Jake's body takes on the stance of the dead: "She was gone out of the room. I lay face down on the bed. I was having a bad time" (41). Death, an act all must experience alone, hovers above this scene as Jake lays face down.

Brought in by Brett, the Count, a man with previous war experience, directs a conversation with her and Jake that centers on danger and death. While discussing values, Brett tells the Count, "You haven't any values. You're dead, that's all," to which the Count concludes, "No, my dear. You're not right. I'm not dead at all" (46). Death is an ear marker to these conversations with Brett, making her a character about which death seems to follow. The Count says he has "seen a lot" and has been in "seven wars and four revolutions" (45). He shows them his arrow wounds, serious encounters with danger and near death, yet he tells Jake that "it is because I have lived very much that now I can enjoy everything so well" (45). The Count's relatively simple statement is reminiscent of Horace's admonition to live in such a way to make the most of each day—an admonition that Brett seems to have picked up in much the same way.

At thirty-four years old, Brett's life has changed dramatically because of her own experience with death. Perhaps because of that, Jake tags her as "afraid of so many things" (18). She served as a V. A. D. in a hospital during the war, seeing much of death. Before marrying Ashley, another man with whom she had fallen in love had gotten sick with dysentery and passed away. Once married to Ashley, Brett received more threats of death, as "he used to tell her he'd kill her" (156). Mike explains to Bill and Jake that she "slept with a loaded service revolver. Brett used to take the shells out when he'd gone to sleep. She hasn't had an absolutely happy life. Brett. Damned shame, too. She enjoys things so" (156). In the same way the Count enjoys life because of his encounters with death, Brett has learned to enjoy life because of her own grazes with death.

To the Count's comments on country living, however, Brett says she is not only uninterested in the pastoral, but is actually against it: "I couldn't live quietly in the country" (41)—quite opposite of Horace's teachings that "the quiet country is the fittest place" (*The Odes*

10.17). Her comments on a quiet life in the country invoke echoes of Horace, who advocates for that specific lifestyle. While she may live in a *carpe-diem*-like manner in some areas of her life, choosing the quiet, content life of the pastoral is not one of them, yet she continues to explore the subject of how to live, with the topic of a country life being part of her exploration. This scene with the Count, Brett, and Jake's interaction is laced with Horace's musings of the future. Trusting as little as possible to the future is part of Horace's instructions to "pluck the day," and Lady Brett Ashley is a classic case study in pushing life's boundaries and not looking to the future for validation and security.

Toward the end of their conversation, the Count mentions a boy he supports, saying, "You know I think that boy's got a future," but then remarks, "About his future you can't ever tell" (48). This comment is a statement about the future at large which melds to Horace's *carpe diem*: no one can "tell" about the future. On this same page, Brett exclaims that she feels "miserable" and "terribly," followed by Jake sensing a feeling close to déjà vu: "I had that feeling of going through something that has all happened before. … I had the feeling as in a nightmare of it all being something repeated, something I had been through and that now I must go through again" (48). He experiences a similar feeling in later scenes as well, all of which give him pause about the future—an unknowing, a hesitancy—yet he knows he must continue *to* the future. This is similar to the feeling Jake experiences the night before the fiesta begins: "It was like certain dinners I remember from the war. There was much wine, an ignored tension, and a feeling of things coming that you could not prevent happening" (111). These nuanced references to the future are a reminder of its uncertainty and the concern often associated with such uncertainty.

With respect to viewing death in relationship to Horace's *carpe diem*, Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* takes Horace's words of "trusting as little as possible to the future" to a new, modern level when the fiesta begins and the bullfighting ensues. Death is incredibly pervasive during these scenes, as it looms over the fiesta with each day's events. The group arrives in Pamplona almost exactly halfway through the book, and Hemingway sets up the bullfighting as exciting, passionate, and dangerous. The owner of Hotel Montoya, Montoya himself, would smile at Jake "as though bull-fighting were a very special secret between" them, so as not "to expose it to people who would not understand" (99). Jake then gives a lengthy explanation of an "aficionado": "Afición means passion. An aficionado is one who is passionate about the bull-fights. All the good bull-fighters stayed at Montoya's hotel; that is, those with afición stayed there" (99). For Hemingway, the lead up to the bullfighting is detailed, establishing it as a focal point while building a foundation for the critical component of death to intervene in its midst.

When Bill asks what the unloadings are like, Jake responds saying the bulls are let out of their cages and steers wait for them in their corrals. Sometimes the bulls go in and kill the steers, and the steers cannot do anything about that. When the unloading begins, Jake's description of the bulls resonates with imagery of death: "It was dark," "dark muzzle," "shadow of horns," "swollen tight," "heads sunken" (105). Then, "the gate was pulled up and a second bull came out into the corral" who moved to charge one of the steers; the steer's death is detailed: "He charged straight for the steers and two men ran out from behind the planks and shouted, to turn him. He did not change his direction and the men shouted: 'Hah! Hah! Toro!' and waved their arms; the two steers turned sideways to take the shock, and the bull drove into one of the steers" (105). One steer is gored as another enters and actually approaches the bull:

> The steer was down now, his neck stretched out, his head twisted, he lay the way he had fallen. Suddenly the bull left off and made for the other steer which had been standing at the far end, his head swinging, watching it all. The steer ran awkwardly and the bull caught him, hooked him lightly in the flank, and then turned away and looked up at the crowd on the walls, his crest of muscle rising. The steer came up to him and made as though to nose at him and the bull hooked perfunctorily. The next time he nosed at the steer and then the two of them trotted over to the other bull. (106)

After this, death marks the first steer, and he stands separate from the group: "The steer who had been gored had gotten to his feet and stood against the stone wall. None of the bulls came near him, and he did not attempt to join the herd" (106). In these scenes, the steers dance with death. For the first steer, death comes. For the other, death does not. Interestingly, the former did not approach the bull; rather, the bull came for it simply because it was present. The second steer not only witnessed the first goring, but also approaches the bull, quite literally gazing at death.

When the group leaves for drinks in a café, Jake explains that the bulls are only dangerous when they are alone. Bill questions him, saying they all looked dangerous, and Jake clarifies: "They only want to kill when they're alone" (106). Brett tells Mike never to "detach me from the herd," but he misses her implication, remaining mesmerized by the bull who gored the steer. Jake believes "it's no life being a steer," but Mike derogatorily remarks that Robert would have liked being a steer because "[t]hey lead such a quiet life. They never say anything and they're always hanging about so" (107). The bulls symbolize the threat of possible death, and the steers symbolize a desire for life—*being* itself—and the characters compare each other to bulls and steers, furthering the death and life comparisons.

Jake's thoughts marking the last day convey *carpe diem* undertones. When he returns to his room, his thoughts linger on the idea that buying into the world is "a fine philosophy," believing that you pay for what you like "by learning about them, or by experience, or by taking chances, or by money. Enjoying living was learning to get your money's worth and knowing when you had it" (112). Jake says he pays for things he likes so that he will have "a good time." He and the others have paid (traveling, lodging, drinking, etc.) to "enjoy living" during the fiesta, an event that centers around risk and death. So, interestingly, enjoying life has brought them to death; or rather, they are enjoying life in the midst of literal death.

While the unloadings and bullfighting scenes-to-come are, indeed, jarring, they are also to be expected in a book about bullfighting. What is not necessarily expected are the rather complex conversations the characters engage in about death that stem from, center around, and are brought on by the bullfighting. Jake is most excited about Pedro Romero, the bullfighter to whom no one else compares (125), and after the group has seen Romero perform, Brett offers to read his palm, to which he responds: "Tell me I live for always, and be a millionaire" (142). Brett turns to Jake to say she thinks "he'll live a long time." Romero tells her to say it to him, and she repeats, "I said you'd live a long time" (142). Romero, the bullfighter who comes face-to-face with death each time he sets foot into the arena, responds, "I know it. I'm never going to die." Romero's remarks of never dying stand in stark contrast with Brett's original love interest, Mike, who is described as "looking like a death mask of himself" (161). Romero proves to escape death—and also to seek retribution of the death of others.

During the running of the bulls, a man, Vicente Girones, is gored and then trampled, which the crowd witnesses firsthand. When Jake relays to a waiter what happened at the encierro (the running of the bulls) at the café he visits afterward, the waiter repeats that his death was for

fun, emphasizing these paradoxical elements: “All for sport. All for pleasure. . . . All for fun. Just for fun. . . . That’s it. All for fun. Fun, you understand. . . . Dead. He’s dead. With a horn through him. All for morning fun” (151-152). The men running with the bulls seek fun, but it is a thrill-seeking fun that pits them against the risk of death to the point the police arrest people who, according to Bill, “wanted to go and commit suicide with the bulls” (153). Later the same day, it is the bullfighter Pedro Romero who kills the bull Bocanegra that gored Girones that morning. Romero, a man who expects never to die, brings death to the bull who brought death to another (169).

Romero’s final bullfight mimics Horace’s explanation of death, which Hemingway details as Romero brings death to a bull who awaits it:

> The bull was squared on all four feet to be killed, and Romero killed directly below us. He killed not as he had been forced to by the last bull, but as he wanted to. He profiled directly in front of the bull, drew the sword out of the folds of the muleta and sighted along the blade. The bull watched him. Romero spoke to the bull and tapped one of his feet. The bull charged and Romero waited for the charge, the muleta held low, sighting along the blade, his feet firm. Then without taking a step forward, he became one with the bull, the sword was in high between the shoulders, the bull had followed the low-swung flannel, that disappeared as Romero lurched clear to the left, and it was over. (170)

The bull acts as the sacrifice to death to which Horace refers in the second volume of *Odes*, writing, “we are sacrifices / To Death, not well-known for compassion. / We are obliged and herded” (“Liber/Book I” 3.27-32). Opposite the bull, Romero acts as the certain death about which Horace forewarns: “Death, pale and impartial, stands at the door” (4.16-19). For the bull,

"imminent death" (3.20) comes quickly in accordance with Horace's prediction: "So death, remote and slow before, / Sooner than necessary began" (3.35-36).

This bullfight occurs the last day of the fiesta. Nathalie Cochoy observes that *The Sun Also Rises* "succeeds in conveying an experience of the moment" (304), asserting the movement of the bullfight scene as "leading the text to turn the certainty of loss into a formal dance." She notes the Lost Generation's constant searching as "the exiled Americans' spatial and linguistic wandering," to which she compares to "a mark of death and silence" (304). Yet it is the movement of this scene that "transforms [the bullfight's] wounds or ineluctable death into some aesthetic creation" (304) in the final scene of the fiesta.[14]

A celebration of death pitted against life defines the *fiesta*, a word whose origin belongs to the Latin *festus*, meaning "festive, joyful, or merry." Hemingway's characters vacillate between feeling elated and disturbed during the fiesta, specifically after the bullfights: "We had that disturbed emotional feeling that always comes after a bullfight, and the feeling of elation that comes after a good bull-fight. The fiesta was going on" (125). In the midst of possible death, they feel the joy of victorious life—in this way, the fiesta is a picture of Horace's words in *Odes*: "And so the grateful unexpected hour / Of life prolong'd, when come, will please the more" (4.17-18).

Hemingway's characters embark in a search for how to live while surrounded by death in *The Sun Also Rises*. Their journey effectively explores Horace's understanding of the implication of death. Jake's words on how to live, expressed the last day before the fiesta begins, seem most appropriate:

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[14] Hemingway creates anticipation for the fiesta's end building on the already-existing tension. He references the end of the fiesta four times in only four paragraphs the morning after the last day: "In the morning it was all over. The fiesta was finished."; "The fiesta was over."; "'Well," he said, "it's all over'" (174).

> Perhaps as you went along you did learn something. I did not care what it was all about. All I wanted to know was how to live in it. Maybe if you found out how to live in it you learned from that what it was all about. (113)

An interdisciplinary reading of Horace, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway not only highlights connections between the philosophy and the fiction, but also presents the sharp comparative element of death. As a poet who wrote about *how* to live, Horace's writings address that death informs one how to exist in the world. Read alongside Fitzgerald's two short stories and Hemingway's novel, Horace's primary view of death's role as a steadying influence in life is clearly evident. Fitzgerald echoes Horace's advice in the "I.O.U." by reminding readers that death is, indeed, a part of life and in "The Ice Palace" by dramatizing a near-death experience that resolves in the decision to choose peace. Hemingway takes a different approach in *The Sun Also Rises*, exploring various methodologies to seize the day and avoid trusting the future because of death. The similarities between Horace's and the two American authors' meditations on death are uncanny and reiterate the brevity of life, uncertainty of death, and proper approach to both the present and future.

CHAPTER II: KIERKEGAARD, FITZGERALD, AND HEMINGWAY

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. —Philippians 1:21

Deemed the Father of Existentialism, Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813–1855) wrote across various disciplines, touching on theology, religion, literary and social criticism, psychology, and philosophy (Lippitt and Evans). Yet throughout all his philosophically versatile writings, one topic reappears: death. Over the course of his authorial journey, Kierkegaard analyzed truths about existence, theorized what characterizes a person's existence, and emphasized the meaning of existence. As an existentialist, he fixated on the meaning of existence, but for Kierkegaard, to understand how to exist was to understand the thought of death, to give it "retroactive power and make it impelling in life" ("At a Graveside" 102). Kierkegaard intended to provide insight into what can be learned from the thought of death. He does not, however, offer a conclusion but rather lessons to consider, lessons which are broadly demonstrated in F. Scott Fitzgerald's and Ernest Hemingway's works. This chapter will first present Kierkegaard's holistic understanding of death. Then, close readings of Fitzgerald's novel *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922) and Hemingway's "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" (1936) will follow to illuminate Kierkegaard's philosophy of death as taking shape in fictional form. Where applicable, further detail of Kierkegaard's understanding of death will be incorporated in these close readings to clarify their connection to Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's works.

Because death is interwoven into the very fabric of Kierkegaard's body of published works, outlining his understanding across a selection of his works is beneficial.[15] A brief and direct holistic explanation of Kierkegaard's view of death follows: The aesthetic is one of two

[15] The selected works primarily include: *Either/Or* (1843), "At a Graveside" (1845), *Works of Love* (1847), *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), and *The Sickness unto Death* (1849). Of his collection of works, Kierkegaard pays death significant attention in these and makes his understanding of death clearest in them.

types of figures; its opposite is the ethical. The ethical values others, upholds universal principles, prioritizes finding meaning in life, and pursuits that meaning willfully. The aesthetic person, however, is self-absorbed, focused on pleasure in the immediate sense, and does not consider the long term. Consequently, the aesthetic lives in a state of despair. In this state, aesthetics are disconnected from their true selves and lack meaning in life—so much so that they become disheartened that they cannot die. Despair must be fought, but the route out of despair begins with one's inner being, where truth resides. Truth is subjective in that it is personal, thus inwardness, or subjectivity, provides one the ability to become one's true self. An individual is constantly in the process of becoming. A subjective individual engages with this process, and through inwardness, overcomes despair and discerns meaning in life, meaning which is derived from death. This derivation of meaning from death requires an individual to identify the idea for which one is willing to live and die—while thinking always of death, being ever mindful it will come. The choosing of work should not depend on when death will come because each day is to be lived as both the first and the potential last. In this way, death displays impelling power in life and provides true direction.

Despair: Causes, Consequences, and Solutions

Kierkegaard's understanding of death begins with his understanding of existence, which he initiates in his first work, *Either/Or* (1843), published in two volumes. Publishing under pseudonyms was a common practice for Kierkegaard as evidenced in *Either/Or* (1843), whose pseudonymous editor, Victor Eremita, attributed the first volume to "A" and the second to Judge Vilhelm (William). As a whole, *Either/Or* addresses the Aristotelian question of how one is to live. In it, Kierkegaard distinguishes between and defines two types of existence: the *aesthetic*:

passive, stability-lacking pleasure-seekers who live for themselves; and the *ethical*: responsible, ethically-inclined higher-self-seekers who favor the subjective (i.e. truth). The aesthetic lives for the moment, is prompted by pleasure, puts faith in what is beyond control, and falls into despair. Meaning cannot be found in despair, and sometimes one can develop a self-deluded reassurance of being fated *for* despair. The ethical, however, creates a path *out* of despair by accepting responsibility for life. For "A," the aesthetic, despair can become a substitute for meaning in life, whereas the ethical, extrapolated by Judge Vilhelm in the second volume, finds meaning in responsibility and self-creation, the alternative to despair because in Kierkegaard's view, "not to will deeply and sincerely is sin"—and not only that, but "the mother of all sins" (160).

Notorious for beginning an idea in one work and developing it in another, Kierkegaard begins his notion of despair in *Either/Or* but continues it in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), *Works of Love* (1847), and *The Sickness unto Death* (1849), providing the cause of, consequence of, and solution to despair. In *Postscript*, he writes, "To be thus constantly coming to be is infinitude's deceptiveness in existence. It is enough to bring a sensate person to despair, for one feels a constant urge to have something finished, but this urge is of evil and must be renounced. The continual becoming is the uncertainty of earthly life, in which everything is uncertain" (73). Kierkegaard posits that temporal existence seems as though it will go on forever, and because this temporality is overwhelming, one feels a natural desire to finish something. But the reality is that though the time is unknown—like so many of life's other uncertainties—temporal existence will end. The solution to despair is to continue striving until the unknown end, as "constantly striving does not, however, mean that he has a goal in the finite sense, towards which he strives and reaching which would mean he was finished. No, he strives infinitely, is constantly coming to be" (77). This striving wards off despair.

When he writes of despair in *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard explains that the death of a loved one can lead one to feel despair:

> About despair it must be said: only he can despair who is desperate. … Despair consists in laying hold on an individual with infinite passion; for unless one is desperate, one can lay hold only on the eternal with infinite passion. … Despair is, namely, not something which may happen to a man, an event like fortune and misfortune. Despair is a disproportion in his inmost being—so far down, so deep, that neither fate nor events can encroach upon it, but can only reveal the fact that the disproportion—was there. … That which really makes a man despair is not misfortune, but it is the fact that he lacks the eternal; despair is to lack the eternal; despair consists in not having undergone the change of eternity by duty's 'shalt.' Consequently despair is not the loss of the beloved, that is misfortune, pain, suffering; but despair is the lack of the eternal. (34)

Misfortune, in this case the death of a loved one, can lead to desperation, which opens one up to despair—"a disproportion in his inmost being." But misfortune, he goes on to say, is not what causes despair; it is "the lack of the eternal."[16] In this instance, the eternal solves the problem of separation which death creates.

Then, in *Sickness*, Kierkegaard's pseudonymous narrator Anti-Climacus defines despair as the sickness unto death, with death as other—not as physical but as spiritual. Existing individuals have difficulty synthesizing life as both temporal and eternal, and in this difficulty, despair is made manifest. The despairing person then becomes "a fatalist of sorts who, having

[16] Through subjectivity (and the process of becoming), the continual battle with despair and struggle with external elements of misfortune are to ultimately lead one to accept the forgiveness of sin from God and engage in a deep and abiding faith in God. Though not particularly applicable in relation to Fitzgerald and Hemingway, it is important to mention, as Kierkegaard's later works delve deep into the eternal.

lost hope, sees no imaginative possibilities that can be incorporated into his or her life. Necessity alone, Anti-Climacus claims, is suffocating. Possibility is, spiritually speaking, like oxygen: one cannot breathe pure oxygen, but neither can one breathe without it" (Lippitt and Evans). When free will is thought lost and necessity becomes the only reason to live, despair "is seen not merely as an emotion but as the state in which the self fails to become a self in truth." Despair inhibits one's ability to become one's true self; by accepting fate, which leads to despair, one simultaneously rejects freedom—freedom of responsibility. A despairing person does not take accountability for his life and simply becomes a player in fate's game, whereas taking responsibility for life *and* falling into despair is simply not possible. The solution, then, is to strip away self-delusion and take full responsibility of life by willingly engaging in the process of *becoming*, not resolve oneself to *being*.

