

**these  
ashes  
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depths  
of  
anguish  
in  
our  
sun  
whose  
night  
is  
singing  
and  
whose  
day  
is  
fire**

**january-february 1964**

**motive**

**death: a special issue**



WOODENGRAVING BY MARGARET RIGG

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# psalm 90

*A Prayer of Moses, the man of God.*

LORD, you have been our dwelling place  
in all generations.  
Before the mountains were brought forth,  
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting  
you are God.

YOU recall man again to the dust,  
and say, "Turn back, O children of men!"  
For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday  
when it is past,  
or as a watch in the night.

YOU sweep men away; they are like a dream,  
like grass which is renewed in the morning;  
in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;  
in the evening it fades and withers.

For we are consumed by thy anger;  
by thy wrath we are overwhelmed.  
You have set our iniquities before you,  
our secret sins in the light of your countenance.

For all our days pass away under your wrath,  
our years come to an end like a sigh.  
The years of our life are seventy  
at the most  
or even by reason of strength eighty;  
yet their span is but toil and trouble;  
they are soon gone, and we fly away.

Who considers the power of your anger,  
and your wrath according to the fear of you?  
So teach us to number our days that we may get a  
heart of wisdom.

RETURN, O Lord! How long?  
Have pity on your servants!  
Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,  
that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.  
Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us,  
and as many years as we have seen evil.  
Let your work be manifest to your servants,  
and your glorious power to their children.

LET the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,  
and establish the work of our hands upon us,  
yes, the work of our hands establish it.

# DEATH:

reluctant pilgrims and chastened survivors

Agony and despair constitute a major portion of the diet on which modern man feeds. The cancerous condition of man and the flaws of an arrogant society preoccupy us, and become the modus operandi of the critics and the artists. Professor Tillich, in his heavy German brogue, describes ours as being an "unhealzy healz." Health—and/or the lack of it—is a relative condition. Good health is usually associated with absence of pain, freedom from disease or ailment, and the maximum presence and operation of all one's natural facilities (supplemented, of course, by myriad pharmaceutical miracles without which TV commercials—strange, these kinships among panaceas—couldn't exist). But where in such a romanticized and sterile view of man's ideal state—whether psychological, physical, or social—is there a full recognition of the presence of pain and hurt, the meaning of evil, and the radical implications of death? Greek tragedy is mysterious and offensive to our age, and its subtleties elude our understanding, because it treats the whole scope of man's condition and confronts full face the inevitable—and sometimes paralyzing—tension between life and death, good and evil, pride and humility, fate and futility.

It is commonplace, particularly within the church, to lament the loss of meaning, the decline of Pietistic moralism, the disenchantment with orthodox institutionalism, and perhaps most of all, the alleged equivocation of religious authorities in dealing with this erosion of religious heritage and tradition. We act as though we think we can have a sound biblical faith and an authentic Christian community in spite of our excising most of the Old Testament prophets, the early church fathers, the meaning of Pentecost—to say nothing of the Cross itself! The church runs from controversy, sacrifice, and risky involvement with the world under the pretext of "being true to its calling." A full immersion (just short of drowning, of course) in biblical study and church history may be necessary before we recognize the degree to which contemporary gnosticism prevails in current ecclesiology. Death dangles around the church with the deceitful grace of Spanish moss. That the church cannot believe its own Word, that it cannot "lose its life" in service to its Lord, is the haunting specter before us.

Many will ask: Why a special issue on death? A few ancient oracles will clack their archaic organs because we've treated a topic which "isn't appropriate to college students" because "everybody knows college is the time for being lighthearted and full of life." Others will bemoan our "parochial vision," our "unscriptural language," or the "bizarre modern art." A few will even think us "un-American" for taking an extended look at death and its implications through the eyes of modern man.

In essence, this issue is a libation before the church. The contents are not definitive. We have allowed each—the poet, the writer, the preacher, the artist, the cartoonist, the filmmaker—to speak for himself and in his own mode. The result, hopefully, is a contribution to the unending search for truth and meaning. We participate in that pilgrimage in the assurance that such truth frees us to live . . . and die.

### postscript

This issue on death was begun more than two years ago. The idea erupted in the midst of a staff discussion on significant themes in modern life. This intramural discussion was repeated many times as we discussed with others the pertinent dimensions of this topic. That the theme was a strategic one became obvious, but its scope and significance haunted us.

The publication of this special issue has been reset numerous times. As each deadline approached, the material in hand or being planned didn't seem to be adequate. Ideas and articles came and went, and the potential table of contents changed more frequently than any issue we've yet published. In early November, additional delays were made necessary by the late arrival of the new typeface which was being shipped from Germany.

And then November 22, 1963.

Death in all its existential grandeur and arrogant finality badgered us into a bewildered stupor. Absurdity—which had heretofore intrigued and entertained us on stage and in print—suddenly flaunted itself. Nausea and the abyss became real. Our glib and sophomoric accolades to Sartre, Kafka, Ionesco, Bonhoeffer and Kierkegaard mocked us. The awful reality of death arose to indict our pseudo-commitments to "live as men of faith." Anguish, futility, despair, absurdity became tough truths which could not be dismissed easily by playing intellectual games.

Death leaped at us dramatically in 1963—Pope John, Eleanor Roosevelt, Medgar Evers, burning monks, the four children in Birmingham, Aldous Huxley, George Braque, Jean Cocteau, John F. Kennedy and Lee Oswald. In the aftermath, we, as survivors, run the gamut from being morbidly preoccupied with death to being apparently oblivious or immune to its implications for us.

