



# The New Death: American Modernism and World War I (The American Literatures Initiative)

*Pearl James*

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Adopting the term "new death," which was used to describe the unprecedented and horrific scale of death caused by the First World War, Pearl James uncovers several touchstones of American modernism that refer to and narrate traumatic death. The sense of paradox was pervasive: death was both sanctified and denied; notions of heroism were both essential and far-fetched; and civilians had opportunities to hear about the ugliness of death at the front but often preferred not to. By historicizing and analyzing the work of such writers as Willa Cather, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and William Faulkner, the author shows how their novels reveal, conceal, refigure, and aestheticize the violent death of young men in the aftermath of the war. These writers, James argues, have much to say about how the First World War changed death's cultural meaning.

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