Becoming Subjective, Thinking Death, Living Death

Kierkegaard surmises that life *can be* made meaningful, but meaning cannot be found while in despair, though it is found in the concept of temporality—in death. Kierkegaard's notion of the subjective places great importance on one's inner being because inwardness wards off despair and unveils personal truth. Generally, a notion is considered objective truth when a fact is observed in the world, but Kierkegaard rejects truth in this traditional sense and asserts truth is subjective in that it is personal: "Truth is inwardness; there is no objective truth, but the truth consists in personal appropriation. … The truth exists only in the process of becoming, in the process of appropriation" (71). It is the subjective thinker who engages in the process of becoming and, thus, knows truth, which is to say, inwardness:

> Someone existing is constantly in coming to be; the genuinely existing subjective thinker simulates this existence of his constantly in his thinking and invests all his thinking in becoming. It is the same as with style: the only writer who really has style is the one who never has anything finished, but 'troubles the waters of language' every time he begins, so that for him the most everyday expression comes into being with the pristine freshness of a new birth. (73)

The subjective thinker engages with the process of becoming, which must be carried out by sheer will—"to will deeply and sincerely" (160). This explication of the subjective in *Postscript* unmistakably harkens back to earlier writings. Walter Lowrie, translator of the 1944 edition, asserts that *Either/Or* "teaches despair as a thing one must will, and teaches one to choose oneself—the way to overcome melancholy and despair" (xii). Further, Kierkegaard "explains too that 'to choose oneself' is only another expression for the Socratic injunction 'to know oneself'" (xii)—thus the need for inwardness. Yet one's personal truth, found through coming to know oneself, is not without parameters. Critical to Kierkegaard's explanation of subjective truth is his clarification what one's truth must do: "Only the truth that edifies is truth for you; that is, the truth is inwardness, the inwardness of existence" (213). This edification unveils meaning. Kierkegaard had said as much himself ten years prior to writing *Postscript* in an August 1, 1835, journal entry: "One must first learn to know oneself before knowing anything else. Not until a man has inwardly understood *himself* and then sees the course he is to take does his life gain peace and meaning; only then is he free" (10). Subjectivity, finding one's personal truth, is the goal.

Inwardness, engaging in the process of becoming, allows one to find meaning. Death—specifically, thinking about death—must be a part of this process: "But if the task is to become

subjective, then thinking death is not at all a something in general, but indeed an action, for the development of the subjectivity consists precisely in [an individual] actively implicating himself in his thought about his own existence, that he actually thinks the thought by making it actual, that he does not just think for one moment, now you must take care every moment, but takes care every moment" (142). Julia Watkin summarizes Kierkegaard's view of death at a basic level, reasoning that "Kierkegaard shows in his writings that one's view of death is very much linked to one's total view of existence" (65). Though primarily concerned with Kierkegaard's "transcendentalist" writings, she acknowledges that he "shows us that the norm is to assume that man is meant to be as happy as possible in this life, even if there is nothing else after death. One must make the best of human existence, even if it cannot be given a meaning or significance that really transcends immanence" (68). Though meaning may not be found in the eternal in the immanentalist view—that being the "views that presuppose only the world order as we know it" (65)—existence can still be given meaning in this world because of death's influence on this life, as mortals while existing in "the world as we know it."[17]

With the reemergence of interest in Kierkegaard has come a new analysis of despair's relationship to death. George Connell has undertaken analyzing Kierkegaard's use of living death as a metaphor for despair. His primary focus is presenting and defending Kierkegaard's analysis of unconscious despair, which he says "runs counter to a number of main currents of modernity" (41). Nevertheless, he unpacks the metaphor of living death and establishes it as a plausible notion. Kierkegaard distinguishes between "death as the end of all experience" and

[17] While acknowledgement of Kierkegaard's adherence to a transcendentalist view of death is important, arguing his positioning of death as immanentalist versus transcendentalist need not be elucidated in this study. Doing so, as is the case with Watkin's essay, summarily dismisses many of his critical views of death. Though likely because the basis for the view of death she ascribes to Kierkegaard is primarily derived from her readings of *Either/Or* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, she overlooks his discussions of death in a broader sense. She cites Kierkegaard's "At a Graveside" discourse, for example, only once. Furthermore, she largely ignores the notion of *becoming*, which he so evidently inscribes to life *because of* death.

"dying as the experience of the movement from life to death" (23), but he does not always separate the latter as a result of the former. Because of this, "Kierkegaard invokes the idea of dying as living death to say that death is not sharply demarcated from life, that it can encroach upon life so that it becomes experientially present" (23). Death's encroachment through despair is unwanted, but its encroachment through the earnest thought of death is warranted, as the next section explains. Connell makes the point that regardless of living death's aptness as a metaphor, "our reaction to it serves as an occasion for the sort of self-examination Kierkegaard attempted to provoke throughout his authorship" (41). Interestingly, it is self-examination which leads to the topic of death.

Simon D. Podmore also analyzes Kierkegaard's "living death of despair" (47), perhaps even tightening despair's link to death. She explains, "Death is the secret 'unknown' that simultaneously holds the key to self-knowledge, and also to the self's own destruction" (45). This seems to be true on both counts in Kierkegaard's writings: warding off despair is possible by indefinitely thinking, becoming, and striving, *but* falling into despair damages one's soul. He contends that "the contemplation of death in all its poetic, spiritual, and visceral forms thereby becomes a mysterious and fecund wellspring of hidden self-knowledge and knowledge of the divine" (46). Again, self-knowledge is the route out of the throws of despair.[18]

Life Transformed by Death's Uncertain Certainty

[18] Likely obvious, these philosophical analyses go into great depth analyzing living death in relation to grander, more complex goals. Detailing that depth—for instance, of despair as unconscious (Connell) or the spheres of death (Podmore)—is not necessary for the purposes of this project (i.e., Kierkegaard's understanding of death as it relates to Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's works). These considerations could, however, be continued in further study. The intent of including these philosophical analyses is to bolster support for despair's incontrovertible connection to death through inwardness.

"What I really need is to be clear about *what I am to do* … the thing is to find a truth which is truth *for me*, to find *the idea for which I am willing to live and die*" (*Kierkegaard's Journals* 19). So wrote the twenty-two-year-old Kierkegaard as he embarked on his authorial journey. His writing was to become "the idea" on which he held fast through even the last decade of his life, proclaiming in 1846, "I have found my life-support in this work. I mean, this work has supported me, the work of preparation and self-development" (157). How much time remained to complete his work was of no matter, and his personal proclamations indicated as much: "If death does come tomorrow, I am beginning upon something that is worth starting on" (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript* 139). Ultimately, it is in death where Kierkegaard believed we derive meaning. We must understand and face the reality of death *and then* live expediently and with purpose because of death's reality.

In perhaps no other work does Kierkegaard so clearly lay out his understanding of death than "At a Graveside," one of three discourses in the 1845 publication he thought would be his last, though it certainly was not. Having outlived all but one of his immediate family members, Kierkegaard anticipated his death would come at an early age. In a letter he sent from Berlin to a friend abroad, he wrote, "I have a feeling that I have not long to live, but I am living for a brief term and so much the more intensely" ("Early Journal Entries" 8). Patrick Stokes and Adam Buben write in the introduction to their 2011 publication *Kierkegaard and Death*, "Søren expresses surprise, almost disbelief, on reaching his thirty-fourth birthday" (2). Reasons for "his remarkable, lifelong preoccupation with death, dying, and the dead" and their corresponding appearances as ever-present themes throughout his authorial production, as Stokes and Buben contend, should tragically be of no surprise.

Yet Kierkegaard's anticipation of his own death did not deter him from pursuing his work. Quite the opposite. He believed fervently in pursuing one's purpose without concern as to how long one might have left to live, "whether one is granted a lifetime to complete it well or only a brief time to have begun it well" (96). His "Graveside" discourse outlines "death's decision" (76) as *decisive, indefinable,* and *inexplicable* and emphasizes the notion of earnestness. In an essay titled "Earnestness," John Davenport explains an earnest person, in Kierkegaardian terms, as one who "is genuinely devoted to an ethical ideal that requires dedication, sacrifice, and perseverance over time, subordinating pursuit of other finite goods to this eternal standard" (220). With regard to life, an individual is to pursue their interests and passions, hold them in their heart, and remain devoted to them while at the same time not succumbing to external pressures of life—finances, projects, and the constant felt need to *finish* something (219-220), a topic Kierkegaard furthers a year later in his next book.[19]

With the three defining words—*decisive, indefinable,* and *inexplicable*—alongside the notion of earnestness, Kierkegaard provides a framework for his view of death. In fact, he uses the word "earnest," or a variation thereof, one-hundred-twenty-eight times in his discourse. What, then, is earnestness of death? It is the thought of death: "earnestness is that you think death, and that you are thinking it as your lot, and that you are then doing what death is indeed unable to do—namely, that you are and death also is." But such thought involves one's "inner being," as "it is the inner being and the thinking and the appropriation and the ennobling that are the earnestness" (74). Earnestness, however, "is only an illusion when the external is regarded light-mindedly or heavy-mindedly or when the observer, profoundly considering the thought of

[19] In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard expands on how "one feels a constant urge to have something finished," an effect of "constantly coming to be." This urge must be fought, however, because one should "invest all his thinking in becoming" (73), but not toward "a goal in the finite sense." Rather, "he strives indefinitely, is constantly coming to be" (77).

death, forgets to think about and take into account his own death" (73). In other words, avoiding the thought of one's own death discredits earnestness, discreditation the protagonist in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," for example, inadvertently incurs.

In his "At a Graveside" discourse, Kierkegaard initiates the concept that there is no safeguard against death. With a biblical allusion, he writes, "See, the axe already lies at the root of the tree; every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down" (93), a reference to Jesus's warning in Matthew chapter 7: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (vv. 19-20). Jesus calls for followers to discern false prophets and speaks to those prophets' afterlife, but Kierkegaard uses this verse to speak to death, clarifying that "every tree will be cut down, also the one that bears good fruit" (93). In other words, everyone will die. He continues, writing, "The certainty is that the axe lies at the root of the tree. Even if you do not notice that death is passing over your grave and that the axe is in motion, the uncertainty is still there at every moment, the uncertainty when the blow falls—and the tree" (93). Life is always at risk.

Kierkegaard asserts that one should live a transformed life because of death's uncertain certainty with "its uncertainty [as] the instruction, the practice of earnestness" (94). He believes finding one's personal truth (i.e. meaning) possible through inwardness, which must include thinking about death: "to give the thought of death retroactive power and make it impelling in life, because with the decision of death all is over, and because the uncertainty of death inspects every moment" (100). Then, with "impelling power" and "true direction" (89), one pursues their "essential work" (96). Though he again later poses "the problem of *what it means to die*" (147) in *Postscript*, he explains that "in spite of this almost extraordinary knowledge of facility in knowledge, I can by no means regard death as something I have understood" (148). Yet he

attempts to understand by thinking death into every moment, because the uncertainty in every moment "can be overcome only by overcoming it in every moment" (149). He leads his reader to consider how, then, death can transform life:

> The question then arises as to what death is, and especially as to what it is for the living individual. We wish to know how the conception of death will transform a man's entire life, when in order to think its uncertainty he has to think it in every moment, so as to prepare himself for it. We wish to know what it means to prepare for death, since here again one must distinguish between its actual presence and the thought of it. (151)

Here, Kierkegaard's "wish to know" more about death rings true. He had already established death's decision in his "Graveside" discourse, but he continues learning about death so it will transform his own life.

At the end of "At a Graveside," Kierkegaard calls on his listener to acquire an explanation of death slowly because "it is acquired only by the person who worked himself weary in the good work, who walked himself tired on the right road, who bore the concern for a just cause, who was misunderstood in a noble striving, and not until it is well gained in this way is it in the right place" (101). He calls himself a learner, offering thoughts by "merely letting you witness, just as he himself is doing, how a person seeks to learn something from the thought of death" (102), a thought he continued seeking to learn throughout his authorship.

Fitzgerald's Aesthetic: A Progressive Embodiment of Despair

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned* was first printed in *Metropolitan Magazine* in 1921. Just a few months later in 1922, Charles Scribner's Sons published the work

as a novel. The book is recognized for its autobiographical elements, namely the two main characters as based on Fitzgerald and his wife, Zelda. Set in New York during the Jazz Age, it is the tale of a man and his bride-to-be's courtship and young love. The two spend their young married life waiting on his grandfather to die so they can inherit his fortune, but when they finally receive the grandfather's wealth, little remains of them and their relationship. Their infatuation with each other having long since faded and their hopes left unfulfilled, they become completely discontent with life. They epitomize Kierkegaard's aesthetic: pleasure-seekers who live for the moment, put faith in what is beyond control, avoid responsibility, and ultimately fall into despair, with meaning remaining elusive. Their attempts to find meaning are in vain as they continue to pursue only immediate, short-term pleasure. In this tragic tale of love lost (or perhaps never rightfully gained), Fitzgerald weaves death into his narrative, so much so that references to death become an integral part of its language. Alongside his stylistic choice of fusing death into *The Beautiful and Damned*'s language, he incorporates causes and consequences of despair. The young couple progressively embody despair because of their aesthetic views, a progression which can be traced through their downfall to their demise.

At the beginning of *The Beautiful and Damned*, Anthony Patch is introduced as the main character—with references to death, despair, and the afterlife. Anthony has returned from Rome, and at twenty-five years old, "he considered that he would one day accomplish some quiet subtle thing that the elect would deem worthy and, passing on, would join the dimmer stars in a nebulous, indeterminate heaven halfway between death and immortality. Until the time came for this effort he would be Anthony Patch" (11). In an article on Fitzgerald and the demise of the American Dream, Hai Nguyen explains the "failure to integrate into the aristocratic elite class" to be a "fundamental limitation of the American Dream since the early days of America," a

limitation with which Fitzgerald would have been well-accustomed. Whereas Nguyen writes that admission to "the Elect" class is made possible with wealth, Anthony similarly seems to believe some accomplishment could pass him to fame. Even so, this language— "the elect," "passing on," "heaven," "death and immortality"—reflects obvious elements of death and the afterlife, setting the stage to introduce Anthony's early experiences with death and Kierkegaard's notion of despair.

Reminiscent of Kierkegaard's description of despair in *Works of Love*, Anthony's despair originates from the death of a loved one, having borne witness to his father's death. Anthony's mother, Henrietta Lebrune Patch, died when Anthony was five years old. When he was eleven on a trip to England and Switzerland, his father "died with much sweating and grunting and crying aloud for air" (15). Anthony came home to America "in a panic of despair and terror … wedded to a vague melancholy that was to stay beside him through the rest of his life" (15). Fitzgerald introduces the origination of Anthony's despair which follows him throughout the entirety of the novel. Though immensely heartbreaking, the misfortune of the death of a loved one is not, according to Kierkegaard's philosophy, the true cause of Anthony's despair; rather, the cause is his lack of an eternal perspective because through it, the problem of separation that death creates is solved.

As the story continues, it becomes evident that Anthony is a replicated version of Kierkegaard's aesthetic, with death interwoven into the narrative's language. The heir apparent to Adam Patch's wealth, Anthony does only enough to get by: "Some golden day, of course, he would have many millions; meanwhile he possessed *raison d'être* in the theoretical creation of essays on the popes of the Renaissance" (22). When Anthony had returned home from Rome, "he had hoped to find his grandfather dead, but had learned by telephoning from the pier that

Adam Patch was comparatively well again" (22). Like the aesthetic who puts his hope in what is outside his control, Anthony puts his hope in receiving his inheritance and does not care to bear any responsibility, defining characteristics of the aesthetic.

His rejection of responsibility coupled with misplaced hope causes meaning to become elusive. After dinner with his friends Dick Caramel and Maury Noble, Anthony thinks about Caramel going home to work on his book, but "Anthony was glad *he* wasn't going to work on *his* book. The notion of sitting down and conjuring up, not only words in which to clothe thoughts but thoughts worthy of being clothed – the whole thing was absurdly beyond his desires" (26-27). In a conversation with these same two friends just a few pages later, Anthony's lack of responsibility bleeds into his thoughts on meaninglessness:

> Maury: And I shall go on shining as a brilliantly meaningless figure in a meaningless world.
>
> Dick (*pompously*): Art isn't meaningless.
>
> Maury: It is in itself. It isn't in that it tries to make life less so.
>
> Anthony: In other words, Dick, you're playing before a grandstand peopled with ghosts.
>
> Maury: Give a good show anyhow.
>
> Anthony (*to* Maury): On the contrary, I'd feel, it being a meaningless world, why write? The very attempt to give it purpose is purposeless. (33)

But without the responsibility that comes with free will, Anthony is a susceptible victim to despair with no way of discerning the meaning of existence and willingness to pursue a purpose. This leaves Anthony vulnerable to the deceptiveness of existence—which is the thought that existence is endless, even if it be unconscious thought.

Epitomizing Kierkegaard's aesthetic, Anthony searches for meaning in what is outside his control—believing to have found meaning in Gloria Gilbert—who, according to her own mother is "irresponsible, as much as anything else. She has no sense of responsibility'" (49). Their relationship only deepens his despair. Kierkegaard asserts that one can gain strength from despair, though it is a fleetingly deceptive strength: "The strength you possess is the strength of despair; it is more intense than ordinary human strength, but also it lasts a shorter time" (*Sickness* 167). Consequently, "you then have forgotten your despair and all that commonly weighs upon your soul and thought, the accidental contact you have established with a person engages your attention absolutely" (168). For a time, Anthony seems to forget his despair because of the person who captures his attention.

One winter day after briefly meeting Gloria, Anthony makes meeting Dick and Gloria Gilbert for tea an item to do on his list for the day, which "brought him obvious satisfaction" (63). His days did not typically bring him satisfaction, nor structure, but this day does: "His day, usually a jellylike creature, a shapeless, spineless thing, had attained Mesozoic structure. It was marching along surely, even jauntily, towards a climax, as a play should, as a day should" (63). Fitzgerald interrupts the marching of the day with a reference to the day's death and the ensuing melancholy to come: "Anthony dreaded the moment when the backbone of the day should be broken, when he should have met the girl at last, talked to her, and then bowed her laughter out the door, returning only to the melancholy dregs in the teacups and the gathering staleness of the uneaten sandwiches" (63-64). Around this same time, "there was a growing lack of colour in Anthony's days," but rather than search for a route out of despair, he attempts to justify his meaningless days, which only leads to more despair: "In justification of his manner of living there was first, of course, The Meaninglessness of Life" (65). Anthony "found in himself a

growing horror and loneliness," and he seems to distantly recognize Kierkegaard's call to work: "If I am essentially weak, he thought, I need work to do, work to do" (65). He desires hope and knows "in flashes what it was – some path of hope to lead him towards what he thought was an imminent and ominous old age" (65). However, Anthony's misplaced hope fosters his despair. When he returns to his apartment, the "greyness" also returns. "Anthony Patch with no record of achievement, without courage, without strength to be satisfied with truth when it was given him. … He had garnished his soul in the subtlest taste … He was empty, it seemed, empty as an old bottle –" (66-67), but then, Gloria arrives, who resolves his despair if but momentarily as "the most living person he had ever seen" (68). As despair leads to death, its resolution leads to life, but Gloria, an aesthetic herself, is a false representation of life for Anthony.