The contents of this issue—with the exception of the addition of Howard Moody's sermon—remain the same as they were before the assassination. But we will read these articles in a different light—and hopefully with a renewed sense of urgency about the importance and relevance of our own individual contributions to life. The reality of death has impinged upon our lives in sobering and dramatic events in this decade. This issue on death is offered as an exploration and a celebration of all the mysteries of life—including death.



# THE TIME MY FATHER DIED

BY JOSEPH W. MATHEWS

SOMETIME past noon, November ninth the last, our telephone rang. It was for me, person-to-person. My oldest sister, Margaret, was calling.

"Joe, Papa just died!"

We children never called him Papa while we were growing up. He was mostly "Dad." But in the last decade or so, out of a strange mellowing affection, we started, all seven of us, referring to our father as Papa.

My Papa dead!—just seven days before he was ninety-two.

Within the hour I began my journey to my father. I find it difficult to express how deeply I wanted to be with him in his death. Furthermore he had long since commissioned my brother and me to conduct the celebration. My brother unfortunately was out of the country and I had quiet anxiety about executing it alone.

The late afternoon flight was conducive to contemplation. I thought of the many well-meant condolences already received.

"Isn't it fine that your father lived to be ninety-two?"

"It must be easier for you since he lived such a long life."

Certainly I was grateful for such comments. But I found myself perturbed too. Didn't they realize that to die is to die, whether you are seventeen, forty-nine, or one hundred and ten? Didn't they know that our death is our death? And that each of us has only one death to die? This was my father's death! It was no less significant because he was most of a hundred. It was his death. The only one he would ever have.

The family had already gathered when I arrived in the little New England town. We immediately sat in council. The first task was to clarify our self-understanding. The second was to embody that understanding in the celebration of Papa's death. Consensus was already present: the One who gives us our life is the same that takes it from us. From this stance we felt certain broad implications should guide the formation of the ceremony.

*Death is a very lively part of a man's life and no life is finished without the experience of death.*

*Death is a crucial point in the human adventure which somehow transposes to every other aspect of life.*

*Death is to be received in humble gratitude and must ever be honored with honest dignity.*

Together we concluded that the death of our father must be celebrated as a real part of his history, before the final Author that gave him both his life and his death, with integrity and solemn appreciation.

The very articulation of these lines of guidance worked backward laying bare our own inward flight from death. They also made more obvious the efforts of our culture to disguise death. I mean the great concealment by means of plush caskets, white satin linings, soft cushions, head pillows, Sunday clothes, cosmetics, perfume, flowers, and guaranteed vaults. Empty of symbolic meaning, they serve but to deceive—to simulate life. They seem to say, Nothing has actually happened, Nothing is really changed. What vanity to denude death! All our pretenses about it only strengthen its power to destroy our lives. Death stripped of meaning and dignity becomes a demon. Not to embrace death as part of our given life is finally not to embrace our life. That is, we do not really live. This is the power of unacknowledged death. I ponder over the strange smile on faces of the dead.

To symbolize the dignity of our father's death, the family thought to clothe him in a pine box and to rest him in the raw earth.

I remembered the men of the war I buried. There was great dignity in the shelter—half shrouded, in the soiled clothing, in the dirty face, in the shallow grave. I say dignity was there. Death was recognized as death. Death was dramatized as the death of the men who had died their own death.

A sister and brother-in-law were sent to make arrangements. They asked about the coffin. A pine box was out of the question. None was to be had. The undertaker, as they called him, explained that caskets ranged from one hundred to several thousands of dollars.

Interpreting the spirit of the common mind, our emissaries asked for the \$100 coffin.

"What \$100 coffin?" replied an astonished undertaker.

"Why the one you mentioned."

"Oh no, caskets begin at \$275."

"Did you not mention a \$100 coffin?"

"Yes. Yes. But you wouldn't want that. It is for paupers. We bury only the paupers in the \$100 coffins."

This thought racked the psychic foundations of my sister and her husband. They retreated for further

consultation. None of the rest of us, it turned out, were emotionally prepared for the pauper twist. Actually, the tyranny of the economic order over us was exposed. Our deepest emotions of guilt, love, sorrow, regret were all mixed up with this strange tyranny. In short, we could not move forward with our decision until we first agreed to set up a small memorial for Papa that would be used for charity in the little community.

By this time, assuming that no one would want to put his father away as a pauper, the undertaker had placed Papa in the \$275 casket. Having recovered some equilibrium we protested. He was understandably upset by our stand and insisted that we come to his showroom. We all went together, including Mama, who has been weathering the storms of life now for more than fourscore years. Caskets of all kinds filled the place. We asked about the pauper's coffin.

"We keep that outside in the storehouse." Anticipating our next request he hurried on. "No, I can't bring that into my showroom."

In the back I saw a wooden rough box which reminded me of the pine coffin. We talked, the undertaker and I. He was really a very sensitive man. Certainly he had a living to make. When I offered to pay him more for the other expenses of the funeral, he refused. But he mellowed a bit. He remembered when he lived in upper New York state as a little boy. His grandfather had been an undertaker too. Grandfather had used rough pine boxes out in the country to bury people in. In his recollecting he found a kind of meaning in our decision for the pauper's coffin. He even brought it into the showroom where Mama and the rest of the family could see it.