In one of his first extended conversations with Gloria on a winter afternoon at the Plaza, she tells Anthony she hates getting old more than anything in the world. When he asks if she ever wants to get married, she responds, "I don't want to have responsibility and a lot of children to take care of" (74). To Gloria's question of "What *do* you do with yourself?" Anthony responds, "I do nothing, for there's nothing I can do that's worth doing" (75). His response "had neither surprised her nor even held her, yet she had certainly understood him" (75). She goes on to explain that she doesn't see why people do anything, concluding, "In fact it always astonishes me when anybody does anything" (76). Anthony calls her a determinist, and she asserts that the world is hers — as long as she is young (77). Contrastingly, Geraldine Burke, another girl Anthony sees occasionally, asks if he has any ambition and tells him to think what will become of him by the age of forty if he continues to drink every day. He responds, "I sincerely trust that I won't live that long" (99). The aesthetic view of life, which resides on fate and abdicates responsibility, takes precedence in these conversations.

As Anthony's infatuation with Gloria grows, he becomes an exemplar of that which Kierkegaard warns. After Anthony and Gloria take a taxi down Broadway, he stops the taxi driver outside Marathon, a cabaret. To Anthony, the place "is comparatively gay and joyous" (81). He thinks, "This is life! Who cares for the morrow? Abandoned people!" (81). Kierkegaard advises strongly against this type of "conclusion of joy as if there were no tomorrow" since such a conclusion implies "meaning were entirely finished" ("At a Graveside" 78). But Anthony perceives Gloria as giving meaning to his life at this time. When Gloria expresses her love for the place, Anthony slips into a dreamlike state: "At her happiness, a gorgeous sentiment welled into his eyes, choked him up, set his nerves a-tingle, and filled his throat with husky and vibrant emotion" (82). This is but an illusion that does not last:

> Then the illusion snapped like a nest of threads; the room grouped itself around him, voices, faces, movement; the garish shimmer of the lights overhead became real, became portentous; breath began, the slow respiration that she and he took in time with this docile hundred, the rise and fall of bosoms, the eternal meaningless play and interplay and tossing and reiterating of word and phrase – all these wrenched his senses open to the suffocating pressure of life – and then her voice came at him, cool as the suspended dream he had left behind. (83)

Kierkegaard warns of a similar type of illusion that occurs when external elements are given too much reverence, remarking that "the possibility of illusion" takes place when "the external is ennobled in one's consciousness" ("At a Graveside" 74). Anthony holds onto this illusion at the end of the evening, concluding that Gloria "moved him as he had never been moved before" (84). He realizes "the sheath that held her soul had assumed significance – that was all. She was a sun, radiant, growing, gathering light and storing it – then after an eternity pouring it forth in a

glance, the fragment of a sentence, to that part of him that cherished all beauty and all illusion" (84). Anthony has put his hope, even eternal hope, in Gloria.

Known for her heartbreaking ways, Gloria does not make time for Anthony for a short stint. Because of this, Anthony senses his loneliness returning to him: "There was one of his lonelinesses coming, one of those times when he walked the streets or sat, aimless and depressed, biting a pencil at his desk" (105). He knows it to be "a self-absorption with no comfort, a demand for expression with no outlet, a sense of time rushing by, ceaselessly and wastefully – assuaged only by that conviction that there was nothing to waste, because all efforts and attainments were equally valueless" (105). Upon Gloria's return to his life, so too does his love of life return which "absorbed him for the present to the exclusion of all else" (117). He had no question, "no eternal problem for a solution and resolution" (117). But Anthony's slip in and out of despair is far from over.

After a date one evening when he wishes to kiss Gloria, she denies him, he leaves, and she murmurs "half aloud to the death-bound fire" (128). Again, Anthony returns to his state of despair: "He reached home in misery, dropped into an armchair without even removing his overcoat, and sat there for over an hour, his mind racing the paths of fruitless and wretched self-absorption. She had sent him away! That was the reiterated burden of his despair" (129). He had walked away with "his grief and rage hidden behind the manner of a whipped schoolboy" (129). It is in Gloria that Anthony believes he has found meaning for his life: "he wanted nothing more from life" but "to possess the triumphant soul" (129). Misery strikes him again as he "endures the constant reminder of Gloria that all existence had become" (132). She was his only source of hope. He decides to wait six weeks before calling her, and upon that decision, "a gradual improvement was manifest" after taking "at least a step in the direction to which hope pointed"

(134). Within the six-week time of silence, he runs into Bloeckman in a Manhattan bar, a man he believes Gloria might be considering marrying. Bloeckman bids Anthony a quick farewell on his way to dinner with Gloria. The narrative reads: “Death looked suddenly out at him from two blue eyes” (137). This “vital blow” to Anthony makes him “wild with grief and fear and abominable imaginings” (137). But when Gloria agrees to see Anthony again, his soul is “thrilled to remote harmonies” (140). He feels confident in pitting even his youth opposite death: “for he was young now as he would never be again, and more triumphant than death” (140).

As the days to their wedding dwindle, Anthony and Gloria “comprehend dimly that if truth is the end of life, happiness is a mode of it, to be cherished in its brief and tremulous moment” (152). For Kierkegaard, truth is found through inwardness *during* life, not the end. Happiness is not the mode to truth; the process of becoming is. Happiness, rather, is the aesthetic’s aim. Anthony has always considered Gloria capable of bringing meaning into his life, and he believes she will continue to do so with her soul of fire and freshness—though an ominous comparison between their union and “dead beauty” appears in an otherwise poignant analogy: “the union of his soul with Gloria’s whose radiant fire and freshness was the living material of which the dead beauty of books was made” (164). At the time, he believed their “life would be beautiful as a story, promising happiness – and by that promise giving it. It gave love hope in its own survival. It could do no more” (164). Yet their love does not protect Anthony long-term from despair, nor does Gloria prove to be a life-giving tributary.

A month after marrying, Gloria learns Anthony is “an utter coward toward any one of a million phantasms created by his imagination … this cowardice sprang out, became almost obscenely evident, then faded and vanished” (173). Evidently, the “horror of death” Anthony had at eleven years old followed him into adulthood, and to him, “life was a struggle against death,

that waited at every corner" (15). Anthony does not outrun his bouts of despair. Gloria, meanwhile, seems to take on the role of touting an ominous loom of death rather than bringer-of-life as references to death thread the narrative, keeping death as a constant impression: "Gloria's penchant for premonitions and her bursts of vague supernaturalism were a surprise to Anthony" (205). She tended "to credit any extraordinary happening attributed to the whimsical perambulations of the buried." Together, the two are influenced by death, though in different ways: "The desperate squeakings about the old house on windy nights that to Anthony were burglars with revolvers ready in hand represented to Gloria the auras, evil and restive, of dead generations, expiating the inexpiable upon the ancient and romantic hearth" (205). Anthony fears death, and Gloria believes it responsible for the inexplainable.

The Beautiful and Damned intermittently describes Anthony and Gloria's declarations of love for one another, sweet professions to each other, and phrases describing "their almost uncanny pull at each other's hearts" (185). However, their marriage is no doubt tumultuous to the point it unravels over time. In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard acknowledges that life can be fulfilled by love *if* one accepts love as the antidote to unhappiness with regard to fortune. In other words, come what may, love is fulfillment enough (26). He includes a caveat, of course: that only with a matter of conscience is there love from a pure heart (123). The mention of conscience calls Anthony's and Gloria's love into question.

In addition to matters of the heart, Kierkegaard discusses the soul as well.[20] He sees humans as both finite and infinite, "an existing infinite spirit," which is "the subject's synthesis" (*Works of Love* 69). In other words, "the existing subject is eternal, but as existing temporal." Because of humans' synthesized being, "nothing finite, not the whole world, can satisfy the soul

[20] Kierkegaard sees the soul and spirit essentially the same. See C. Stephen Evans's *Kierkegaard and Spirituality: Accountability as the Meaning of Human Existence* (2019).

of the man who feels need of the eternal," which is to say, "nothing finite can satisfy the soul of every man" (171).[21] But despair makes even temporal satisfaction nonexistent because "the soul keeps on shivering with despair and the spirit cannot attain its true transformation" (177). Without reprieve from despair, aesthetics will continue to seek pleasure, chasing after vain pursuits and damaging their souls along the way. Kierkegaard writes, "For, as I have expounded this in a previous passage dealing with every aesthetical view of life, it is despair to gain the whole world, and to gain it in such a way that one suffers damage to one's soul, and yet it is my sincere conviction that it is a man's true salvation to despair" (185).[22] This seeking and chasing only deepens despair.

The section titled "The Soul of Gloria" calls attention to Fitzgerald's motif of the soul in *The Beautiful and Damned*. Beginning first with Adam Patch, whose "body and his soul [his first quarter-century of life] had attacked his brain" (23); followed by the fantastical, supernatural Beauty character, whose "soul and spirit were one – the beauty of her body was the essence of her soul" (37); and including Richard's "ancient soul," Gloria's "very young soul" (49), and Anthony's "restless soul" (54), the novel is filled with constant references to the characters' souls. As the novel continues, the language darkens when "soul" is mentioned: "souls bleak," "soul had aged," "bore and bully a man soul," "heavy and lifeless as her soul," "burden from his soul," "ironic soul," "soul and body shrank away," "tenebrous depths of her soul," "pitiful wretching of the soul," and so on. As Anthony and Gloria press on, despair progressively damages their souls.

[21] Here, Kierkegaard alludes to Ecclesiastes chapter 3, verse 11: "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart." He writes on Ecclesiastes in *Three Upbuilding Discourses* (1844).
[22] This is an allusion to Mark chapter 8, verse 36: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

In an essay titled "'Despair' in Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*," Michelle Kosch defends a view of despair as "the conscious or unconscious assumption of a passive or fatalistic attitude toward one's existence, motivated by a misconstrual of the nature of one's agency" (87). Following her claim that "the aesthetic view is despair," she parses the pseudonymous judge's presentation of despair as a concept:

> Aesthetic views, he says there, are those that place the highest importance on pleasure, satisfaction or happiness in some (apparently) ordinary sense: "*[T]he popular expression [for the aesthetic life-view] heard in all ages and from various stages is this: One must enjoy life*" (*E/O* II 179/II 163). And the criticism he brings seems to be that enjoyment cannot be relied upon: "*But the person who says that he wants to enjoy life always posits a condition that either lies outside the individual or is within the individual in such a way that it is not there by virtue of the individual himself*" (*E/O* II 180/II 163). (87)

Anthony and Gloria believe they have found happiness with each other. Apart from their relationship, they pursue pleasure through a lavish lifestyle they cannot afford. Their enjoyment of life hinges on their ability to remain a part of the "simple healthy leisure class" (210). As a married couple, they "loitered, restive and lazily extravagant" while "joining other parties intermittently"—but "with no purpose more apparent than Gloria's desire to dance by different music," all the while spending "too much money" (211). When they find themselves at risk of losing such a lifestyle, they are overcome with distress.

The aesthetic's opposite, the ethical, is concerned with the inner world, not the external, because he aspires to know himself, guided by self-knowledge, to change himself by his own choice. This is a solid starting point to make life meaningful: prioritizing one's innermost being

to engage in becoming, choosing oneself to the degree that self-creation becomes life's goal, and becoming "genuinely devoted to an ethical ideal that requires dedication, sacrifice, and perseverance over time, subordinating pursuit of other finite goods" (Davenport 220). Thus, one should "begin something worth starting on" (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript* 139) so he can look back on his life to see that "he was halted and halted again in order to renounce vain pursuits, was prompted and prompted again to hasten on the road of the good" ("At a Graveside" 77). As much as Anthony may wish, Gloria cannot be Anthony's "ethical ideal," nor do either of them renounce vain pursuits; they, instead, seek them. Though Anthony has professed he will be "genuinely devoted" (220) to Gloria by marrying her, even this is refutable as their marriage continues to unravel (perhaps made most evident in his later extramarital affair).[23]

The first time Gloria is mentioned as being in despair, she solidifies her place as a Kierkegaardian aesthetic while at the same time proving Anthony's idolatrous placement of Gloria as ill-advised. The narrative prefaces this instance, emphasizing its detriment: "Later in June horror leered out at Gloria, struck at her and frightened her bright soul back half a generation. Then slowly it faded out, faded back into that impenetrable darkness whence it had come—taking relentlessly its modicum of youth" (213). She is so overwhelmed, her soul (the eternal part of her), and what could be interpreted to be her innocence, is cast back into darkness. In a battle of whether to go home or continue their day drinking escapades, Anthony decides to "assert his will against" her to obtain "a mastery that seemed infinitely desirable" (213). He threatens to force her into the car, and then, despair makes its appearance: "With a subdued cry of infinite pain and despair she yielded herself up and got into the car" (219). Now, both are

[23] Kierkegaard broke off his year-long engagement to Regina Olsen, not because he did not love her, but because he believed marriage would deter him from his life's purpose of writing. For more on his reasoning, see Clare Carlisle's chapter "'My Regine!'" in *Philosopher of the Heart: The Restless Life of Søren Kierkegaard* (Penguin Random House, 2019, pp. 15-28).

despairing individuals: Gloria despairing over Anthony's actions; Anthony despairing over Gloria's inability to be his meaning. Kosch speaks to this dilemma in her explanation of the judge/Kierkegaard's view of despair in *Either/Or*, writing:

> The individual with an aesthetic life-view takes as his goal or standard something that is not in his power and whose attainment therefore cannot be guaranteed. The argument continues as follows: When things go awry for such an individual, he despairs, in a quite ordinary sense of that term—he feels unhappy, without hope, at a loss. (87)

They have unwisely placed external factors out of their control in the position to bring them individual happiness—the aesthetic's most important objective. Yet attainment continues to evade them. All the while, references to death increase around Gloria as the novel continues and her despair becomes more evident.

As the days go by, the couple's pursuit of pleasure leads to more turmoil—and despair. In the section titled "The Triumph of Lethargy," Anthony tells Gloria, "We've just worried around without even being efficient people of leisure" (228). She responds by telling him he should, indeed, do something, and he retorts, saying:

> "It's not that I have any moral compunctions about work," he continued, "but grampa may die tomorrow and he may live for ten years. Meanwhile we're living above our income and all we've got to show for it is a farmer's car and a few clothes. We keep an apartment that we've only lived in three months and a little old house way off in nowhere. We're frequently bored and yet we won't make any effort to know any one except the same crowd who drift around California all summer wearing sport clothes and waiting for their families to die." (229)

These hedonistic pleasures "depend on conditions 'outside the individual'" and "such goals admit of failure—due to impossible circumstances, to bad luck, or to one's own mistakes" (Kosch 87). They have no assurance of success in any of these matters, so they "cannot really enjoy life in the way the aesthetic individual pretends" (87). Further, *The Beautiful and Damned* narrative reminds readers that they live "in a world where death and war, dull emotion and noble savagery were covering a continent with the smoke of terror" (233), that Gloria's beauty "needed death" (233), and that "[Anthony] seemed to have inherited only the vast tradition of human failure—that, and the sense of death" (238). This persistent mention of death interspersed in Anthony's and Gloria's attempt to be "efficient people of leisure" (228) is a clear reminder of the final destination Kierkegaard identifies as inevitable for the aesthetic view—despair, the sickness unto death.

It is the grandfather who Anthony and Gloria so eagerly anticipate dying who seems perhaps most aligned with Kierkegaard's views of death. During a visit, Adam Patch asks Anthony if he thinks about the afterlife, telling him, "I think a great deal about the afterlife" (154). Then, almost as though he is warning Anthony, Adam says, "I began thinking – and it seemed to me that you ought to think a little more about the afterlife" (155). Such thought of the afterlife would naturally also bring death to mind, but Anthony does not heed his grandfather's advice. Instead, he ramps up his party habits. Then, at one of his and Gloria's wildest parties, Adam Patch shows up unannounced, "the grotesque, the unbelievable, the histrionic incident" (288). Paramore, one of their guests, is severely inebriated, "and as the commotion reaches its height he begins to spin round and round, more and more dizzily—he staggers, recovers, staggers again and then falls in the direction of the hall ... almost into the arms of old Adam Patch, whose approach has been rendered inaudible by the pandemonium in the room" (288).

Patch immediately goes white, having just donated fifty thousand dollars “to cause of national prohibition” that morning. Afterward, Gloria and Anthony are “nauseated and tired, dispirited with life” (292).

The couples despair deepens as their focus on the external elements of life continues. Gloria pleads with Anthony to visit his grandfather, which he does after reading in the newspaper that he is deathly ill. After his death, Anthony finds out he has disinherited him, so he takes course to contest the will. In the meantime, they continue on with life as it had been: “There had been many parties—people broke things; people became sick in Gloria's bathroom; people spilled wine; people made unbelievable messes of the kitchenette. These things were a regular part of their existence” (310). Their marriage continues to unravel, reaching “the stage of violent quarrels that were never made up, quarrels that smouldered and broke out again at intervals or died away from sheer indifference” (313). Being disinherited does not change their relationship, nor their lifestyle. America going to war, however, does.

When Anthony is drafted, he believes it to be “very purposeless and sad” and confesses to Gloria “one night that he wanted, above all things, to be killed” (322). After boarding the train at Grand Central Station bound for the South that would take him to Camp Hooker, Anthony thinks it “wearisome” to be “shut up in a car by an incomprehensible civilization, taken somewhere, to do a vague something without aim or significance or consequence” (329). Lacking purpose, Anthony begins an affair with Dorothy Raycroft, a nineteen-year-old Southern woman. With her, he felt “he had become a coward in earnest—completely the slave of a hundred disordered and prowling thoughts which were released by the collapse of the authentic devotion to Gloria that had been the chief jailer of his insufficiency” (339). Anthony views the collapse of his devotion Gloria as a struggle he has lost, thereby leading him to wishing for

death. Then, he establishes himself a coward, fulfilling a sequence of events Kierkegaard describes so similarly that the comparisons are uncanny. In "Graveside," Kierkegaard writes of the loser of a fight who sees "that his suffering is every day in consequence of the defeat" and believes it "to be mitigating to consider that death will fetch him and make the separation into nothing" and "to be a relief to reflect that death invites him" (87). Kierkegaard goes on, addressing his reader: "But, my listener, this is a mood; and actually it is cowardice … It is a cowardly craving of depression to want to become dizzy in the emptiness and to seek the final diversion in this dizziness; it is envy in rebellion against God to want to damage one's soul" (87). Anthony's desire for death is cowardly, made manifest in his affair with Dorothy.

Both the harshness of life and reality of death appear when Anthony tells Dot his infantry is leaving for Mississippi. He begins, "Life is so damned hard" (354), then continues, saying, "it just hurts people and hurts people, until finally it hurts them so that they can't be hurt ever any more. That's the last and worst thing it does" (354). Dramatically, Dot responds telling him that if he leaves her, she will die—and wants to die. He recalls the time when he desperately wanted Gloria (without mentioning her) and attempts to console Dot, telling her that "things are sweeter when they're lost. I know—because once I wanted something and got it. It was the only thing I ever wanted badly, Dot. And when I got it it turned to dust in my hands" (355). But Dot remains fixated on death, replying, "What's death to me is just a lot of words to you" (356). Ultimately, Anthony loses Captain Dunning's proposed opportunity to become a corporal (an opportunity which "did generate the idea that life would be amusing" though he "was little interested in the work" [350]). After Dot calls to tell him "good-by" and threatens to kill herself, he returns late to camp and is "reduced to the ranks without trial, and confined for a month to the limits of his company street" (364). This throws Anthony back into the depths of despair seeking the

worthless pleasure of an aesthetic: “With this blow a spell of utter depression overtook him, and within a week he was again caught down-town, wandering around in a drunken daze, with a pint of bootleg whiskey in his hip pocket. It was because of a sort of craziness in his behavior at the trial that his sentence to the guard-house was for only three weeks” (364). As Anthony’s self-inflicted situation gets worse, his despair does as well:

> Early in his confinement the conviction took root in him that he was going mad. It was as though there were a quantity of dark yet vivid personalities in his mind, some of them familiar, some of them strange and terrible, held in check by a little monitor, who sat aloft somewhere and looked on. The thing that worried him was that the monitor was sick, and holding out with difficulty. Should he give up, should he falter for a moment, out would rush these intolerable things—only Anthony could know what a state of blackness there would be if the worst of him could roam his consciousness unchecked. (364)

In “A Matter of Aesthetics,” the narrative turns to Gloria, briefly recounting her whereabouts during Anthony’s absence. She tries not to think of Anthony, but when she receives word he has been in the hospital, she thinks back to when they met, a Kierkegaardian illusion: “Like a figure in a dream he came back into her life across the ballroom on that November evening—and all through long hours that held familiar gladness she took him close to her breast, nursing an illusion of happiness and security she had not thought that she would know again” (386). But once reunited, they begin quarreling again, falling into the same patterns as before, with Anthony drinking more than even before prohibition and Gloria wanting money for expenditures like a gray squirrel coat. A now twenty-eight-year-old Gloria thinks back to her young life and remembers “she had talked always in broken clauses—to weave about her

immeasurable illusions, immeasurable distances, immeasurable light. To create souls in men, to create fine happiness and fine despair she must remain deeply proud" (406). Kierkegaard lists "a number of goals (hedonistic pleasure, honor, wealth) that depend on conditions 'outside the individual' and one (cultivation of one's talents)" (Kosch 87) indicative of an aesthetic view, like that of Gloria and her proudness.

Despite their efforts, the two "become like players who had lost their costumes, lacking the pride to continue on the note of tragedy" (419). Anthony and Gloria's tumultuous marriage mirrors the Kierkegaardian aesthetic, with a final moment in the unraveling of their relationship being brought on by "a sort of madness [which] seized upon Anthony" (437). They have pursued pleasure, maintained a lifestyle devoid of responsibility, spent beyond their means, placed hope in what is beyond their control, and thus embodied Kierkegaard's notion of despair. After four-and-a-half years, Anthony and Gloria's legal battle to regain ownership of Adam Patch's estate comes to an end; the decision is reversed, and they receive their inheritance. The reversal of this decision does not, however, reverse the damage done to their relationship. Afterwards, Anthony considers the reversal as a victory over having to go to work, even considering it a victory over Gloria and her wish to send him to work. Their aesthetic view led them only to despair—and the death of their relationship.

Hemingway: Death's Decision, "So this was how you died, in whispers that you did not hear."

Kierkegaard intended his musings to provide insight as to what can be learned from the thought of death, and his discourse about death's decision in "At a Graveside" takes shape particularly in Ernest Hemingway's "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" (1936), a story about a man's lingering encounter with death. Meditations on death are not a fleeting occurrence in

Hemingway's works; rather, they are a constant and looming presence. In this short story, the protagonist does not encounter a *near-death* experience, but is, rather, *in the midst of* dying. Death does not simply lace this story; death overlays it. Because the protagonist, Harry, knows he is dying, he has time to reflect on—and grieve for—his own life. Essentially antonymous, Harry stands opposite Kierkegaard's earnestness, and "Snows" illustrates the implications of living a life without thought of death, especially its unpredictability *and* certainty. Consequently, the Kierkegaardian notion of death's decision takes shape in Hemingway's "Snows of Kilimanjaro."

Just as Kierkegaard confronts death at a graveside, explicating what certain death means for how one *is* to live, Hemingway's protagonist Harry similarly comes face-to-face with death, understanding now how he *should have* lived. The narration begins with Harry's direct reference of death: "The marvellous thing is that it's painless. That's how you know when it starts" (58). He and his wife Helen are stranded on their safari in Africa because of a bad bearing in the truck's engine. Harry is afflicted with gangrene, and he references death in a direct, matter-of-fact tone, pointing out the fifteen vultures nearby and asking, "Now is it sight, or is it scent that brings them like that?" (58). Helen hopes a plane will come to save them, but Harry rebukes her, telling her to "let a man die as comfortably as he can" (59). Helen says he is not going to die, to which he retorts, "Don't be silly. I'm dying now" (59).

With fatigue and anger, Harry admits to death having obsessed him for years, echoing Kierkegaard's repeated phrase "all is over":

> So now it was all over, he thought. So now he would never have a chance to finish it. So this was the way it ended in a bickering over a drink. Since the gangrene started in his right leg he had no pain and with the pain the horror had

> gone and all he felt now was a great tiredness and anger that this was the end of it. For this, that now was coming, he had very little curiosity. For years it had obsessed him; but now it meant nothing in itself. It was strange how easy being tired enough made it. (60)

Harry's obsession with death is evident from the memories he dredges up—as a soldier fighting in World War I, as a man meeting Helen whose husband and child have died, and as a veteran plagued by lingering ruminations of war. This supposed obsession, however, has only been what Kierkegaard names an "illusion"; Harry, indeed, may have "considered the thought of death," yet he failed "to think about and take into account his own death" ("At a Graveside" 73). Harry's contemplations of death were those that, as Kierkegaard explains, "induce weakness" and bring about lethargy, rather than those that provide "the earnest person the right momentum in life and right goal toward which he directs his momentum" because nothing "is able to accelerate the living when earnestness stretches the thought" (83). Harry has lived without the *earnest* thought of death.

Because death's decision is objectively decisive, Kierkegaard argues that death should be considered a possibility in each day, "disdain[ing] no task as too insignificant, reject[ing] no time as too short, work[ing] with all might" (83). In an essay summarizing his view of death, Julia Watkin observes that Kierkegaard "shows in his writings that one's view of death is very much linked to one's total view of existence" and reiterates that death is "an uncertain certainty because it can strike us down at any time" (65). The thought of death gives each day "infinite worth." In his "Graveside" discourse, Kierkegaard muses:

> Death itself produces a scarcity of time for the dying. Who has not heard how one day, sometimes one hour, was jacked up in price when the dying one bargained

> with death! Who has not heard how one day, sometimes one hour, gained infinite worth because death made time dear! Death is able to do this, but with the thought of death the earnest person is able to create a scarcity so that the year and the day receive infinite worth … death also is like a thief in the night. (84)

Kierkegaard refers to "the dying" generally and broadly, but Harry is "the dying" in an immediate sense. Obviously, his intermittent thoughts of death did not create a scarcity in such a way of allowing his day infinite worth. Harry is not in a position to "bargain with death," as he realizes death has come for him like a thief in the night, thinking, "Now he would never write the things that he had saved to write until he knew enough to write them well. … he would never know, now" (60). His life has culminated in this final moment when he realizes he cannot give any more days their worth.

Regretting this, Harry first deflects, casting blame on Helen for his unfinished work and describing her as "this kindly caretaker and destroyer of his talent" (66), but then he corrects himself: "Nonsense. He had destroyed his talent himself … He had destroyed his talent by not using it, by betrayals of himself and what he believed in, by drinking so much that he blunted the edge of his perceptions, by laziness, by sloth, and by snobbery" (66). Kierkegaard explains such actions and attitude as cowardly, writing that "death induces the sensual person to say: Let us eat and drink, because tomorrow we shall die—but this is sensuality's cowardly lust for life, that contemptible order of things where one lives in order to eat and drink instead of eating and drinking in order to live" (83). Too late, Harry proclaims he does not "like to leave things behind" (64), but having misused his talent, he must.

Harry recalls the war, describing it to have figuratively ended his life, and after it, he began a new life "with different people and more money, with the best of the same places, and

some new ones" (65). By the time Harry and Helen met after the war, he had gotten in the habit of lying, namely to women because, as he recollects, "his lies were more successful with women than when he told them the truth. … [Yet] it was not so much that he lied as that there was no truth to tell" (65). Harry became unable to identify any truth, and with what started as lies to women became lies to himself. He recollects:

> In yourself, you said that you would write about these people; about the very rich; that you were really not of them but a spy in their country; that you would leave it and write of it and for once it would be written by some one who knew what he was writing of. But he would never do it, because each day of not writing, of comfort, of being that which he despised, dulled his ability and softened his will to work so that, finally, he did no work at all. (65)

While Kierkegaard asserts death to be a momentum-driver to life, Harry actively chose not to dwell on death—or writing—further positioning him opposite earnestness. Death's power is that all *will be* over, so Kierkegaard advises to "keep the right to work while it is day; and let the earnest person seek the thought of death as an aid in that work" (84). Without the earnest thought of death, Harry's will to work had dissipated.

After the war, Helen seems to have brought Harry a renewed sense of purpose to write and a "returning strength of will to work" (66), but now, in moments of anticipatory grief of his own death, he pauses to think about how he traded on his talent rather than using it to his full potential, knowing that "it was never what he had done, but always what he could do" (66). Harry is grieved that he procrastinated accomplishing his goals and allowing himself to slip into living a life of lethargies. In his essay, "Living Posthumously: From Anticipatory Grief to Self-

Mourning," Bob Plant addresses various facets of grief through a philosophical lens, echoing Kierkegaard's warnings regarding death:

> Our temporally open-ended plans, projects, commitments and relationships *will be* cut short by death. But even those temporally bound plans, projects, commitments and relationships we are lucky enough to see to fruition *could have been* prematurely terminated by death at any point. Indeed, this ever-present possibility is part of what makes our various plans, projects, commitments and relationships valuable in the first place. At this juncture it is therefore tempting to conclude that death, far from *undermining* life's meaning and value, is in fact what *makes* life worthwhile. (46)

Much like Kierkegaard, Plant emphasizes that "loss is an unavoidable feature of human life" which brings about "unwanted suffering" (39). Harry experiences the phenomenon of anticipatory grief—specifically the grief of his own death. According to Plant's philosophical study on anticipatory grief and self-mourning, while caregivers often experience anticipatory grief while caring for loved ones who are elderly or terminally ill, the ones dying can also experience such grief. Plant explains this phenomenon in the first person: "For although I will not be able to lament or grieve the loss of my own life *after I have died*, I am perfectly capable of mourning my future death *while I am still alive*" (42).

Harry recognizes now that both their meeting and separating, their beginning and ending, has been brought on by death. Harry and Helen's connection was brought about by the death of one of her two children (killed in a plane crash). Her husband had died when she was still a young mother. She had always enjoyed reading, shooting, drinking, and riding horses, and after the death of her adult child, she did not want to be alone, "wanted someone that she respected

with her" and decided "she had to make another life" (68). He thinks about her pleasantly, then blames himself for ending the second life she built for herself: "And now this life that she had built again was coming to a term because he had not used iodine two weeks ago when a thorn had scratched his knee as they moved forward trying to photograph a herd of waterbuck… They had bolted, too, before he got the picture" (68). This reflection is guilt-ridden; he had chosen to pursue taking the photograph, did not achieve that goal, and cost Helen her second life in the process. As he considers her fondly while lying in his cot, he jarringly remembers death: "She was a fine woman, marvellous really. And just then it occurred to him that he was going to die. It came with a rush; not as a rush of water nor of wind; but of a sudden evil-smelling emptiness and the odd thing was that the hyena slipped lightly along the edge of it" (70). Death's decision has been made known to Harry.

Second to *decisive*, Kierkegaard names death *indefinable*, writing, "So death is indefinable—the only certainty, and the only thing about which nothing is certain" ("At a Graveside" 91). Helen regrets having taken this trip that has brought the loom of death. "Snows" reads, "'I wish we'd never come,' the woman said" (60). Helen's name is not given here, which seems to take even any unintended emphasis off her and placed on Harry's prognosis. Harry blames their escapades on Helen's "bloody money" (61), but she fixates on the unfairness of Harry's plight, saying, "I don't see why that had to happen to your leg. What have we done to have that happen to us?" (61). Helen's question echoes Kierkegaard's explanation of the indefinable nature of death: Death has "no preferences" and "does not make a pact with anyone" ("At a Graveside" 88). He writes, "When the barns are full and there are provisions for a long life, death comes and demands the rich man's soul" (91). Though death's methodology discriminates, its result does not. In life, some people are dealt good fortune, others face

immense hardship, and many experience both prosperity and struggle—but death is the ultimate equalizer.

Throughout the narrative, the present time (of Harry and Helen on safari) has been interspersed with Harry's memories from the past. All of his memories, in some way, mention or involve death. In the first memory, Harry remembers the winters and snow he experienced during his stints in the war, remembering too the Austrians they had killed. The second begins with Harry not being able "to kill" the loneliness he experiences after his first love left him and "the day he'd first seen dead men wearing white ballet skirts and upturned shoes with pompons on them" (72) during the war. His feels regret at the end of this memory: "He had seen the world change; not just the events … He had been in it and he had watched it and it was his duty to write of it; but now he never would" [72].) The third memory is of his grandfather who had numerous guns that all burned when his cabin did and is followed by memories of Paris. In the fourth, death makes a sure appearance. After being told not to allow anyone to get any hay from the barn, a chore boy stopped a man trying to get feed. The man threatened to beat the boy again, so the boy shot him but left him in the barn where he froze. The boy was surprised and overcome with sadness at being arrested since he had followed the orders given to him. Harry had saved this story to write and again wonders why he never did.

The final memory, the most descriptive of death, describes a bombing officer's last moments before death: hit by a stick bomb, he begs Harry to kill him:

> *Shoot me, Harry. For Christ sake shoot me. They had had an argument one time about our Lord never sending you anything you could not bear and some one's theory had been that meant that at a certain time the pain passed you out automatically. But he had always remembered Williamson, that night. Nothing*

> *passed Williamson until he gave him all his morphine tablets that he had always saved to use himself and then they did not work right away.* (79)

As Harry nears death, his memories become more focused on it—and those who have died before him who he has forgotten to remember. Kierkegaard attributes remembering the dead to being just as praiseworthy as someone who spends his life in the earnest thought of death. He writes that "recollecting is precious to the deceased, is received with joy in heaven, and that his earnestness is just as laudable, just as well-pleasing to God, just as serviceable to him as that of someone who with rare talent used day and night in practicing in his life the earnest thought of death" (77). It is the "responsibility of death" that teaches "not to fear those who kill the body but to fear for himself and fear having his life in vanity, in the moment, in imagination" (77). Harry did not own this responsibility and has lived just as Kierkegaard apprises one will without such ownership.

Kierkegaard writes in his final description of death's decision, "Just as death is the last of all, so this will be the last thing said about it: It is *inexplicable*" (100). Then, he personifies death in his final description: "If you were able to catch sight of him, the pale, grim harvester, where he stood idle, leaning on his scythe, and if you would then go up to him … and said, 'Explain yourself, just one word'—do you think he would reply? I think he would not even notice that you put your hand on his shoulder and spoke to him" (96). Similarly, it is a personified version of inexplicable death that makes its presence known to Harry in his final hours:

> Because, just then, death had come and rested its head on the foot of the cot and he could smell its breath. … It had moved up on him now, but it had no shape any more. It simply occupied space. … It moved up closer to him still and he could not speak to it, and when it saw he could not speak it came a little closer, and now

> he tried to send it away without speaking, but it moved in on him so its weight was all upon his chest, and while it crouched there … He could not speak to tell her to make it go away and it crouched now, heavier, so he could not breathe. (80)

Though Helen is present, Harry is alone in his death, just as Kierkegaard explains the aloneness as a certainty all must face: "Alone, because that is indeed what death makes him" ("At a Graveside" 89). When Harry tells Helen at the beginning of "Snows" that he is dying, she corrects him, saying, "You can't die if you don't give up" (59). Harry becomes convinced at one point that he can beat anything "because nothing could hurt him if he did not care" (78). So he decided "he would not care for death" (78). But they are both proven incorrect in the end. Harry has not given up, but the decision is not his to make—it is death's. Death explains nothing, according to Kierkegaard, but it does give a warning to the living: "I need no explanation; but bear in mind, you yourself, that with this decision all is over and that this decision can at any moment be at hand" (100-101). Harry's death is a playing out in fictional form of Kierkegaard's discourse about "death's decision" as decisive, indefinable, and inexplicable.

Harry's story concludes when his life on earth does, but his is only one illustration of Kierkegaard's thanatology. As Stokes and Buben conclude, "The impact Kierkegaard's work on death has had on Western thought has yet to be fully uncovered and reckoned" and "a thorough engagement with [his] views on death-related issues, across a number of thematic fronts and via a range of approaches, is long overdue" (3). Death is an unending source of curiosity; "death itself explains nothing" (96). But it provides lessons from which to learn should we choose to engage its teachings—and think earnestly about death.

Close readings of Fitzgerald's novel and Hemingway's short story evince Kierkegaard's understanding of death, but few commentators have noted their obvious and pervasive inclusion

of death—let alone its relevance to philosophy. As Fitzgerald weaves death into *The Beautiful and Damned*'s language, he portrays Kierkegaard's aesthetic to the point where characters become the embodiment of despair; in "Snows," Hemingway illustrates death's decision as unpredictable and certain—and the consequences of having considered neither. Their work is far from exhausted in terms of thanatological study. Particularly what seems clear is that Kierkegaard's thoughts on death take shape in both Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's portrayals of death and its relationship to existence.

CHAPTER III: SARTRE, FITZGERALD, AND HEMINGWAY

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. —Thessalonians 4:13

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) arguably made existentialism into the preeminent branch of philosophy it is today. At least initially, his existential philosophy was a response to the historical events Sartre lived through in the early part of the twentieth century. It became the philosophy that revolutionized existentialism in ways his philosophical predecessors had not quite achieved. Sartre's philosophical contributions are wide-ranging, but he is largely recognized for his distinctive notion of radical freedom. According to Sartre, man creates meaning through freedom and is "condemned to be free" (*Being and Nothingness* 567). Because of this stance, Sartre emphasizes death's interruption of one's future, likewise contending that "to die is to be condemned" (696). This reciprocal connection is identifiable in F. Scott Fitzgerald's and Ernest Hemingway's works. This chapter will present Sartre's philosophy of death, beginning with the specific elements of his theory of meaning on which his philosophy of death hinges. Then, close readings of Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and Hemingway's short story "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" (1936) will illuminate Sartre's understanding of death as depicted in fictional form.[24]

Sartre's philosophy of death is informed by his radical notion of freedom in that death is the cutoff of freedom. For Sartre, death is about annihilation. Since death annihilates the future,

[24] Scholarship has undoubtedly attended to Sartre's own fiction as dramatizations of his philosophies, death included. (See David Detmer's chapters "Nausea," "No Exit," or "Saint Genet" in *Sartre Explained: From Bad Faith to Authenticity* [2011] or Adam Buben's article "Do Immortals Need an Eject Button? Sartre and the Importance of Always Having an Exit" [2020], for example.) Though these and other scholarship are incorporated where applicable (namely in their contributions to Sartre's understanding of death), this project's focus is of Sartre's philosophical works, not his fictional works, the first of which—novel *Nausea* (1938), short story "The Wall" (1939), and play *Bariona* / *Bariona, ou le fils du tonnerre* (1940)—were published after Fitzgerald's *Gatsby* (1925) and Hemingway's "Short Happy Life" (1936). Moreover, where dramatization is concerned, this project intends to focus on Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's fiction, providing a unique and innovative study.

any possibilities, and freedom, Sartre renders death meaningless. Thus, meaning cannot be derived from death but is, rather, extinguished by death. Since death is a fact but simultaneously rendered meaningless, one need not wait for death. Instead, the creation of meaning through freedom is to be the focus of existence. The subsequent pages outline specific concepts in Sartre's theory of meaning that his understanding of death relies upon. Pared down, these central concepts shed light on Sartre's overriding philosophy of death.