Immediately it was opened, another mild shock came. The pauper's coffin was exactly like any other coffin—pillow, white satin, and all. Except the white satin wasn't really white satin. It was the kind of shiny material you might buy at the ten-cent store. Everything was simply cheap imitation. We had hoped for something honest. Despite the disappointment, we took the pauper's box. And Papa was transferred to his own coffin.

I did not want to see my father until I could have some time with him alone. Several hours before the funeral I went to where he waited. I can scarcely describe what I saw and felt.

My father, I say, was ninety-two. In his latter years he had wonderfully chiseled wrinkles. I had helped to put them there. His cheeks were deeply sunken; his lips pale. He was an old man. There is a kind

of glory in the face of an old man. Not so with the stranger laying there. They had my Papa looking like he was fifty-two. Cotton stuffed in his cheeks had erased the best wrinkles. Make-up powder and rouge plastered his face way up into his hair and around his neck and ears. His lips were painted. He . . . he looked ready to step before the footlights of the matinee performance.

I fiercely wanted to pluck out the cotton but was afraid. At least the make-up could come off. I called for alcohol and linens. A very reluctant mortician brought them to me. And I began the restoration. As the powder, the rouge, the lipstick disappeared, the stranger grew older. He never recovered the look of his ninety-two years but in the end the man in the coffin became my Papa.

Something else happened to me there with my father in his death. Throughout childhood, I had been instructed in the medieval world view. This by many people who were greatly concerned for me. My father, my mother, my Sunday school teacher, yes, my teachers at the school and most of my neighbors. They taught me the ancient Greek picture of how when you die there's something down inside of you that escapes death, how the real me doesn't die at all. Much later I came to see that both the biblical view and the modern image were something quite different. But I wondered if the meeting with my father in his death would create nostalgia for the world view of my youth. I wondered if I would be tempted to revert to that earlier conditioning in order to handle the problems of my own existence. It wasn't this way.

What did happen to me I am deeply grateful for. I don't know how much I'm able to communicate. It happened when I reached down to straighten my father's tie. There was my father. Not the remains, not the body of my father, but my father. It was my father in death! Ever since I can remember, Papa never succeeded in getting his tie quite straight. We children took some kind of pleasure in fixing it before he went out. Though he always pretended to be irritated at this, we knew that he enjoyed our attention. It was all sort of a secret sign of mutual acknowledgment. Now in death I did it once again. This simple little act became a new catalyst of meaning. That was my Papa whose tie I straightened in the coffin. It was my father there experiencing his death. It was my Papa involved in the Mystery in his death as he had been involved in the Mystery in his life. I say there he was related to the same Final Mystery in death as in life. Somehow the dichotomy between living and dying was overcome.

*Where is thy victory, O death?*

Death is indeed a powerfully individual happen-



ing. My Papa experienced his death all alone. About this I am quite clear. I remember during the war I wanted to help men die. I was never finally able to do this. I tried. Sometimes I placed a lighted cigarette in a soldier's mouth as we talked. Sometimes I quoted for him the Twenty-third Psalm. Sometimes I wiped the sweat and blood from his face. Sometimes I held his hand. Sometimes I did nothing. It was a rude shock to discover that I could not in the final sense help a man to die. Each had to do his own dying, alone.

But then I say, death is something more than an individual experience. It is also a social happening. Papa's death was an event in our family. All of us knew that a happening had happened to us as a family and not just to Papa. Furthermore, the dying of an individual is also an internal occurrence in the larger communities of life. Indeed it happens to all history and creation itself. This is true whether that individual be great or small. The inner being of a little New England town is somehow changed by the absence of the daily trek of an eccentric old gentleman to the postoffice who stopped to deliver long monologues on not very interesting subjects to all who could not avoid him. Perhaps we don't know how to feel these happenings as communities. Maybe we don't know how to celebrate them. But they happen.

Finally, death is a happening to that strange historical cadre the Church. This body, however vaguely, is more self-consciously aware of this. It is clearly there in ancient rites by which it celebrates the event of death.

We wanted to celebrate Papa's death as his own event but we wanted also to celebrate it as a social happening. Most of all, we wanted to celebrate Christianly. But this is not so simple. The office of the funeral suffers a great malaise in our day. Perhaps even more than other rites. There are many causes. The undertaker, in the showroom episode, spoke to this with deep concern. His rather scathing words disturb me still.

"Funerals today have become no more than disposal services!"

"What of those conducted by the Church?" I ventured.

"Church indeed! I mean the Church," he said.

His professional posture was here set aside. Pointing out that most funerals today are held outside any real sense of Christian community, he spoke of the tragedy of keeping children away from death. He spoke of adults who sophisticatedly boast of never having engaged in the death rite. He spoke of the

over-all decrease in funeral attendance. He especially rued the emptiness of the rites because they were no longer understood. And he caricatured the clergy as the hired disposal units with their artificial airs, unrealistic words, and hurried services.

"What we all seem to want nowadays," he said, "is to get rid of the body as quickly and efficiently as is respectably allowable, with as little trouble to as few folk as possible."

These solemn words were creatively sobering. The funeral embodied the full office of worship. We who gathered acted out all three parts. We first confessed our own self-illusions and received once again the word of cosmic promise of fresh beginnings. Then we read to ourselves from our classic scriptures recounting men's courage to be before God and boldly expressed together our thanksgiving for the given actualities of our lives. Thirdly, we presented ourselves to the Unchanging Mystery beyond all that is and corporately dedicated our lives once more to the task of affirming the world and creating civilization.

The point is, we did not gather to console ourselves. We did not gather to psychologically bolster one another. We did not gather to excuse anybody's existence or to pretend about the world we live in. We celebrated the death of my father by recollecting and acknowledging who we are and what we must therefore become. That is, we assembled as the Church on this occasion in our history, to remember that we are the Church.

In the midst of the service of death the "words over the dead" are pronounced. I had sensed for a long time that one day I might pronounce them over Papa. Now that the time had come I found myself melancholy beyond due. It was not simply that it was my father. Yet just because it was my father, I was perhaps acutely sensitive. I mean about the funeral meditation, as it is revealingly termed. Memories of poetic rationalizations of our human pretenses about death gnawed at my spirit. Some that I recalled actually seemed designed to blanket the awareness that comes in the face of death, that death is a part of life and that all must die. I remembered others as attempts to explain away the sharp sense of ontological guilt and moral emptiness that we all experience before the dead. The very gifts of grace were here denied, whether by ignorance or intent, and the human spirit thereby smothered into nothing. I remembered still other of these meditations even more grotesque in their disfigurement of life—undisguised sentimentalities offering shallow assurances and fanciful comforts. How could we shepherds of the souls of men do

such things to human beings? Perhaps after all, I was not unduly depressed.

Coincidental with these broodings, my imagination was vividly assaulted by another image. It was a homely scene from a television western. A small crowd of townsfolk were assembled on Boot Hill to pay last respects to one who had lived and died outside the law. A very ordinary citizen was asked to say "a-few-words-over-the-dead." He spoke with the plainness of wisdom born out of intimate living with life as it actually is. Protesting that he was not a religious man, he reminded the gathered of the mystery present in that situation beyond the understanding of any one or all of them together. Then he turned and spoke words to the dead one. He spoke words to the family. He spoke words to the townsfolk themselves. In each case his words confronted the intended hearer with the real events and guilt of the past and in each case he offered an image of significance for the future. There was comfort in his words. But it was the honest, painful comfort of coming to terms with who we are in the midst of the world as it is. It impressed me as deeply religious, as deeply Christian. For my father, I took this pattern as my own.

At the appointed place I, too, reminded the assembled body of the Incomprehensible One who is the ground of all living and dying. I, too, announced a word to the assembled townsfolk, and to my family, and to my father.

I looked out at the members of the funeral party who represented the village where my father had spent his last years. They were sitting face to face before one another, each caught in the gaze of his neighbor. In that moment, if I had never known it before, I knew that a community's life is somehow held before it whenever it takes, with even vague seriousness, the death of one of its members. I saw in its face its failures and fears, its acts of injustice, callousness, and irresponsibility. I saw its guilt. I saw its despair. They would call it sorrow for a passing one. But it was their sorrow. Indeed it was, in a strange way, sorrow for themselves.

In the name of the Church, I spoke, first, of all

HE LED THEM THROUGH A DEEP WOODCUT R. REGIER



this which they already knew yet so desperately needed to know aloud. And then I pronounced all their past, remembered and forgotten, fully and finally received before the Unconditioned Being who is Lord both of life and death.

I looked out at my family. There was my mother surrounded by her children and her children's children. What was going on in the deeps of this woman who had mixed her destiny with that of the dead man for the major share of a century? What of sister Margaret who knew so well the severity of her father? What of the son who had never won approval? Or the son-in-law never quite received. What of the one who knew hidden things? What of the rebellious one? What of the specially favored? What of Alice? What of Arthur? What of Elizabeth? I knew, as I looked, perhaps all over again, that the sorrow at death is not only that of the loss of the cherished and the familiar. It is the sorrow of unacknowledged guilt, postponed intentions, buried animosities, un-mended ruptures. The sorrow of the funeral is the pain of our own creatureliness, of self-disclosure, and of self-acknowledgment. It is the pain of turning from the past to the future. It is the pain of having to decide all over again about our lives.

In the name of the Church, I spoke of these things written so clearly upon our family countenance. And then in fear and joy pronounced all our relations with Papa and one another as cosmically approved by the One who gives us our lives and takes them from us once again.

I looked at my father. And I knew things in a way I had not known them before. It wasn't that I knew anything new. But my knowing was now transposed so that everything was different. I knew his very tragic boyhood. I knew the scars it engraved on his soul. I knew his lifelong agonizing struggle to rise beyond them. I knew his unknown greatness. I knew his qualities next to genius that never found deliverance. I knew his secret sense of failure. I knew things he never knew I knew. I knew the dark nights of his soul. I knew, well, what I knew was his life. His spirit's journey. That was it. It was his life I knew in that moment. It was frozen now. It was all in now. It was complete. It was finished. It was offered up for what it was. This was the difference made by death.

In the name of the Church, I spoke his life out loud. Not excusing, not glorifying, just of his life as I saw it then. And then I pronounced it good and great and utterly significant before the One who had given it to history just as it was. Not as it might have been, not as it could have been abstractly considered, not as I might have wanted it to be or others felt it should have been, not even as Papa might have wanted it altered. I sealed it as acceptable to God, then, just as it was finished.

The celebration ended in the burial grounds.

The funeral party bore Papa to his grave. There was no drama in the processional. It was just empty utility. The death march, once explosive in symbolic force, had lost its power. I allowed myself to be swept along in silent frustration. I was sad for Papa. I had pity for those of us who bore him. I grew angry with myself.