Concepts Foregrounding Death

In his first major philosophical work, *Being and Nothingness* (1943), Sartre begins his view of death in argument with Martin Heidegger's concept of Being-towards-death. But Sartre does not keep solely to arguing with Heidegger. He broadens the scope of his view by branching off from those arguments to present his own conceptual framework of death. In short, Heidegger concludes the possibility of death "as marking a way of my Being, an intelligible way for me to be" (Wheeler). But unlike Heidegger, who sees the always-present possibility of death as a way to find meaning, Sartre views death as the end of all—including meaning. Sartre's being-for-itself creates meaning "for itself" through conscious choice made possible by freedom. With freedom comes responsibility and anguish—concepts which underscore Sartre's understanding of death.

Foregrounding Sartre's radical freedom (which allows for meaning to be made) is being-for-itself (the being which makes meaning). In Sartre's theory of meaning, being is not active, nor does it create itself: "We need not conclude that being creates itself, which would suppose that it is prior to itself. Being can not be *causa sui* in the manner of consciousness. Being is *itself*" (*Being and Nothingness* 28). Being in-itself is a mode of passive existence without

consciousness: "being in-itself *is* what it is—to that which designates the being of consciousness" (28). Being-for-itself, however, is both conscious and aware of its consciousness: "The being of *for-itself* is defined, on the contrary [to being in-itself], as being what it is not and not being what it is … there is activity when a conscious being uses means with an end in view" (27-28). Peter Gabel defines Sartre's being-for-itself as "the continual projection into the next moment, always trying to complete itself but always remaining incomplete" (217). Stephen Priest explains the for-itself as "the kind of being of which it makes sense to say 'I am it'. Because *being-for-itself entails* consciousness, it entails that directedness towards the world called 'intentionality' which consciousness entails" (Priest, "Being" 107). Being-for-itself is both the presence of being and being which uses intent toward an end, or, in Sartre's words, being-for-itself "is what it is not while not being what it is … [which] is to say one and the same thing: to be aware that man is free" (567).

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre famously declares, "I am condemned to be free. This means that no limits to my freedom can be found except freedom itself, or, if you prefer, that we are not free to cease being free" (567). Freedom, as Sartre proclaims, cannot be escaped. Two years after the publication of *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre delivered a lecture in Paris which was published as "Existentialism Is a Humanism" in 1946. In it, he summarizes highpoints from his previous philosophical work, espousing that man "is nothing"; he only becomes "what he makes of himself" (22). Sartre reiterates that man "wills himself to be after being thrown into existence" but "is nothing other than what he makes of himself" (22). He clarifies his two-year prior declaration: "We are left alone and without excuse. That is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free: condemned, because he did not create himself, yet nonetheless free, because once cast into the world, he is responsible for everything he does" (29). For Sartre,

"Life has no meaning *a priori*. Life itself is nothing until it is lived, it is we who give it meaning, and value is nothing more than the meaning that we give it" (51).

According to Sartre, life does not inherently have meaning, but being-for-itself is free and given "absolute freedom of choice" (43). In Priest's words, "*being-for-itself* does not so much *have* choice as *is* choice" (107). For Sartre, this means that "I bear the responsibility of a choice" ("Existentialism" 44), with responsibility being "simply the logical requirement of the consequences of our freedom" (*Being and Nothingness* 708). Sartre says, "what is impossible is not to choose. I can always choose, but I must also realize that, if I decide not to choose, that still constitutes a choice" ("Existentialism" 44). Through one's choices, an individual is constantly in the process of creating oneself. By way of choices made, humans undergo an unending process of transformation.[25]

When being-for-itself realizes its responsibility of choice, it experiences anguish—a state of consciousness and a natural consequence of freedom. Sartre explains that "it is in anguish that man gets the consciousness of his freedom, or if you prefer, anguish is the mode of being of freedom as consciousness of being; it is in anguish that freedom is, in its being, in question for itself" (*Being and Nothingness* 65). Being-for-itself is in anguish when making a choice: "In order to cause *my* possibility to appear, I posit the other possibilities so as to nihilate them. This would not produce anguish if I could apprehend myself in my relations with these possibles as a cause producing its effects" (67). In choosing one possible, all other possibles are cast aside *and* the outcome of the possibles not chosen cannot be realized. Further, the outcome of the possible selected is also unknown: "I am in anguish precisely because any conduct on my part is only *possible*, and this means that while constituting a totality of motives *for* pushing away that

[25] For more on Sartre's absolute freedom, see chapter one of Part Four, "Being and Doing: Freedom," in *Being and Nothingness*.

situation, I at the same moment apprehend these motives as not sufficiently effective" (68). Since there is no way of knowing the future of any possible, anguish is "precisely my consciousness of being my own future, in the mode of not-being" (68). This is "anguish in the face of the future" 69) and, essentially, anguish in the face of the unknown.

Anguish in a second sense, "anguish in the face of the past" (69), necessitates Sartre's view that the past cannot be relived. He explains that any prior resolution is "no more than a memory of an idea, a memory of a feeling. In order for it to come to my aid once more, I must remake it *ex nihilo* and freely" (70). Sartre's idea is that "the past is without force to constitute the present and to sketch out the future" (472). Temporality, an existential structure of the for-itself, is irreversible and does not allow one to return to the past; its "irreversibility" is "the peculiar character of a freedom which temporizes itself" (699).[26] Even if the same opportunity presented itself again, it could not be replicated since it was passed the first time around: "by the very fact that this opportunity will be presented *after* the refused opportunity, it will not be the same" (699). The concept of anguish on the whole reiterates the continuality of transformation.

Understandably, one might search for a route out of anguish, but to escape anguish is to flee in bad faith—to deny freedom and evade responsibility. Sartre explains bad faith as an act of hiding truth: "To be sure, the one who practices bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth" (90). Further, bad faith "can even be the normal aspect of life for a very great number of people. A person can *live* in bad faith, which does not mean that he does not have abrupt awakenings to cynicism or to good faith, but which implies a constant and particular style of life" (90). Priest provides an example of this "style of life," writing, "In

[26] In *Being and Nothingness* (1943), Sartre organizes temporality into "three so-called 'elements' of time, past, present, and future" (159); he distinguishes these three separately alongside describing their relation to each other. The past, present, and future are not exclusive; they are, rather, part of a whole as "the structured moments of an original synthesis."

bad faith I am in relation to myself as the actor is to Hamlet. We are all actors. An actor knows he is an actor but in so far as he performs he is not his real self. In bad faith I know I am free but adopt a role which masks my freedom. Bad faith is a presentation for others and for myself" (205). As Priest summarizes, "The denial of freedom is immoral because it is inauthentic and hypocritical. Freedom brings with it a heavy and terrible responsibility. Bad faith is also therefore an evasion of responsibility" (206).

Sartre vehemently admonishes bad faith. He explains it is "true, many people do not appear especially anguished, but we [the existentialists] maintain that they are merely hiding their anguish or trying not to face it" ("Existentialism" 25),[27] as it is "experienced by all who have borne responsibilities" (27). But all individuals have a responsibility to create meaning in life through the choices they make. "In truth," Sartre states in his lecture, "one should always ask oneself, 'What would happen if everyone did what I am doing?' Asking this question requires acknowledgement of one's responsibility. The only way to evade that question is through some kind of bad faith. Someone who lies to himself and excuses himself by saying 'Everyone does not act that way' is struggling with a bad conscience" (25).

Death as Devoid of Meaning

With freedom as that which makes meaning in life possible, death is obviously problematic—the degree to which, for Sartre, death becomes meaningless. His understanding of death relies on the immense and grave emphasis he places on freedom, choice, and

[27] Sartre attributes this anguish to Kierkegaard, who called it "the anguish of Abraham" (25). In *Fear and Trembling* (1843), Kierkegaard examines the biblical story of Abraham in the book of Genesis (chapter twenty-two) when God commands him to sacrifice his son Isaac. In his examination, Abraham's anguish stems from his faith, placing obedience to God foremost and concludes faith requires setting aside understanding and all that is finite. Sartre, contrastingly, argues in favor of the need for proof—precisely what Kierkegaard said must be released.

responsibility; therefore, death must be considered "in relation to Sartre's theory of meaning" (92), as Bernard N. Schumacher puts it. Going so far as to name Sartre's philosophy of death "a cornerstone in the debate on death and the meaning of life," he positions Sartre's philosophy of death as "one of the most original contributions to thanatology in the twentieth century" (92). Schumacher narrowly defines Sartre's view of death as "an innovative way of understanding death" with "freedom as the foundation for being, at the same time that it addresses the problem of the meaning of life and the absurdity of death" (109). Sartre begins his most critical passage on death in *Being and Nothingness* broadly, explaining widely-accepted views of death and Heidegger's philosophy of death—in order to counter it.

Death has long been deemed "an event of human life" and therefore "considered as the final boundary of human life" (*Being and Nothingness* 680-681). Philosophy concerned with the relationship between the human and non-human has seen death as the connector of the two. Other theories, however, have not accepted the possibility of man encountering the non-human, even at one's end, so they moved "to *recover* death" by making it the final part of a series—that is, to humanize it. Through this lens, "death is a human phenomenon; it is the final phenomenon of life and is still life. … Death becomes the meaning of life as the resolved chord is the meaning of the melody" (681). If death is recovered, it is not merely human; it becomes "the phenomenon of *my* personal life which makes of this life a unique life—that is, a life which does not begin again, a life in which one never recovers his stroke. Hence I become responsible for *my* death as for my life" (682). The responsibility in these theories is the preparation *for* death, a death unique to each individual life. Heidegger gave "a philosophical form to this humanization of death" and philosophized life to be a "project toward death" (682). Sartre acknowledges this theory's appeal and its "undeniable portion of truth" (682). After all, in humanizing death, death is no longer a

limit to freedom but rather freedom recovered. But Sartre warns that this theory is actually misleading.

Sartre separates death from life and refutes the idea that death is individualized. It is not *a part of* life but is "extrinsic to life. It annihilates the meaning of free projection of the possibilities of the for-itself, which, once it is dead, is definitely reduced to an in-itself" (Schumacher 91). Sartre rejects the idea of death being a resolved chord and thereby refutes Heidegger's "resolute decision" because "if the meaning of our life becomes the expectation of death, then when death occurs, it can only put its seal upon life" (*Being and Nothingness* 683). Death itself makes this reasoning difficult to follow because "one can, in fact, expect *a particular* death but not *death*" (683). Sartre takes issue with the manner in which Heidegger individualizes death, reducing it to a "sleight of hand" and a reason for his warning that such a theory is misleading.[28] Countering Heidegger, Sartre questions death's individuality. Even if death has individuality, it may be that the death someone dies is not necessarily *their* death. Heidegger's claim that "to die is the only thing which nobody can do for me" is simply not true since it is not the "only thing," which Sartre proves, countering that "nobody can love for me" (684). In the same way, it is quite possible someone else can die in another's place: "If to die is to die in order to inspire, to bear witness, for the country, *etc.*, then anybody at all can die in my place" (684). Ultimately, Sartre says that "there is no personalizing virtue which is peculiar to *my*

[28] Critiques of Sartre's view of death largely focus on his argument against Heidegger's view of death. (For example, Bernard N. Schumacher questions Sartre's interpretation of Heidegger analysis of death in "Inductive Knowledge of Death and Jean-Paul Sartre" in *Death and Mortality in Contemporary Philosophy* [Cambridge University Press, 2012].) In part, this is because Sartre's framing of death is intricately bound up with his argument of Heidegger. It makes sense that philosophical critiques would question if Sartre overlooks or misreads Heidegger's conception of death. However, the goal of this project is not to critique Sartre's philosophy of death, only to present it in relation to Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's use of it. Aiming to avoid both overcomplication and detrimental simplification, Heidegger's philosophies of death are here briefly mentioned to the degree they are necessary, but the focus will remain on Sartre's philosophy of death.

death" (684). Though everyone will die and death is to be expected, death is, nevertheless, absurd because its particularities (namely, the time and manner of) are unknown.

With Sartre having separated death from life and refuting its individuality, to wait for death becomes a matter of choice. But Sartre asserts that waiting for death is as unworthy a choice as it is pointless. In fact, waiting for death "would be self-destructive" (691). He deems expecting death permissible because he acknowledges that life is limited and death is, indeed, a fact. But he distinguishes between *expecting* death versus *waiting for* death because "to *expect* death is not to *wait for* death" (685). In practicality, death cannot actually be waited for because its arrival time is unknown. Sartre maintains that death could be moving closer or farther away: "Perhaps while I am peacefully writing in this room, the state of the universe is such that my death has approached considerably closer; but perhaps, on the contrary, it has just been considerably removed" (686). Sartre does not believe that each moment brings death closer; instead, he believes that death may come closer one minute but be prolonged the next—his point being that we do not know.

Further, Sartre renders waiting for death an unworthy choice since the time and manner of one's death are unknown. Waiting for death of old age is negated by the always present possibility of sudden death. Sartre explains, contrasting these two types of death:

> There is a considerable difference in *quality* between death at the limit of old age and sudden death which annihilates us at the prime of life or in youth. To wait for the former is to accept the fact that life is a *limited* enterprise; it is one way among others of choosing finitude and electing our ends on the foundation of finitude. To wait for the second would be to wait with the idea that my life is an enterprise which is *lacking*. If only deaths from old age existed (or deaths by explicit

> condemnation), then I could *wait for* my death. But the unique quality of death is the fact that it can always before the end surprise those who wait for it at such and such date. (687)

Death of old age may seem like finality of choice and could be "lived as the resolved chord of our life (we are given a task and we are *given time* to accomplish it)." However, one cannot plausibly wait for sudden death because it is "undetermined." Dying by surprise is always a possibility, but the element of surprise negates the *waiting for*. Because sudden death is indeterminate, it causes dying of old age to be indeterminate as well—which then "means that one can *wait for* a death from old age only blindly or in bad faith" (687). Sartre sees death only as chance; it is luck that determines death. That means, for Sartre, death is "*an always possible nihilation of my possibles which is outside my possibilities*" (687).

Since death annihilates all future possibilities, it removes any opportunity to create meaning. As Sartre sees it, the meaning of all the acts of life "escapes us" if we cannot choose when life ends. In this way, death cannot "*complete* our life" (689). Since the time of one's death is indeterminate, Sartre attributes "the sequences of the universe" as determining it. This means "we can no longer even say that death confers a meaning on life from the outside; a meaning can come only from subjectivity. Since death is not part of the foundation of our freedom, it can only *remove all meaning from life*" (689). Death is the interruption of one's future in so far as it annihilates any possibles to be presented in the future, the ability to choose among such possibles, and freedom itself. Life cannot be lived; therefore, meaning cannot be created. Death is "an evil," Schumacher says on Sartre's behalf, "inasmuch as it deprives the subject of possibilities, interrupting the projection of his free plans for the future" (92). Death "is not a conspicuous (*indigne*) possibility that is intrinsic to the for-itself, and it does not give meaning to

the existence of the free for-itself" (91). Because death is the end of being-for itself (i.e., freedom), it thereby also ends meaning. It additionally destroys expectation with regard to the future. No matter the promise a person's life shows, death leaves a person's future unknown. In the case, for instance, of a young man who expects to become a great writer but dies right when he was "*expecting* to become a great writer," everything becomes "undetermined" (*Being and Nothingness* 690). The expectation loses all meaning. With this reasoning, Sartre says death cannot be seen as a source of life's meaning; "it is, on the contrary, that which on principle removes all meaning from life. If we must die, then our life has no meaning because its problems receive no solution and because the very meaning of the problems remains undetermined" (690).

With death established as outside one's possibilities, Sartre preemptively refutes the idea to choose one's death and asserts suicide as unacceptable. He concludes that "it would be in vain for us to resort to suicide in order to escape [death]. Suicide can not be considered as an end of life for which I should be the unique foundation" (690). Though it is a choice, it is a choice that does not allow for meaning to continue. Life cannot be lived, nor can life be given meaning thereafter. Being-for-itself holds stake in the future and "is the being which always lays claim to an 'after,' [so] there is no place for death in the being which is for-itself" (691). In the end, the for-itself is still dead. Sartre acknowledges the concept of suicide or martyrdom as a project toward death, but because this choice would destroy the possibility of any other projects, it cannot be considered a possibility. Like waiting for death, it is self-destructive.

With Respect (Responsibility) to the Dead

Though meaning created by the for-itself ceases in death, the dead can continue to undergo changes—at the hands of the Other. In this way, Sartre's philosophy of death with

regard to the for-itself is three-pronged. First, in death, the for-itself becomes the memory of the Other and is given over to the living Other. Death is "the project which destroys all projects and which destroys itself" because the for-itself "can no longer change itself by the simple consciousness which it has of itself" (*Being and Nothingness* 691). In life, the for-itself can change its meaning "by continually temporalizing itself," but when life ends, "only the *memory of the Other*" remains. In death, "the point of view of the Other [triumphs] over the point of view *which I am* toward myself" (691).

Second, up to death, the for-itself is responsible for the dead Other: "The unique characteristic of a dead life is that it is a life of which the Other makes himself the guardian" (693). The for-itself "must assume a position in relation to the dead," be that what it may. For example, if "someone forgets the dead life, they have made a decision to forget it" (693). The for-itself decides the dead's "removal or their absolute proximity" in how they will be remembered, forgotten, talked of, and so forth. Ultimately, "we choose our own attitude toward the dead" and "the for-itself is thrown into full 'responsibility' with respect to the dead; it is obliged to decide freely the fate of the dead" (694). The for-itself is responsible to the deaths of those who die before them. Sartre offers the example of a son who takes over his father's enterprise or a student who continues studying the lessons of his teacher; in these examples, the for-itself accepts responsibility by deciding the fate of the dead. Ultimately, the dead's reputation as left in the hands of the living.

Finally, this means that after death, the dead life (previously the for-itself) is left at the mercy of the living Other. The for-itself can no longer make changes to create meaning, but changes to meaning can *be made to* the dead life:

> Thus from this point of view we can see clearly the difference between life and death: life decides its own meaning because it is always in suspense; it possesses essentially a power of self-criticism and self-metamorphosis which cause it to define itself as a 'not-yet' or, if you like, makes it be as the changing of what it is. The dead life does not thereby cease to change, and yet it is *all done*. This means that for it the chips are down and that it will henceforth undergo its changes without being in any way responsible for them. (695)

Death not only gives "the advantage" to the Other, but it also makes the dead "prey for the living" (695). While living, an individual can combat the Other by revealing oneself, but once an individual is no longer able to create oneself, one cannot escape what the Other makes of their life. This is what Sartre calls a "dubious battle" (685), the victory of which will inevitably go to the living Other because the dead life is suppressed indefinitely. "In this sense to die is to be condemned no matter what ephemeral victory one has won over the Other" (696). Sartre concludes that death "is *a contingent fact*" since some particulars of it are unknown, including the Other's subjectivity. The dead are "at the mercy of the surviving-other who decides on what meaning to attribute to the life of the deceased and to his past actions" (Schumacher 104). How one will be conceived after death is unknown, left up to the Other.