The sun had already fallen behind the ridge when we came to the burial ground. It was on a remote New England hillside (they call it a mountain there). I remember clearly the sharp, cold air and how the very chill made me feel keenly alive. I remember also how the dark shadows dancing on the hills reminded me of life. But I remember most of all the clean smell of God's good earth freshly turned.

I say I smelled the fresh earth. There was none to be seen. What I did see is difficult to believe. I mean the green stuff. Someone had come before us and covered that good, wonderful raw dirt, every clod of it, with green stuff. Everything, every scar of the grave, was concealed under simulated grass: Just as if nothing had been disturbed here: Just as if nothing were going on here: Just as if nothing at all were happening. What an offense against nature, against history, against Papa, against us, against God.

I wanted to scream. I wanted to cry out to the whole world, "Something is going on here, something great, something significantly human. Look! Everybody, look! Here is my father's death. It is going on here!"

The banks of flowers upon the green facade only added to the deception. Was it all contrived to pretend at this last moment that my father was not really dead after all? Was it not insisting that death is not important, not a lively part of our lives, not thoroughly human, not bestowed by the Final One? Suddenly the great lie took on cosmic proportion. And suddenly I was physically sick!

This time I didn't want to scream. I experienced an acute urge to vomit.

A sister sensitively perceived all this and understood. She pushed to my side and gave me courage. Together we laid aside the banks of flowers. Together we rolled back the carpet of deceit. God's good, wonderful clean earth lay once again unashamedly naked. I drank it into my being. The nausea passed.

Mind you, I'm not blaming anybody. Not anybody really, save myself. I just hadn't anticipated everything. I have no excuse but I was taken by surprise, you understand. And I so passionately wanted to celebrate Papa's death with honesty and integrity and dignity—for his sake, for our sake, for God's sake.

We lowered Papa then in his pauper's box deep

into the raw ground. Then began the final rites. There were three.

I lifted up the Bible. It was a sign. We were commemorating Papa's journey in the historical community of the faithful. However distantly, however feebly, however brokenly, he had walked with the knights of faith, Abraham, Amos, Paul, Augustine, Thomas, Luther, Wesley, Jesus. By fate and by choice these were his first companions of the road. I recalled aloud from their constitution which I held in my hands. The heroic formula from Job is what I meant to recite: Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. What came from my lips were the words of Paul. "If I live, I live unto the Lord; if I die, I die unto the Lord; so whether I live or whether I die, I am the Lord's."

I lifted up a very old, musty, leatherbound volume of poetry. This too was a sign. We were ritualizing Papa's own unique and unrepeatable engagement in the human adventure. Papa was an individual, a solitary individual before God. It was most fitting that a last rite should honor this individuality. Such was the role of the volume of hymn-poems. From it Papa had read and quoted and sung in monotone for as long as any of us including Mama could recall. The words I joined to the sign were from this collection. The author was a friend of Papa's.

God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform;

He plants his footsteps on the sea and rides upon the storm;

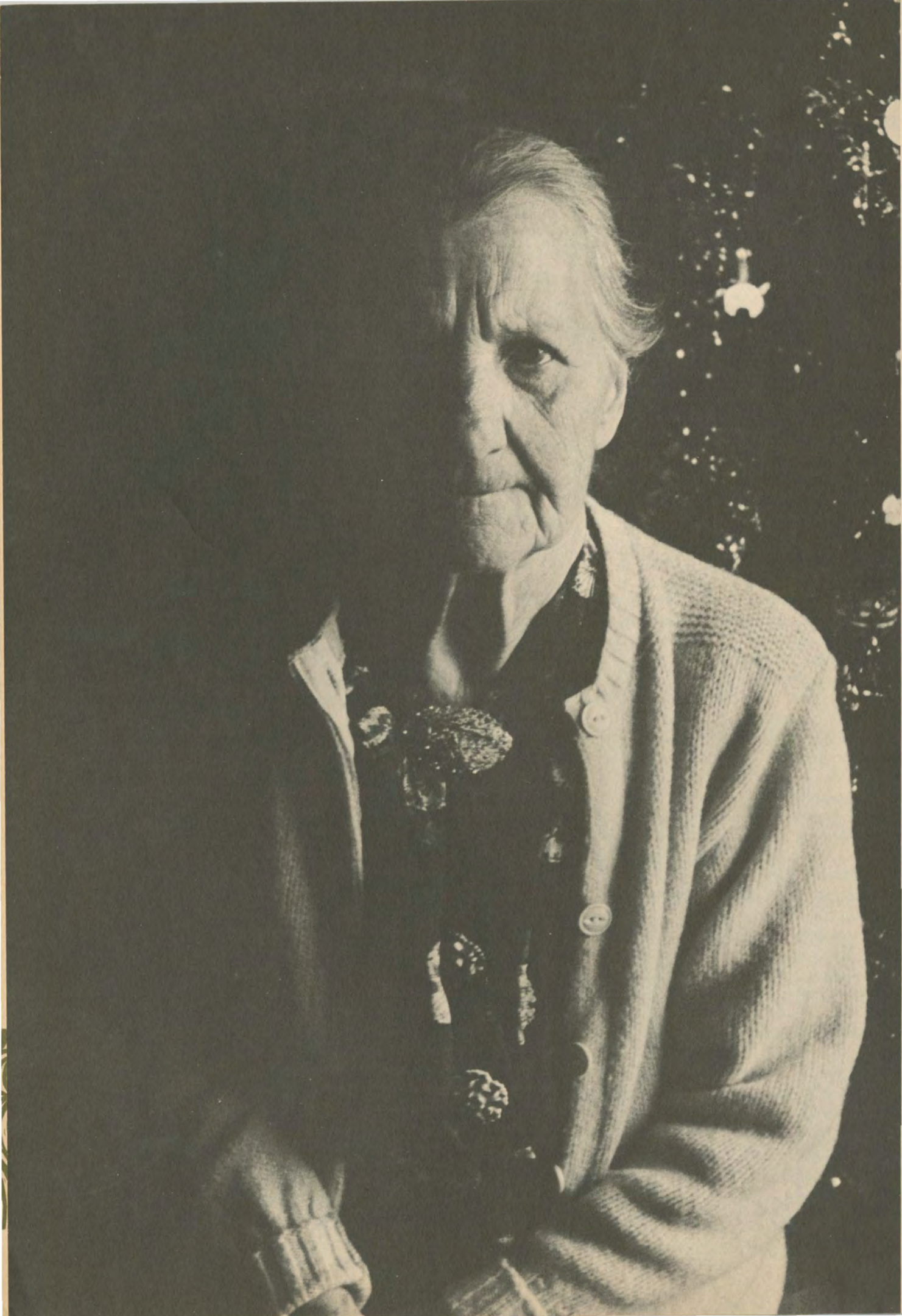
Blind unbelief is sure to err, and scan His works in vain;

God is His own interpreter and He shall make it plain.

The third sign celebrated the fact that Papa was a participant in the total wonder of creation and that his life and death were good because creation is good. What I mean is that Papa was God's friend. My last act was to place him gladly and gratefully on behalf of all good men everywhere in the hands of the One in whose hands he already was, that Mysterious Power who rules the unknown realm of death to do with him as he well pleaseth. I ask to know no more. This I symbolized. Three times I stooped low, three times I plunged my hands deep into the loose earth beside the open pit, and three times I threw that good earth upon my Papa within his grave. And all the while I sang forth the majestic threefold formula,

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.*

And some of those present there for the sake of all history and all creation said Amen.



PHOTOGRAPH: EDWARD WALLOWITCH

# EXISTENTIAL ESCAPISM

BY VIKTOR E. FRANKL

EXISTENTIAL philosophy has been blamed frequently in recent years for overemphasizing tragic aspects of human existence. Logotherapy, one of the schools of existential psychiatry, has been accused of centering too much on dying and suffering. However, since logotherapy, as its name betrays, focuses on meaning (*logos* means meaning) it therefore cannot avoid confronting the patient with pain, death and guilt, or, as I call it, the tragic triad of human existence.

These three existential facts of life should be faced by the patient rather than blurred and clouded by the doctor. This is a particularly important assignment and requirement in psychotherapy since at present it is no more than the instinctual aspects of human existence which are subject to repression, but rather man's spiritual aspirations. And, the lack of sexual awareness is seldom the cause of neurosis as a mode of escape (this was true only for the Victorian age!). Today our neurosis is an attempt to obscure existential facts, and an old-fashioned, one-sided psychodynamic indoctrination may well shunt the actual problems by providing the patient with a pandeterministic self-image which does not allow for change and growth. We may now understand how justified Arthur Burton was in pointing out that when fear of death is indiscriminately analyzed away or reduced to castration anxiety, this constitutes a form of denial of an existential fact.<sup>1</sup>

Dying and suffering are not inventions of logotherapy. They belong to the human condition. Therefore, one should not approach them as if, in a given case, he just had to deal with bad luck. Pain, death, and guilt are inescapable and the neurotic only entangles himself in additional suffering in any attempts to escape them.

Although the tragic triad is an undeniable fact inherent in human existence, it is rationalized away by means of technical progressivism and scientism. But even in the United States—where society is so permeated by the belief that sooner or later science will resolve man's predicament—there are rumors that after all man is a finite and mortal being who inevitably has to face dying—and even before this—suffering.

This article is specifically and explicitly concerned with man's mortality and life's transitoriness. As we teach in logotherapy, the essential transitoriness of human existence itself adds to life's meaningfulness. If man were immortal, he would be justified in delaying everything; there would be no need to do anything right now. Only under the urge and pressure of life's transience does it make sense to use the passing of time. Actually the only transitory aspects of life are the potentialities. As soon as we have succeeded in making actual a potentiality, we have transmuted it into an actuality, and thus rescued it into the past. Once an actuality, it is one forever. Everything in the past is saved from being transitory.

<sup>1</sup> See Burton, "Death as a Countertransference," *Psychoanalysis and the Psychoanalytic Review* 49, 3-20, 1962-63.

Therein it is irrevocably stored rather than irrecoverably lost.

This is true irrespective of whether there is still anyone around who may remember that which has been. I deem it a thoroughly subjectivistic view if one assumes that everything depends on the presence of an individual's memory in which alone there is duration. Clemens E. Benda certainly did not escape such a subjectivistic interpretation of the true ontological state of affairs when he wrote, "It is obvious that the past exists only through its impact on the imagery, which has duration."<sup>2</sup>

Usually, to be sure, man only considers the stubble field of transience and overlooks the full granaries of the past wherein he has salvaged once and for all his deeds, his joys, and also his sufferings. Nothing can be undone, and nothing can be done away with. I should say that having been is still a form of being, even its most secure form.