Recognized as one of the foregrounding existentialist thinkers of the twenty-first century, Sartre's idea that the for-itself is given over to the living Other played out after his death for him—perhaps the most tangible example being Simone de Beauvoir's *Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre* (1981). A lifelong friend and partner to Sartre, Beauvoir recounts the last decade of Sartre's life in *Adieux*. Beauvoir chose her "own attitude toward the dead," took up her "responsibility," and contributed to deciding "freely the fate of the dead" (*Being and*

Nothingness 693-694). Her recollection of Sartre's thoughts on his own life are, obviously, one-sided; no battle can ensue since Sartre, through death, has been suppressed and Beauvoir, as the living Other, is the victor. But after his death, she became "the guardian" of Sartre, writing her dedication "To those who loved Sartre / who do love him / who will love him." With *Adieux*, Beauvoir pays homage to Sartre, honoring him, his work, and his life—one which Sartre may well have been glad to be at the mercy of.

Death and Meaning: A 'Vicious Circle'

Ultimately, death stands opposite freedom. Freedom allows an individual "to make known to oneself what one is by projecting oneself toward one possible to the exclusion of others" (*Being and Nothingness* 698), but being-for-itself cannot name death a project and move toward it. What then is to be made of death? Sartre explains:

> Thus death haunts me at the very heart of each of my projects as their inevitable reverse side. But precisely because this "reverse" is to be assumed not as *my* possibility but as the possibility that there are for me no longer any possibilities, it does not penetrate me. The freedom which is *my freedom* remains total and infinite. Death is not an obstacle to my projects; it is only a destiny to these projects elsewhere. And this is not because death does not limit my freedom but because freedom never encounters this limit. (700)

Death is a fact—but a "contingent" fact. It is "indeterminate," thus not a possibility (and waiting for its arrival is not worthy of choice). It is separate from life, so the for-itself will never experience death. It does not limit freedom in the immediate sense. As far as the for-itself is concerned, freedom is limitless.

What, then, is to be made of life in light of death? Sartre seems to believe there is no need to pay death much attention. It is, after all, meaningless. Unlike life, which can be given meaning, death offers no potential to be given meaning. What is incontrovertibly clear in Sartre's philosophy is that "it is we who give [life] meaning" and are "responsible for everything [we do]" ("Existentialism" 29). Thus, we are responsible to pay attention to what can be made meaningful (i.e., life)—to choice among actual possibilities. The connection between, for example, bad faith and death is implicitly evident when considered through the lens of Sartre's understanding of death as annihilation. Death has no effect on freedom (to the degree freedom never encounters its limit), so the thought of death need not be indulged or pandered to. Conversely, fleeing anguish in bad faith does, indeed, affect freedom (as it denies freedom and evades responsibility). Therefore, anguish is worthy of attention in that it must be accepted to engage fully in freedom.

In some ways, Sartre's philosophy of death precludes a conclusion. Sartre contends that "death is never that which gives life its meaning; it is, on the contrary, that which on principle removes all meaning from life. If we must die, then our life has no meaning because its problems receive no solution and because the very meaning of the problems remains undetermined" (*Being and Nothingness* 690). Adam Buben admits to having no intention of defending Sartre's controversial claim in his article "Do Immortals Need An Eject Button?" and concludes Sartre is "content to highlight the ways death is destructive of human meaning" (1136). Meaning is made in life, but "death leaves the meaning I spent my life cultivating in (at best) a severely diminished state. Even with the responsibility to make meaning in life that freedom confers upon humans, meaning is never fully realized: Given the dependence of our meaning on the future, and our uncertainty about what the future holds, any meaning mortals try to attribute to their own lives

while they are still being lived is precarious and illusory" (1137). We face life with all its challenges to make meaning that will, inevitably, be destroyed and left to others to do with as they so choose. Yet Sartre does not allow for any excuse to be made, and he employs the belief that "there are good reasons to worry about meaning in mortal life" (1143), even—and perhaps especially—considering death's destruction of meaning.

Fitzgerald: Bad Faith Accompanied by Death

F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote in a letter to Gertrude Stein, "Like Gatsby, I have only hope. It puts me in a false position, I feel." Fitzgerald was hoping for another successful novel; Gatsby hoped for the past to circumvent itself. As Fitzgerald says himself, Gatsby's hope is false—and one that is incontrovertibly linked to his death. Similarly, *The Great Gatsby* was not the raving success Fitzgerald had anticipated when originally published in 1925. Though he could have earned more by having the book serialized, he chose against serialization so as not to have its publication delayed. But upon publication, *Gatsby* did not surpass the popularity of Fitzgerald's previous works, a deep disappointment to Fitzgerald. It was not until the onset of World War II that the novel's popularity soared unexpectedly—popularity Fitzgerald never saw. He died in December of 1940, never seeing the novel's acclaim. In death, Fitzgerald became "the *memory of the Other*" (*Being and Nothingness* 693) and "prey for the living" (695), but his novel's "peculiar *importance*" (693) was dubbed worthy of remembrance. Tragically ironic, meaning was attributed to Fitzgerald by the Other after his death in the same way his protagonist attributes meaning to Gatsby after his.

Allusions to death most often appear—and, in two instances, occur—in *Gatsby* with characters of bad faith. Fitzgerald's characters make choices that move them into their futures,

which in Gatsby's case, ends in sudden death. Admittedly, concluding bad faith to be the cause of their death, for example, would leave a number of questions unanswered—one being why some characters of bad faith escape unscathed while others do not. In any case, such a conclusion cannot be found in Sartre's philosophies, as he professes death to be a matter of chance as "the sequences of the universe" determine it (*Being and Nothingness* 689). But bad faith is certainly associated with death in Fitzgerald's novel, and elements of Sartre's philosophy of death are depicted in it. At the very least, Gatsby's mysterious past is notably wrapped up in rumors of murder and the death of his family, and one could easily argue his death to be meaningless—in the sense it is both tragically unnecessary and the end of any future possibility of meaning. A close reading of *The Great Gatsby* reveals Fitzgerald's characters of bad faith as connected to death. Just as Sartre's philosophy of death is tied up in his theory of meaning, so too do Fitzgerald's characters explore meaning (specific elements of which are observable in Sartre's theory of meaning) *alongside* death. This exploration culminates in Sartre's for-itself as responsible for the dead, with Fitzgerald's protagonist attributing meaning to Gatsby after his death.

So as not to ignore the obvious, it is first worth acknowledging that critical attention has been given to Fitzgerald's early works as "a distinctive balance of romantic lyricism and realist determinism" (Moreland 46). Generally, these analyses are reasonable—but they are not the sole perspective with which Fitzgerald's works can be viewed, nor are they without flaw. In this line of scholarship, Kim Moreland, for one, sets out to present determinism as a "defining element" in Fitzgerald's collection of works in her lengthy 2016 essay "Determinism as a Defining Element in Fitzgerald's Oeuvre," Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* included. But she inadvertently positions *Gatsby*'s major characters in alignment with Sartre's notion of freedom. She contends

that Fitzgerald's "upper-class characters ignore their moral responsibility for the effects of their actions" (66). Nick, she claims, "is acting in bad faith" when pursuing Jordan while still writing to a girl back home (68). Unlike the other characters, he proves to have grown by the end of the novel "by finally taking responsibility for his action" (69) and cutting ties with Jordan. Daisy "must choose between Tom and Gatsby" and "her response manifests her previous search for pleasure and now especially her avoidance of pain" (71). She ultimately "decides it is too risky to choose 'Mr. Nobody from Nowhere'" (71-72). Most important, Moreland proves Gatsby *chooses* to act in bad faith while at the same time helping Daisy do so as well. He "shields Daisy from responsibility for Myrtle Wilson's death" and protects her "from responsibility for her behavior" (70). Notably, she explains that "Gatsby's choice to go into partnership with Wolfsheim" (an effort to recreate the past) likely resulted in "many bankrupted, others jailed, and still others murdered" (death), with his pursuit of recreating the past "justifying his every choice and action" (71). Her analysis implicitly—and unintentionally—offers measurable support for Fitzgerald having dramatized several elements of Sartre's philosophy of meaning—encompassing freedom, choice, responsibility, and bad faith—which is, indeed, evident in *Gatsby*.

Nick Carraway begins his narration of *The Great Gatsby* by introducing it as a story of Gatsby. His recollection begins a year after returning from the East. Until going to the East, Nick had prided himself on not criticizing others and believed "reserving judgements" to be "a matter of infinite hope" (2). But his time there tested his ability to remain impartial—except with Gatsby. He introduces Gatsby by breaking the fourth wall and acknowledging the book to be attributed to Gatsby. His attitude about Gatsby is clear in his words of reverence, as Gatsby was the one person who "was exempt" from his critical eye:

> Only Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction—Gatsby, who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn. If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life. … This responsiveness…was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again. No—Gatsby turned out all right at the end; it is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men. (2-3)

Gatsby is undeniably linked to hope, but it becomes evident as the story progresses that his hope is linked to the past.

Nick's tale begins when he moves from the Middle West to the East in the spring of 1922. He remembers being lonely a couple days after moving alone to a town close to New York City until a man asks him for directions. Upon giving him guidance, Nick finds that he "was lonely no longer" (5). He presumes himself "a guide, a pathfinder, an original settler" because the man asking for directions "had casually conferred on [him] the freedom of the neighborhood" (5). Nick senses this is a new life: "And so with the sunshine and the great bursts of leaves growing on the trees, just as things grow in fast movies, I had that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with the summer" (5). Seen as life anew, Nick's new "life has no meaning *a priori*" ("Existentialism Is a Humanism" 51), and in this moment, he acknowledges his freedom in West Egg and, in Sartre's terms, "the freedom of the individual subject to choose what he will be" (23). Nick writes that "it was a matter of chance that I should have rented a

house in one of the strangest communities in North America" (6). Sartre does not attribute life's happenings to chance—but rather to freedom and choice. But if Nick's new beginning is viewed symbolically as the beginning of life, it takes on Sartre's idea that life's beginning is absurd, an accident, a matter of chance.

When Nick first writes of his cousin Daisy, her husband Tom, and friend Jordan, they appear as exemplars of Sartre's conception that life's "value is nothing more than the meaning that we give it" ("Existentialism Is a Humanism" 51). Fitzgerald's prose in this scene is bespeckled with Sartrean language of meaninglessness, and the characters come across with little interest in acknowledging that "it is we who give [life] meaning" (29). Nick describes Daisy's laugh as "absurd" and her voice as "an arrangement of notes that will never be played again." Daisy and Jordan have "impersonal eyes in the absence of desire" (17), and Nick and Jordan "exchanged a short glance consciously devoid of meaning" (20). Even the objects impart a sense of meaninglessness, with "candles being lit again, pointlessly" (22). After Jordan tells Nick that "Tom's got some woman in New York" (21), Daisy returns to the table exasperated: "You see I think everything's terrible anyhow," she says to Nick, continuing, "Everybody thinks so—the most advanced people. And I *know.* I've been everywhere and seen everything and done everything" (24). Nick senses "the insincerity of what she had said" and feels "the whole evening had been a trick of some sort." Though her intent may have been one of playfulness, Daisy indicates her adeptness to act in bad faith, as she "sure enough" looked at Nick "with an absolute smirk on her lovely face, as if she had asserted her membership in a rather distinguished secret society to which she and Tom belonged" (24). This early scene sets up elements of Sartre's philosophy that the narrative builds upon and continues.

Nick's first encounter with Gatsby lays the groundwork on which Gatsby's character is founded. When Nick returns home that evening, he sits in his yard but realizes he is not alone: "a figure had emerged from the shadow of my neighbor's mansion," which Nick determines is "Mr. Gatsby himself" (30):

> I didn't call to him, for he gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone—he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and, far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily I glanced seaward—and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock. When I looked once more for Gatsby he had vanished, and I was alone again in the unquiet darkness. (30).

The "single green light," analyzed profusely as symbolic of Gatsby's longed-for past and hoped-for future with Daisy, is critical to Gatsby's connection to Sartre. Gatsby's intense longing for the past sets him up to become a fictionalized depiction of Sartre's being-for-itself fleeing anguish in bad faith.

On Nick's visit to New York with Tom, Fitzgerald's prose describes the Wilson's residence as one of destruction—later to become one of death. On their drive, the road runs through "a certain desolate area of land" at the midway point between New York and West Egg, described as "a valley of ashes—a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally with a transcendent effort, of ash-gray men" (31). Merriam-Webster's definition of "ashes" as "the portion or bits of something left over or behind after it has been destroyed" illuminates this midway point as a location of destruction. Tom and Nick stop in the valley and agree it is "terrible" and "awful" (35). Then, two characters emerge whose initial

descriptions allude to death—and whose fates end in death. George Wilson is "a blond, spiritless man" (34) and Myrtle Wilson, George's wife and Tom's mistress, walks "through her husband as if he were a ghost" (35). These descriptions are obvious foreshadowing of the deadly event to occur there later, but they also mark the starting point of *Gatsby*'s dramatization of anguish and bad faith—later complicated by death.

Tom and Myrtle are "hiding a displeasing truth" (*Being and Nothingness* 90) by engaging in an extramarital affair, bad faith that Sartre would explain as having become a "particular style of life" (90) for them.[29] When Nick asks if her husband objects to her getting away with him, Tom explains that "he thinks she goes to see her sister in New York" (36). Of course, Daisy too is none the wiser of Tom's whereabouts. Once arrived in the city, Myrtle's sister Catherine tells Nick that Tom's wife is "keeping them apart" because "she's a Catholic, and they don't believe in divorce" (45). Nick knows Daisy is not Catholic, and he is "shocked at the elaborateness of the lie" (45). Tom and Myrtle excuse themselves from accountability, and in so doing, are essentially "attributing a universal value to lies" ("Existentialism Is a Humanism" 25). Their bad faith is "immoral because it is inauthentic" (Priest 206).

The second time Nick passes through the valley of ashes—which "opened out on both sides of us" (92)—he is with Gatsby making a return trip to New York City to meet Mr. Wolfsheim, another character of bad faith. This time, the topic of death comes up in conversation. When introduced in a restaurant, Mr. Wolfsheim "gloomily" explains to Nick that the place is "full of memories" and "filled with faces dead and gone" (95). He tells of the night Rosy Rosenthal was eating in the restaurant and shot just outside the door; the five men involved

[29] Sartre did not denounce having more than one partner, as he himself had an open relationship with Simone de Beauvoir. His disapproval of Tom and Myrtle would be linked to their bad faith as "hiding a displeasing truth" (90). He would "not pass moral judgment against" them, but he would "call [their] bad faith an error" ("Existentialism Is a Humanism" 47).

in the execution were electrocuted. Out of earshot, Gatsby tells Nick that Mr. Wolfsheim is a gambler, "the man who fixed the World's Series back in 1919" (99). Nick is stunned and remembers "that the World's Series had been fixed in 1919, but if I had thought of it at all I would have thought of it as a thing that merely *happened*, the end of some inevitable chain. It never occurred to me that one man could start to play with the faith of fifty million people" (99-100). Fitzgerald's mention of faith is given in direct association with a character of bad faith.

From the onset, death accompanies bad faith specifically with Gatsby. His mysterious past is wrapped up in rumors of murder and the death of his family. Before Nick meets Gatsby, he hears about him first from Myrtle's sister, Catherine, who describes him as a rather ominous figure: "Well, they say he's a nephew of a cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm's. That's where all his money comes from." She goes on, "I'm scared of him. I'd hate to have him get anything on me" (44). At the first Gatsby-thrown party that Nick attends, he hears two more rumors: "Somebody told me they thought he killed a man once," followed by "It's more that he was a German spy during the war" (59). At a subsequent party, Nick overhears some young ladies professing Gatsby to be a bootlegger and adding onto the rumors of murder: "One time he killed a man who had found out that he was nephew to Von Hindenburg and second cousin to the devil" (82). While these rumors turn out to be false, Gatsby's lack of effort to intercept or quieten them arguably fuels their continued circulation.

Nick finds out that Gatsby "was aware of the bizarre accusations that flavored conversation in his halls" (87) when Gatsby himself tells Nick, "I don't want you to get a wrong idea of me from all these stories you hear" (87). Gatsby begins, "I'll tell you God's truth" (88), and continues, claiming to be from a wealthy family in the Middle West and that he went to Oxford. When his "family all died," he "came into a good deal of money" (88), so he moved

around to different capitals in Europe, was drafted in the war, and eventually became a major. But the way Gatsby says the phrase "educated at Oxford" gives Nick pause as to the statement's validity, so much so that Nick concludes that "his whole statement fell to pieces" (88). Nick almost laughs during Gatsby's tale because of its incredibly sparse detail. But when Gatsby produces a metal and photograph, Nick believes him. Gatsby illustrates Sartre's words that "so long as I live, I can give the lie to what others discover in me, by projecting myself" (*Being and Nothingness* 695). Though Nick's initial inkling is later proven true, his discernment is hindered because Gatsby acts in bad faith.

Gatsby confesses to Nick that going to war "was a great relief, and I tried very hard to die" (89), echoing similar words of Sartre: anguish may bring about the thought "of no longer even wishing myself to be" (*Being and Nothingness* 73). But "anguish in its essential structure is consciousness of freedom" (71), and fleeing from anguish results in bad faith. Gatsby engages in a flight from anguish in bad faith by creating a counterfeit personal past. When a reporter digs into Gatsby's past, he discovers James Gatz had been born to "shiftless and unsuccessful farm people" (133), became the right-hand man to Dan Cody (a man who earned his millions from Montana copper) (135), and inherited some of his money. Though Gatsby confesses this to Nick later, he has long upheld a public-facing façade of a years-ago-created self-conception—and "to this conception he was faithful to the end" (134). Gatsby adheres to "fantastic conceits," "reveries," and "unreality of reality" (134-135), similar to the café waiter Sartre describes in *Being and Nothingness* "whose exaggerated movements and affected manner make it clear that he is *playing at* being a café waiter." Stephen Priest summarizes:

> Several kinds of bad faith are displayed by the waiter. He behaves mechanically as though he were a thing rather than a person. He is acting a role, playing a part.

> His relationship to himself is as false as that of an actor to his part in a play. His behaviour is a display before others, a set of routines which make him comfortable in his own eyes and in the eyes of others. (204)

Gatsby's self-created fraudulent past is a product of his attempt to cling unceasingly to hope in the past—reuniting with Daisy. Twice, he mentions "trying to forget something very sad that happened long ago" (89), but rather than confess "the sad things that happened" (91) in his past, Gatsby enlists Jordan to tell Nick instead. A then-officer, Gatsby and Daisy met in 1917, and Jordan recalls "the officer looked at Daisy while she was speaking, in a way that every young girl wants to be looked at sometime, and because it seemed romantic" (102). Jordan explains that Daisy's parents had stopped her from going to New York to see him off before deployment, and by the next autumn, she was engaged to Tom. The day before her wedding, she received a note from Gatsby that nearly caused her to call off her wedding. But she does go through with marrying Tom and had not heard Gatsby's name in years. Meanwhile, Gatsby had clung and continues to cling to his past hope of being with Daisy. Fleeing anguish is, in Sartre's estimation, "an effort at distraction before the future" (*Being and Nothingness* 81). Sartre writes that "we must find in freedom itself the conduct which will permit us to push further" (84), but Gatsby's flight from anguish hinders his ability to accept freedom and move forward.