Imagine what consolation this would bring to a war widow who has experienced only a few weeks of marriage. She could feel that this experience can never be taken from her. It will remain her inviolable treasure, preserved and delivered into her past. Her life then can never be meaningless even if she remains childless. (The assumption that procreation is the only meaning of life contradicts and defeats itself; something that by itself is meaningless can never be made meaningful merely by perpetuating it.)

I think that the logotherapeutic attitude of the past implies both activism and optimism. Man is called upon to make the best use of any moment, and to make the right choice at any time, be it knowing what to do, or whom to love, or how to suffer.

About two millenia ago a Jewish sage, Hillel, said, "If I don't do this job, who will do it? And if I don't do this job right now, when shall I do it? But if I carry it out only for my own sake, what am I?" The first two portions of this saying suggest that each

<sup>2</sup> Benda, "Existentialism in Philosophy and Science," *Journal of Existential Psychiatry*, 1, 284-314, 1960.

man is unique and each man's life is singular; by the same token, no man can be replaced and no man's life can be repeated. Both this very uniqueness of each human being and the singularity of his existence—and the singularity of each moment which holds a specific and particular meaning to fulfill—add to man's responsibility. The third portion of Hillel's dictum, then, grapples with self-transcendence as the foremost and paramount trait and feature of human existence (insofar as man's life always points to something beyond himself). Life is always directed toward a meaning to fulfill rather than a self to actualize, or one's potentialities to develop.

This means activism. As to optimism, let me remind you of the words of Lao-tse: "Having completed a task means having become eternal." This is true not only for the completion of a task but for our experiences and for our brave sufferings as well.

What threatens man is his death in the future and his guilt in the past. Both are inescapable, both he must accept. Thus man is confronted with the human condition which is both fallible and mortal. The acceptance of this twofold human finiteness adds to life's being worthwhile, since only in the face of guilt does it make sense to improve, and only in the face of death is it meaningful to act.

What man has done, cannot be undone. Whereas he is responsible for what he has done he is not free to undo it. As a rule, being human implies being free and responsible. In the exceptional case of guilt, however, man still is responsible but no longer free. While arbitrariness is freedom without responsibility, guilt is responsibility without freedom.

Without freedom . . . except for the freedom to choose the right attitude to guilt. Through the right attitude unchangeable suffering is transmuted into a heroic and victorious achievement. In the same fashion, a man who has failed cannot change what happened by repentance, but he can change himself. Everything depends on the right attitude in the same way and manner as in the case of his suffering. The difference lies in the fact that the right attitude is then a right attitude to himself.

Professor Farnsworth of Harvard University recently contended before the American Medical Association that "medicine is now confronted with the task of enlarging its function . . . Physicians must of necessity indulge in philosophy." Doctors today are approached by many patients who in former days would have seen a pastor, priest or rabbi.



PHOTOGRAPH: EDWARD WALLOWITCH

Hence, they are confronted with philosophical problems rather than emotional conflicts. What is more, the patients often refuse to be handed over to a clergyman.

In those cases in which the doctor has to deal with an incurable disease he should not only treat the disease but also care for the patient's attitude toward it. It may well be that, thereby, the patient is offered consolation. The logotherapist will gladly and readily take this risk. I am fully aware of the fact that die-hard psychoanalysts abhor the interpretation of their job in terms of consolation. A logotherapist, however, understands his task in a different way; if need be—that is to say, in a helpless case, in a hopeless situation—he does not withhold from the patient the right to be comforted. The logotherapist does not deny the patient this right; he does not dismiss his duty simply as a pastoral rather than a medical responsibility. The demand for consolation exceeds the supply furnished by pastoral care. "Preachers are

no longer the pastors of the souls, but the doctors have become such," said Kierkegaard. Anyway, coping with despair in the face of an incurable disease constitutes a challenge to the doctor, too. To him also are addressed the words, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people." (Isaiah 40:1.)

How this is enacted in actual practice may be shown by the following excerpt from an interview with one of my patients. The patient was eighty years of age and suffering from a cancer which had eventuated in metastasis so that she could not be helped by surgery. She knew this, and had become increasingly depressed.

Frankl: What do you think of when you look back on your life? Has life been worth living?

Patient: Well, Doctor, I must say that I had a good life. Life was nice, indeed. And I must thank the Lord for what it held for me. I went to theaters, I attended concerts, and so forth. You see, Doctor, I went there with the family in whose house I have served for many decades as a maid. In Prague, at first, and afterwards in Vienna. And for the grace of all of these wonderful experiences I am grateful to the Lord.

I nevertheless felt that she was doubtful in so far as the ultimate meaning of her life as a whole was concerned. And this was the reason why I wanted to steer and pilot her through her doubts. I still had to provoke them, however, and then to wrestle with them. Wrestle with them as Jacob did with the angel until he blessed him—that is how I wanted to wrestle with my patient's repressed and unconscious existential despair until the moment when she, too, finally could "bless" her life, say yes to her life in spite of everything. So my task consisted of having her question the meaning of her life on the conscious level rather than repressing her doubts.

Frankl: You are speaking of some wonderful experiences; but all this will have an end now, won't it?

Patient (thoughtfully): In fact, now everything ends . . . .

Frankl: Well, do you think now that all of the wonderful things of your life might be annihilated and invalidated when your end approaches? (And she knew that it did!)

Patient (still more thoughtfully): All those wonderful things . . . .

Frankl: But tell me: do you think that anyone can undo the happiness, for example, that you have experienced—can anyone blot it out?

Patient (now facing me): You are right, Doctor: nobody can blot it out!

Frankl: Or can anyone blot out the goodness you have met in your life?