The significance of Gatsby's belief that he can relive the past comes to light in what have now become Fitzgerald's famously penned words. Nick suggests to Gatsby that he "wouldn't ask too much" of Daisy because "you can't repeat the past" (150). Gatsby's famed response follows: "'Can't repeat the past?' he cried incredulously. 'Why of course you can!' He looked around him wildly, as if the past were lurking here in the shadow of his house, just out of reach of his hand" (150). Gatsby tells Nick he is "going to fix everything just the way it was before" (151). Nick

muses, “He talked a lot about the past, and I gathered that he wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy” (150-151). Sartre acknowledges that the past “can haunt the present but it can not *be* the present” (*Being and Nothingness* 166), nor can it be relived; temporality’s irreversibility ensures past opportunities cannot be replicated. Try as he might, Gatsby is unable to return to his past since “the past is what I am without being able to live it” (*Being and Nothingness* 173). Adam Buden parses Sartre’s thoughts on the choices that lay both before us—and behind us:

> The forward march of time fixes my meaning on one end in such a way that even if I want to go back and try the road not taken, I cannot undo what got me to this point. It could happen that a similar option will present itself in the future, and I can certainly go a different way next time, but the fact that it is “next time” means that it is not so much a redo as it is a completely new choice only made possible by the self I have cultivated through my previous choices. (1138)

Sartre would likely write of Gatsby as Buben writes of another scholar: he “just is not taking seriously enough the permanent closing off of opportunities that results from deciding to go one way rather than another in a particular moment” (“Do Mortals Need” 1138).[30]

Just as the topic of death came up in a conversation *with* bad-faith Mr. Wolfsheim, death comes up in conversation again, this time *about* a character discovered to be of bad faith *during* a conversation. Before what later becomes a chaotic scene at the Plaza, Daisy recalls her wedding day. The June day was so hot that one wedding guest, Block Biloxi, fainted. At the mention of his name, a discussion ensues as the group attempts to remember Biloxi’s connection to either

[30] Buben uses this argument against Aaron Smuts, who he names an “immortality curmudgeon,” which, though outside the scope of this project, applies similarly to Gatsby. Twice Fitzgerald uses the word “eternal” to describe Gatsby in his introduction to Nick. Even in immortality, Sartre would in no way agree with Gatsby’s belief in resurrecting the past, of reliving what has already been lived.

Tom or Daisy. Tom claims Biloxi told him he knew Daisy; she, however, denies having known him. Jordan says Biloxi told her he was president of Tom's class at Yale, but according to Tom, they did not have a class president. The group comes to realize Biloxi was probably an imposter, not knowing either of them, who took the opportunity to seek refuge at the wedding and then stay at Jordan's house (two doors down from the church). Fitzgerald writes: "'And he stayed three weeks, until Daddy told him he had to get out. The day after he left Daddy died.' After a moment she added, "There wasn't any connection" (175). Yet there is a connection where Fitzgerald is concerned in that yet another character of bad faith is discussed alongside the mention of death. Here again, death is linked to bad faith, an element of Sartre's theory of meaning.

Tom derogatorily links Biloxi to Gatsby as two characters of bad faith, saying to Gatsby, "You must have gone [to Oxford] about the time Biloxi went to New Haven" (176). Having made "a small investigation into his past" (166), Tom concludes Gatsby to be "Mr. Nobody from Nowhere" (178). In the conversation that follows, when it all comes "out in the open at last" (178), Gatsby expects Daisy will leave Tom to be with him. But at Tom's pleading and promises "to take better care" (183) of her, Daisy does not admit to wanting to leave Tom (nor having never loved him). As Moreland points out, Daisy must have had some knowledge of Gatsby's current life, yet she "represses this knowledge, indeed chooses not to know it in an act of bad faith" (70). When Tom exposes Gatsby's "illegal activities," she still attempts to avoid facing their truth "by twice asking to leave the scene of the argument" (71). Daisy is presented two possibles: leave her life with Tom to be with Gatsby, or remain with Tom. Moreland explicates Daisy's choice as "having been afforded the extraordinary opportunity to make the opposite decision this time, to choose Gatsby who idealizes her over Tom who betrays her" (71). Yet she

"chooses the security of Tom's old money and irreproachable social position over Gatsby's new money" (71). After she makes her choice, Nick recalls leaving the alcohol-induced blowout at the Plaza in a haunting Fitzgeraldian sentence: "So we drove on toward death in the cooling twilight" (187). As they drive, death is no longer a mere reference.

Three characters' deaths follow, all of which are wrapped up in bad faith. It is Myrtle's death which sparks the unraveling of the illusion of Gatsby—and further, his bad faith. The group assumes Gatsby to have been driving the "death car" (188) that hit Myrtle without stopping; however, Daisy was the driver. Again, bad faith is at play. Daisy makes no attempt to come clean, even to Tom.[31] Meanwhile, Gatsby continues "clutching at some last hope" (202) that Daisy will choose him and only enables Daisy's bad faith, as Moreland states, "not only legally but also even psychologically from responsibility for her behavior" (69). Myrtle's husband, Wilson, believes Gatsby to have been the driver and thus his wife's killer. By the time Nick tracks Wilson down, "the holocaust was complete" (223)—Wilson having killed Gatsby and himself. Wilson's actions signal the end of meaning for both him and Gatsby as he has destroyed the possibility of any other projects. His suicide, specifically, is an "end of life" for which Sartre would say he cannot "be the unique foundation" (*Being and Nothingness* 691).

Gatsby's flight from anguish in bad faith hinders his ability to accept his freedom and simultaneously seems to project him toward his death. The latter might seem plausible *until* put up next to Sartre's belief that death is a matter of chance that "the sequences of the universe" determine (*Being and Nothingness* 689). What of Gatsby's choice to protect Daisy by covering as the driver who killed Myrtle? Could his death have been avoided? Sartre would say there is no

[31] Four pages from the last, Tom says to Nick, "That fellow had it coming to him. He threw dust into your eyes just like he did in Daisy's, but he was a tough one. He ran over Myrtle like you'd run over a dog and never even stopped his car" (247). Months after the accident, Daisy still has not told Tom the truth, so she is further evidence of bad faith at play.

way to know because when an individual chooses one possible, all other possibles are nihilated. The road not taken remains unknown—forever. What is clear is that because of Sartre's adamant belief of bad faith to be a choice, he assuredly would have disagreed with Gatsby's choice to continue "presenting as truth a pleasing untruth" (*Being and Nothingness* 90) to his own ends. In actuality, Gatsby had been "a penniless young man without a past" (203), but "he had certainly taken [Daisy] under false pretenses. … he let her believe that he was a person from much the same strata as herself—that he was fully able to take care of her. As a matter of fact, he had no such facilities" (204). Gatsby was "committed" to this persona. Gatsby's bad faith, which Sartre would have disapproved, is compounded when considered in conjunction with the reason Gatsby chooses to live in bad faith: to "repeat the past" (*The Great Gatsby* 151). Had Gatsby been presented the opportunity to marry Daisy, Sartre would argue "by the very fact that this opportunity will be presented *after* the refused opportunity, it will not be the same" (*Being and Nothingness* 699).

Like Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby,* Sartre's play *No Exit* (1945) dramatizes bad faith and death. In his play, three characters—Garcin, Estelle, and Inez—are trapped for eternity in hell. Garcin acts in bad faith by lying to himself, lying to others, and denying his cowardice. When his actions are reflected to him through the view of Other (Estelle and Inez), he famously concludes that "Hell is—other people!" Numerous analyses of the play suggest this line to be the point of the play: there is no exit from the terrible predicaments of life. David Detmer, however, presents a different conclusion. The play dramatizes "ideas about bad faith, human relationships, death, freedom, and responsibility" (156)—all exceptionally challenging realities of existence. As a philosophical play that dramatizes both bad faith and addresses death, Detmer asserts that *No Exit* is not simply a play about the travesties of the human condition; rather, it is "a

cautionary tale (or morality play)" (153). He positions *No Exit* as more than simply "a dramatization of our unavoidable plight, [which] would come off as grotesque and depressing" (153). He concludes that Sartre's play "fills the reader or viewer with the desire to learn from the mistakes of Sartre's characters, so as not to end up in their predicament" (153). Regardless of whether Detmer's conclusion is what Sartre intended, it is a conclusion that makes sense in relation to Sartre's philosophies. Using Detmer's methodology, the same conclusion could be drawn of Fitzgerald's *Gatsby*. Though different in form, Fitzgerald's dramatization of bad faith and death could be considered a cautionary tale similar to Sartre's *No Exit*—at least in Gatsby's case. *Gatsby*, like *No Exit*, sends the "clear message that we are, and are properly defined by, what we *do*" (156). Gatsby may indeed have had "good *intentions*," but by protecting Daisy, he lets her get off scot-free—while he pays the ultimate price. In his attempt to recreate the past and win over Daisy, he pursues illegal methods of gaining wealth, which define him after his death. When Nick invites Gatsby's compatriots to his funeral, they either don't want "to get mixed up in it" (*The Great Gatsby* 236), think he "got what he deserved" (233), or evade the invitation saying they will "do [their] best" (232) to attend. In the end, "nobody came" (239).

While the connection between bad faith and death remains evident but inconclusive in *Gatsby*, Nick undoubtedly dramatizes Sartre's philosophy of death concerning meaning and being-for-itself. In death, the for-itself (Gatsby) becomes the memory of the Other (Nick) and is given over to the living Other. Gatsby is left at the mercy of Nick, who becomes responsible for Gatsby, as the now dead Other. Nick writes, "I found myself on Gatsby's side, and alone" (225), feeling a "certain shame for Gatsby" (233). He goes on, "At first I was surprised and confused; then, as he lay in his house and didn't move or breathe or speak, hour upon hour, it grew upon me that I was responsible, because no one else was interested" (225). So, Nick makes "himself

the guardian" (*Being and Nothingness* 693) of Gatsby's life. Nick assumes an attitude toward the dead (Gatsby) and accepts the "full 'responsibility' with respect to the dead" by acting as an agent in deciding "the fate of the dead" (694), which he does by writing *The Great Gatsby.*

After Gatsby's death, Nick says that the East became "haunted" for him, like an El Greco painting:

> West Egg, especially, still figures in my more fantastic dreams. I see it as a night scene by El Greco: a hundred houses, at once conventional and grotesque, crouching under a sullen, overhanging sky and a lusterless moon. In the foreground four solemn men in dress suits are walking along the sidewalk with a stretcher on which lies a drunken woman in a white evening dress. Her hand, which dangles over the side, sparkles cold with jewels. Gravely the men turn in at a house—the wrong house. But no one knows the woman's name, and no one cares. (244)

With obvious imagery of death—a dangling, cold hand and the men's grave movements—Nick describes a woman who no one knows; her home is unknown, her name is unknown, and no one cares—just as in the case of Gatsby. This is not, however, the fate Nick wants for Gatsby. He wants Gatsby to be remembered. Nick describes Gatsby as an eternal-like figure with a unique smile "of eternal reassurance" that faced "the whole eternal world for an instant, and then concentrated on *you* with an irresistible prejudice in your favor … believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself, and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey" (65). And to an extent, Nick immortalizes Gatsby in writing *The Great Gatsby*. With Gatsby's life having become "the *memory of the Other*" (*Being and*

Nothingness 693), the novel is the embodiment of the memory itself: "Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book" (2)—the *great* Gatsby.

Hemingway: Freedom Realized in the Face of Death

Published in *Cosmopolitan*'s September 1936 issue, Ernest Hemingway's short story "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" was an immediate success with the public, alongside "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." A story centered on hunting, death marks "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," which oscillates between Francis Macomber's and Robert Wilson's perspectives, Macomber's hired hunting guide. Macomber and his wife, Margot, are on an African safari trip, but much to Wilson's (and, to some degree, Margot's) dismay, Macomber is quite the coward. Initially fearing death and finally facing it, Macomber acts out Sartre's notion of cowardice in full. It is when Macomber faces death that he truly experiences life—though not for long. A close reading of Macomber's cowardice—and subsequent shift away from—reveals Hemingway's subtle connection between an element of Sartre's theory of meaning and death.

At the beginning of the short story, Macomber returns with Wilson to the hunting camp after having "just shown himself, very publicly, to be a coward" (10). As an existentialist, Sartre does not subscribe to the determinist belief that one is cowardly because of "his physiological makeup" or because "he has a cowardly heart, lung, or brain" ("Existentialism" 38). Rather, "the coward is responsible for his own cowardice" because "he has made himself a coward through his actions" (38), just as Macomber does. Wilson externally congratulates Macomber while at the same time internally thinking of him as "a bloody coward" (12). Macomber apologizes to him and sheepishly asks if the story can remain between them. Wilson retorts that he and his

team never discuss their clients, and Macomber apologizes yet again before admitting to having "bolted like a rabbit" (13). When Margot joins them, her comments highlight the contrast between Wilson's courage and Macomber's cowardice. Margot observes Wilson as "really very impressive" and asks, "You do kill anything, don't you?" (14). He confirms that he does, indeed, kill "simply anything," and she turns to her husband, stating, "You were lovely this morning. That is if blowing things' heads off is lovely" (15). To himself, Wilson thinks women like Margot are "the cruelest, the most predatory" of women, but gives her some benefit, considering, "How should a woman act when she discovers her husband is a bloody coward?" (16). Macomber confesses to Wilson he is embarrassed Margot bore witness to the lion fiasco.

When the point of view shifts to Macomber's, the narrative highlights his true cowardice. He is "miserably ashamed" and feels a "cold, hollow fear in him. The fear was still there like a cold slimy hollow in all the emptiness where once his confidence had been" (17). When he wakes in the night, he hears a lion roaring and feels afraid: "There was no one to tell he was afraid, nor to be afraid with him" (17). Margot sleeps right through the roaring and thus highlights Macomber's cowardice. At breakfast the next morning, Macomber's fear is starkly contrasted with her lack thereof. She remarks that she is excited, and when she asks him what he is upset about, he confesses that he's nervous. She, on the other hand, is "awfully anxious to see it" (19). She thinks the lion's roar is "impressive"; Macomber believes it "frightful." She confidently states, "I'm ready," as they set off; Macomber's hand, meanwhile, trembles. Vultures circle above them, a reminder of looming death—either of an animal's death or, as Macomber fears, his own.

Macomber's fear increases as they continue. He does not want to get out of the car when they spot the lion, but at Wilson's encouragement he does. He "only knew his hands were

shaking and as he walked away from the car it was almost impossible for him to make his legs move. They were stiff in the thighs, but he could feel the muscles fluttering" (21). He takes two shots, then feels "sick at his stomach" (22) as his hands shake and his mouth is so dry he can barely talk. With the lion wounded but only potentially dead, Macomber looks for ways around having to go in search of him, saying to Wilson, "I don't want to go in there" (23). The statement "was out before he knew he'd said it." His cowardly behavior is on full display as Wilson notices "suddenly how [Macomber] was trembling and the pitiful look on his face" (23). Macomber admits that he's scared, and upon hearing the lion, runs "wildly, in panic in the open" (26). That night, Macomber wakes "frightened in a dream of the bloody-headed lion standing over him, and listening while his heart pounded" (28). Macomber's cowardice is obviously connected to his fear of death.

Albeit unintentional, Kenneth K. Brandt's and Alicia Mischa Renfroe's investigation of criminality and legal implications in "The Short Happy Life" uniquely positions Hemingway's short story in alignment with Sartre's philosophy. Their reading asserts that Hemingway "destabilizes the link between intention and consequences, while at the same time suggesting that actions must be evaluated and judged" (9). Similarly, Sartre discusses the challenges of making a choice, acknowledging that an individual "must choose without reference to any preestablished values" and "moral choice is like constructing a work of art," but ultimately, "whatever [man] does, he cannot avoid bearing full responsibility for his situation" (45). Brandt's and Renfroe's reading reveals further alignment between Hemingway and Sartre in two particular instances.

In the first instance, Brandt and Renfroe address when Macomber only injures but does not kill the lion. Macomber suggests just leaving the lion, but Wilson replies there is "really no choice" ("Short Happy Life" 23) other than to pursue him because "he's certain to be suffering"

and “someone else might run onto him” (24). Brandt and Renfroe suggest that this scene reveals “the tendency to judge an action based on intention rather than consequences” is “problematic,” “even when the individual did not choose a particular outcome” (12). So too would Sartre, since as an existentialist he “defines man by his actions” (“Existentialism” 40) and encourages “people to understand that reality alone counts, and that dreams, expectations and hopes only serve to define a man as a broken dream, aborted hopes, and futile expectations” (37). To echo David Detmer, Sartre sends the “clear message that we are, and are properly defined by, what we *do*” (156)—intentions notwithstanding, as responsibility is “simply the logical requirement of the consequences of our freedom” (*Being and Nothingness* 708). Brandt and Renfroe point out that Macomber’s suggestion to leave “invites consideration not only of the intention motivating an individual’s actions, but also of the consequences those actions might have on others. Macomber ignores the consequences for the lion and the people who might be put in harm’s way if they encountered the injured animal” (13). Wilson, on the other hand, “expects that individuals act with regard to the consequences of their actions and make their choices accordingly” (13). Macomber’s suggestion to leave ignores Sartre’s proclamations that “our responsibility is thus much greater than we might have supposed, because it concerns all mankind” (24), whereas Wilson’s directives echo Sartre’s edict that “I am therefore responsible for myself and for everyone else, and I am fashioning a certain image of man as I choose him to be” (“Existentialism” 24-25). By supplanting Macomber’s suggestion with Wilson’s directives, Hemingway aligns himself with Sartre’s assertion that “I am obliged to choose an attitude toward the situation, and in any case I bear the responsibility of a choice” (44).

The second instance of Brandt’s and Renfroe’s reading involves the “remarkable shift in point of view to the lion’s perspective” (13). They describe this scene as a “sympathetic

depiction of the lion [that] encourages readers to question Macomber's action" (13). The lion is "not afraid" and hesitates "before going down the bank to drink" ("Short Happy Life" 21). Then, "he felt the blow as it hit his lower ribs and ripped on through, blood sudden hot and frothy in his mouth, and he galloped toward the high grass where he could crouch and not be seen and make them bring the crashing thing close enough so he could make a rush and get the man that held it" (21). Brandt's and Renfroe's assertion that Hemingway "positions readers to judge based on consequences" (9) precludes the conclusion that in so doing, he positions readers to take up Sartre's philosophy and "define man by his actions" ("Existentialism" 40).

Brandt and Renfroe's point that this portrayal of death "encourages readers to question Macomber's action" (13) can be extrapolated when considered in the context of Sartre's philosophy of death. What Brandt and Renfroe describe as a "sympathetic depiction of the lion" (13) is also a humanizing depiction of the lion, at the very least because it is depicted from the lion's perspective. Since Sartre sees death as extrinsic to life, he does not believe there to be any "such thing as an experience of death" and maintains "that only a detour by way of the experience of another's death and by way of mourning leads to a recognition of one's own mortality" (Detmer 92). The humanized lion allows readers to experience another's death, and its death's "sympathetic description" incites readers to mourn and thereby recognize their own mortality. What is more, the portrayal of gruesome death puts the reason for Macomber's cowardice—fear of death—on display. Hemingway's code hero alone would refute any argument that such a display implicates Hemingway as making an excuse for Macomber's cowardly behavior or as opposing Sartre. This portrayal of gruesome death actually highlights the significance of Macomber's shift away from cowardice, thereby positioning Hemingway alongside Sartre.

A change occurs in Macomber's attitude and behavior on the day of the buffalo hunt. Most scholarship identifies Macomber's shift away from cowardice to take place during the hunt, but his change is actually detectable beforehand and, notably, closely coincides with Margot calling him a coward and her previous night's betrayal. During the night, Macomber realized his wife had left the tent, and upon her return—from a visit to Wilson's tent—she tells him directly that he is a coward and knows he will "take anything" (29). This is not the first of Margot's extramarital affairs; Macomber says to her: "You said if we made this trip that there would be none of that. You promised." Wilson originally thinks Margot to have just discovered her husband to be a coward; today, however, he realizes Macomber "must have gone through plenty of that before by the look of things" (32). Since Macomber has continued tolerating such behavior from his wife, Wilson believes Macomber "must have a way of getting over it" and thinks it is Macomber's "own bloody fault." Similarly, Sartre is vehemently against any excuse of temperament, asserting that no one is born a coward: "what produces cowardice is the act of giving up, or giving in … a coward is defined by the action he has taken" ("Existentialism" 39). Wilson reflects these thoughts of Sartre in his assessment of Macomber: Macomber runs away in fear, "giving up" during both lion hunts, *and also* gets over Margot's extramarital affairs, "giving in" to her betrayals in their marriage.

Macomber's change is the fulfillment of Sartre's position on cowards, being that "there is always the possibility that one day the coward may no longer be cowardly" (39). Now, at breakfast, "Francis Macomber found that, of all the many men that he had hated, he hated Robert Wilson the most" (29). Of the "many men" Macomber hates are perhaps those who have engaged in affairs with his wife, but Wilson is now foremost. Unlike the previous day, Macomber is not hesitant and asks Wilson if he is "ready to start" (30). Today, he is eager to

begin—so much so he asks Wilson, “You’re sure you wouldn’t like to stay in camp with her yourself and let me go out and hunt the buffalo?” (31). Macomber indirectly alludes to Wilson’s one-night stand with his wife *and* fearlessly prepares to go alone. Anticipating confrontation, Margot quietly tells Macomber she will leave him. Though he knows his wife is “through with him,” he also knows that because of his wealth, she will “not leave him ever now” (27). His change is further evident in his affirmative response that she will not leave—twice-repeated directly to her.

Macomber maintains his new attitude as their car climbs to the hunting location, sitting “grim and furious” (33) with “no fear, only hatred of Wilson” (34). Once they spot the bulls, Macomber does not hesitate: “he was shooting at the bull as he moved away, hearing the bullets whunk into him, emptying his rifle at him as he moved steadily away.” Wilson commends him, keeping his professional role as Macomber’s guide and encouraging him to continue. Macomber shoots “again, aiming carefully, and down [the bull] came, onto his knees.” With the victory of death, Macomber notices the change in himself: “In his life he had never felt so good” (35). Macomber “eagerly” asks Wilson if they can go into the bush after the bull. Wilson notices the one-day about-face change too, thinking to himself, “Yesterday he’s scared sick and today he’s a ruddy fire eater” (37). Macomber realizes he feels “a wild unreasonable happiness that he had never known before” (38).

When Macomber successfully triumphs over the death of the bull, he feels “a dam bursting” inside him. He has chosen against making “himself a coward through his actions” (“Existentialism” 38) by no longer fearing death. Sartre calls “those who conceal from themselves this total freedom” cowards (49), but Macomber has embraced his “total freedom.” His face shines as he tells Wilson, “You know I don’t think I’d ever be afraid of anything again.

… I feel absolutely different" (38). He remarks that he would like to hunt another lion because he is no longer afraid: "After all, what can they do to you?" Wilson supports this notion with an explication on death:

> "That's it," said Wilson. "Worst one can do is kill. You. How does it go? Shakespeare. Damned good. See if I can remember. Oh, damned good. Used to quote it to myself at one time. Let's see. 'By my troth, I care not; a man can die but once; we owe God a death and let it go which way it will, he that dies this year is quite for the next.' (38)

Again, Wilson thinks Macomber has "probably been afraid all his life" but with the triumph of death, he knows it to be "over now" (39). Further, he acknowledges the change that has come over him and that "regardless of how it had happened it had most certainly happened." But Wilson is not the only one who notices this change; Margot too "saw the change in Francis Macomber now" (39). In telling Wilson and Macomber they "talk like heroes" while chasing "helpless" animals, she echoes Sartre's analogy that just as a coward makes himself cowardly, so too does a "hero make himself heroic" ("Existentialism" 39). At Macomber's retort to "keep out of it," she remarks that he has "gotten awfully brave, awfully suddenly," and then it is Margot who realizes she is "very afraid of something" (40). Macomber's cowardice was connected to his fear of death, but now, he has shifted away from this fear.

Before Macomber takes what is believed to be the killshot, his heart pounds with excitement, devoid of fear. Wilson confirms the bull is "dead in there," but it suddenly tears out of the bush unexpectedly. Then, Macomber "felt a sudden white-hot, blinding flash explode inside his head and that was all he ever felt" (42). The narrative follows:

> Mrs. Macomber, in the car, had shot at the buffalo with the 6.5 Mannlicher as it seemed about to gore Macomber and had hit her husband about two inches up and a little to one side of the base of his skull. Francis Macomber lay now, face down, not two yards from where the buffalo lay on his side and his wife knelt over him with Wilson beside her. (42)

Wilson believes this to have been intentional and confronts Margot about it directly, asking, "Why didn't you poison him? That's what they do in England" (42). Wilson realizes that with Macomber losing his fear of death, he also lost his fear of leaving his wife—and he recognizes Margot to have had the same realization.

Obvious is Sartre's philosophy that meaning is cut off with Macomber's sudden death. Macomber is no longer privy to create meaning; it is left at the hands of the Other. Like Sartre, perhaps Hemingway was "content to highlight the ways death is destructive of human meaning" (Buben 1136). But Hemingway's portrayal of Sartre's notions of cowardice in the face of death are too obvious to be ignored. At the very least, the short story illustrates Sartre's profession that one can choose not to be a coward, even in the face of death. L.A. Rowland has named Hemingway a philosophical writer who "believed the measure of an individual is not where he or she has come from" but rather "where they are going, because this is the individual's response and responsibility." This analysis echoes Sartre's thoughts on responsibility and freedom which are apparent when Macomber chooses to reframe his perspective to this focus on meaning.[32]

[32] In "Hemingway and the Hero," Rowland briefly positions Hemingway opposite Sartre, writing that "contrary to Sartre's conclusion that, because all paths lead to death, one must choose one path and follow it wholeheartedly, Hemingway sees as crucial the manner by which the end is reached." Her summary of Sartre's complex philosophy of death is not incorrect, but it leaves out innumerable nuances of his philosophy. In Rowland's defense, no one statement could accurately summarize Sartre's philosophy. Nevertheless, Sartre ultimately sees "the manner by which the end is reached" as critical, but his framing is centered not on death but on meaning: because meaning is not inherent to life, meaning must be created—which Macomber creates in the end.

Rowland asserts that Hemingway's "achievement was to show that understanding consists in seeing connections, not in finding 'proof'," and perhaps these connections are all that he intends.

Yet the short story's title, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," implies a different understanding by directing attention to his "happy life." Sudden death, especially at the hands of your wife (whether accidental or intentional), is quite tragic. In Sartre's words, Macomber's sudden death "annihilates [him] at the prime of life" (*Being and Nothingness* 687). Only thirty-five years old, Macomber, indeed, lives a short life. However, his "happy life" is not years-long, but rather moments-long. When the bull drops after Macomber raises his rifle with "no fear" (34) to shoot, "Macomber felt a drunken elation" (35)—the first indication of Macomber's happiness. After Wilson confirms his belief that the bull is dead, "Macomber felt a wild unreasonable happiness that he had never known before" (38). Though Macomber's happiness is short, cut off only minutes later when Margot shoots and kills him, Hemingway's title seems to indicate that Macomber, who had just moments before engaged in freedom, chooses correctly. Like Hemingway's code hero, Macomber faces the possibility of death with bravery, courage, dignity, and conviction. Rowland describes Hemingway's heroes as those who knew "the hero must keep his head because the head is where truth and freedom reside." In this sense, the short story implies death as preferable to cowardice. After all, death, which Sartre professed as separate from life, has no effect on the free being.

Sartre debates death's relationship to the meaning of life and emphasizes its interruption of projected future plans, a relationship and emphasis evident in *The Great Gatsby* and "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber." More minute points of Sartre's understanding of death appear in other works by both Fitzgerald and Hemingway as well, including the desire for death and possible resurrection. Since both Fitzgerald and Hemingway were living where and when

existentialism was on its ascent—Paris in the 1920s—further study would unravel more connection between their fiction and Sartre's philosophy. Similar to most existentialists, Sartre ascribes all meaning in life to absolute freedom. Fitzgerald and Hemingway dramatize being-for-itself as embracing—or not embracing—freedom that gives life meaning. Their characters face the consequences of their choices, choices made possible by freedom.

CONCLUSION

Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? —Corinthians 15:55

The Bible verses that have been included at the beginning of these chapters mimic Søren Kierkegaard's format in *Works of Love*. Like Kierkegaard's verses at the beginning of the chapters and sections in his book, the preceding verses included were carefully selected to reflect each chapter's theme. Though Kierkegaard's inclusion of Bible verses helps warrant their inclusion here, the replication of his format is, admittedly, happenstance. The idea to include verses came to me a year after a most unwanted, heartbreaking experience: my beautiful mother's passing from this life to the next after a thirteen-year-long battle with cancer. After dedicating semesters of research to death and having just began my second semester of writing this project, the pinnacle of my academic journey, I found myself writing my mother's obituary, forever to be my most meaningful piece of writing and a reminder that "the way to life and to the eternal is through death" (*Works of Love* 52). Kierkegaard explains remembering the dead to be a work of love, a way "to get a view of life" (278) and "to meditate on life" (279), which is the work of love this project has become. The verses are an homage to my mom, Myra Jane Johns Curry, a woman of profound wisdom and strong faith. She is, as Kierkegaard describes, of the "dead who, it is well to note, did not become tired of life, but simply won the joy of eternity" (122). My commitment is to honor and remember her as Kierkegaard writes: "Our duty to love the men we see cannot cease because death separates them from us, for the duty is eternal" (288).

As all three philosophers agree, death is assuredly the one aspect of life that will remain uncertain. No more will be known of the experience of death at any future time than is known at present. This does not mean, however, that new perspectives, observations, and even efforts of discovery will cease. F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway say as much in their fiction. Disillusioned after World War I, these two writers of the Lost Generation intended to work out

their questions of existence while at the same time confronting the matter of death. By depicting death in their fiction, Fitzgerald and Hemingway offer answers as to what is to be made of life in light of death. By seemingly obsessing over life's finitude, death becomes part of the human condition in their fiction, fiction that creates experiences with death that frame life. The significance of death in Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's works is clear, but its significance is deepened when viewed through a philosophical lens—through Horace's, Søren Kierkegaard's, and Jean-Paul Sartre's understandings of death as present within them.

Horace advised living in such a way as to be prepared for death but, at the same time, not to overcome oneself with worry since death's arrival time is unknown. Because he recognized the brevity of life, he believed in making the most of life—a feat easiest achieved by considering, thinking about, and meditating on death. Fitzgerald uses death as a consistent player in "The I.O.U.," signaling that death will come and reminding readers of the reality that is death. Death works as a steadying influence in "The Ice Palace," directing the protagonist home to a quiet life and one similar to that which Horace advocated. And Hemingway explores Horace's *carpe diem* recommendation in *The Sun Also Rises* with characters who reframe their perspective on life after having lived through a death-ridden era of war. Just as Horace meditates on death, so too do Hemingway's characters as they "seize the day" in ways Horace would have encouraged at times and redirected in others. Their efforts through Hemingway's *carpe diem* exploration are interspersed with constant reminders of death, making it a steadying influence in their lives.

Because death is so interwoven into Kierkegaard's oeuvre, his readers must simultaneously consider his thoughts on existence and his thoughts on death. Similarly, Fitzgerald so numerously references death in *The Beautiful and Damned* that death becomes interwoven into the novel's very language. At the same time, he dramatizes despair as a

consequence of an aesthetic way of life—an integral part of Kierkegaard's philosophies of existence—to the point where his characters become the embodiment of despair. Much like Kierkegaard, Fitzgerald weaves death into his writing so readers must consider existence alongside death. Kierkegaard explicates death's decision as decisive, indefinable, and inexplicable, and asserts the earnest thought of death as that which propels one toward a worthy goal in life. Both take shape in Hemingway's "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," as Hemingway's protagonist experiences the repercussions of death's decision after having lived without earnest thought of death.

Sartre's understanding of death is tightly wound into his theory of meaning. Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* homes in on Sartre's notion of bad faith and death as the end of all possibility. Gatsby's hope in the past thwarts him from pursuing meaning in the future because he does not properly accept freedom. Sartre's theories are undoubtedly complicated, and Fitzgerald arguably imitates Sartre's methodology through his dramatizations of anguish and bad faith, both complicated by death. Not complicated, however, is Fitzgerald's dramatization of the memory of the Other, as one of the remaining living characters takes up the responsibility of meaning-making for a dead Other character, exactly as Sartre describes. In "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," Hemingway too depicts death as the end of future possibility through sudden death, but he also depicts Sartre's stance on cowards—that they are so by choice but can always make a different choice, one to shift away from cowardice. Hemingway's protagonist proves this to be true—first, being a coward because of the fear of death and, later, choosing no longer to be cowardly in the face of death.

Among the philosophers who have studied death extensively, most apparent are these three philosophers' understandings of death as present in Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's fiction,

the significance of which is amplified when viewed alongside their philosophical understandings. To be sure, all three philosophers' understandings of death (and life) differ, but ultimately, all three essentially backwards engineer life from death—even Sartre, who labels death as meaningless. Though his reasoning contrasts with that of Horace and Kierkegaard who encourage making meaning in life *because of* death, Sartre still proclaims that we are responsible to make meaning in life *in light of* death. In other words, though they take different approaches, they arrive at a similar end result.

Obvious are the shared topics, themes, and subjects in the writings of the two existentialists, Kierkegaard and Sartre. Existentialism emerged as a prominent branch of philosophy in the twentieth century because of Kierkegaard's foundational nineteenth-century work. His study of humans from an individual perspective and his prioritization of existence and the human condition as philosophical problems foregrounded the existential movement that French thinkers such as Sartre made popular in the twentieth century. As a philosophy that emphasizes people's freewill in determining the course of their lives, existentialism emphasizes an individual's responsibility with the choices that create their life's course, an emphasis that appears as a throughline in both Kierkegaard's and Sartre's works. To identify the responsibility that comes with free will, Kierkegaard posits that one must face despair without casting blame on external factors or loathing in self-pity; focus on one's inner being to know oneself, change oneself, and discern the meaning of existence; and willingly pursue one's purpose. This pursuit is made possible, according to Kierkegaard, by contending with death. Opposed to determinism and a proponent of freewill, Sartre radicalized freedom to the degree one must acknowledge and accept it to find meaning. Meaning in Sartre's view is, however, to be sought in the face of death.

Kierkegaard's and Sartre's philosophies of death most evidently diverge at the point death occurs: the afterlife. Kierkegaard professes that one must think death into existence because thinking about death brings one closer to actualizing it, whereas Sartre implies that death is little worth thinking about. Kierkegaard, a Christian, places emphasis on spiritual development because he believes "the spiritually developed individual takes his development with him when he dies" (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript* 309). Sartre, on the other hand, as an atheist, does not believe in an afterlife. In "Inductive Knowledge of Death and Jean-Paul Sartre," Bernard N. Schumacher writes, "The Sartrean position seems to imply that life would have a meaning if, on the one hand, the for-itself continued to exist postmortem while preserving its personal identity and continuing to project itself freely toward the future (as coming-toward) – which would also suppose a resurrection of the body so that the for-itself could continue to be-in-situation" (100). This observation is, of course, inductive, but Kierkegaard makes it explicit and does, indeed, believe in such a resurrection that "presents to himself in this hope and does not come into conflict with the particular elements of finiteness" (*Either/Or* 223).

Yet regardless of the differences that underlie their philosophies, the two philosophers arrive at the same conclusion: meaning should be made in life. In the effort to make meaning comes the difficulties of life, such as Kierkegaard's despair and Sartre's anguish—both akin to each other. Sartre attributes his notion of anguish to Kierkegaard, who first called it "the anguish of Abraham" (25). In *Fear and Trembling* (1843), Kierkegaard examines the biblical story of Abraham in the book of Genesis (chapter twenty-two) when God commands him to sacrifice his son Isaac. In Kierkegaard's examination, Abraham's anguish stems from his faith, placing obedience to God foremost; Kierkegaard concludes that faith requires setting aside understanding and all that is finite. Sartre, contrastingly, argues in favor of the need for proof—

precisely what Kierkegaard says must be released. Nevertheless, so much do their theories of meaning and philosophies of death overlap that their similarities and significance cannot be ignored.

The degree to which Fitzgerald and Hemingway so remarkably incorporate death in their fiction calls for serious research and thorough study to effectively address all aspects of its incorporation. The inclusion of death is by no means coincidental, inconsequential, or unsubstantiated. The two American authors consistently create death to be a significant part of life in their fiction, and its significance is bolstered when considered alongside understandings of death as parsed by philosophy. Scholarship is merited to follow such a consequential subject in Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's fiction, so I encourage other scholars who share a desire to explore death's implications on the human condition to build upon and further this study. My original intent was to insightfully contribute to the field of modern American literature with unique philosophical thanatological analysis; it has become one with the hope of inviting challenging conversations with dialogue that both comforts and advises. Studies of grief, for example, are an obvious avenue and new path forward.

Regardless of the thanatological path forged, accomplishing such will require scholars to adopt a Kierkegaardian mentality:

> The genuine subjective existing thinker, yes, he is constantly just as negative [being] as positive [non-being], and vice verse; he is constantly that as long as he exists, not once and for all in a chimerical meditation.[33] His communication conforms to this, on pain of senselessly succeeding, by being extraordinarily

[33] Kierkegaard draws on Hegel here, and he assumes that "everyone is now familiar with [Hegel's] dialectic of becoming" (68). He connects "being" to "the negative" and "non-being" to "the positive," explaining, "What in becoming is the alternation between being and non-being (a nevertheless somewhat obscure definition inasmuch as being itself is also the continuity in this alternation) is later the negative and the positive" (68).

> expansive, in transforming a learner's existence into something other than what a human existence at all is. He is cognizant of the negativity of the infinite in life, and he constantly keeps open that wound of the negative that is indeed at times the saving factor. … For that reason he is never a teacher but a learner; and since he is constantly just as negative as positive, he is constantly striving (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript* 72).

To engage in constant striving, scholars must accept their existence as "constantly coming to be," refuse "infinitude's deceptiveness in existence," renounce the "constant urge to have something finished," and invest all "thinking in becoming" (73). Ultimately, this striving can produce research that, even in some small way, helps to ease suffering in the world.

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