Patient (becoming increasingly involved emotionally): Nobody can blot it out!

Frankl: What you have achieved and accomplished—

Patient: Nobody can blot it out!

Frankl: Or what you have bravely and honestly suffered; can anyone remove it from the world—remove it from the past wherein you have stored it, as it were?

Patient (now moved to tears): No one can remove it! (After a while): It is true, I had so much to suffer, but I also tried to be courageous and steadfast in taking life's blows. You see, Doctor, I regarded my suffering as a punishment. I believe in God.

*Per se*, logotherapy is a secular approach to clinical problems. However, when a patient stands on the firm ground of religious belief, there can be no objection to making use of the therapeutic effect of his religious convictions and thereby drawing upon his spiritual resources. In order to do so, the logotherapist may put himself in the place of the patient. That is exactly what I now tried to do.

Frankl: But cannot suffering sometimes also be a challenge? Is it not conceivable that God wanted to see how Anastasia Kotek will bear it? And perhaps He had to admit, "Yes, she did so very bravely." And now tell me, can anyone remove such an achievement and accomplishment from the world, Frau Kotek?

Patient: Certainly no one can do it!

Frankl: This remains, doesn't it?

Patient: It does!

Frankl: By the way, you had no children, had you?

Patient: I had none.

Frankl: Well, do you think that life is meaningful only when one has children?

Patient: If they are good children, why shouldn't it be a blessing?

Frankl: Right, but you should not forget that for instance the greatest philosopher of all times, Immanuel Kant, had no children; would anyone venture to doubt the extraordinary meaningfulness of his life? I rather think if children were the only meaning of life, life would become meaningless because to procreate something which in itself is meaningless, certainly would be a most meaningless thing. What counts and matters in life is rather to achieve and accomplish something. And this is precisely what you have done. You have made the best of your suffering. You have become an example for our patients, as to the way and manner in which you take your suffering upon yourself. I congratulate you on behalf of this achievement and accomplishment, and I also congratulate your roommates who have the opportunity to watch and witness such an example. (Addressing myself now to my students): *Ecce homo!* (My audience now bursts into a spontaneous applause.) This applause concerns you, Frau Kotek. (She is weeping now.) It concerns your life which has been a great achievement and accomplishment. You may be proud of it, Frau Kotek. And how few people may be proud of their lives . . . I should say, your life is a monument. And no one can remove it from the world.

Patient (regaining her self-control): What you have said, Professor Frankl, is a consolation. It comforts me. Indeed, I never had an opportunity to hear anything like this. . . . (Slowly and quietly she leaves the lecture hall.)

Apparently, she now was reassured. A week later she died, like Job one could say, "saturated of years." During the last week of her life, however, she was no longer depressed, but on the contrary, full of faith and pride! Obviously, the interview which we had had together had made her aware that her life was meaningful and that even her suffering had not been in vain. Prior to this, she had admitted to Dr. Gerda Becker, who was in charge of her on the ward, that she felt agonized, and more specifically, ridden by the anxiety that she was useless. The last words, however, which she uttered, immediately before her death, were: "My life is a monument. So Professor Frankl said it, to the whole audience, to all students, in the lecture hall. My life was not in vain. . . ."

We may be justified in assuming that Frau Kotek, like Job, "went to her grave as the harvest was brought to the granary."



**SHIBUMI:**

**LINES FOR A BURIAL**

*The scab come loose after the cut is healed,  
the broken blister,  
the look of a girl unsealed  
in cheap rooms,  
the flood, the vomit flack*

*of all the hundred things we dream put back  
to lose again*

*(chigger and the cherry)*

*the thing we put away  
the boy we bury  
is only a part  
only a raw measure  
of pain that ends in some unchristian pleasure.*

*But one night I  
will finger the joy of knowing  
pulled  
like a scab  
from the sore of his going.*

*I will sit in my chair  
hearing my breath  
and prick the dark blister  
of his death.*

—MILLER WILLIAMS

**AND THE SUN GOETH DOWN**

*Atmosphere thickens, and shadow licks  
the face of light, in the dark drafts  
of our cellar room.*

*When we loved, the season was the same  
as Spring, but now gray winds  
blow always over our bed.*

*You'd wake me pyrotechnically:  
voice,  
smile,  
and eye-lights dazzling, like  
we were really love  
or knew the word  
or at least  
could spell,*

*But now billows of bellowed shushes  
pad the bleak and shape the black  
to woods, and an oval field  
throwing dead grasses past my face.*

—WILLIAM HEYEN

**WHEN ARE THE ALWAYS RIGHT**

*It is there, covered by the fog  
That creeps slowly into the marrow,  
Hiding the bloated bodies floating  
Beneath silver ships sailing to a war  
In some forgotten place;*

*It is there in spring, when rain pools  
Ripple quietly down brown clad trees  
And drop silently onto a senseless earth,  
While noon-tides raise fleets  
On far flung oceans  
To fire a shell coastward;*

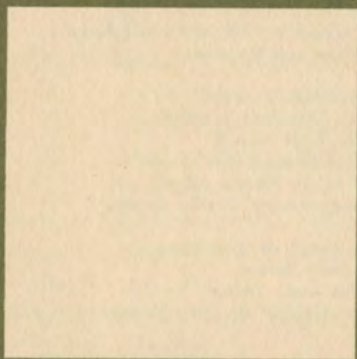
*It is there in hands entwined,  
Walking twins to pulses,  
Covered in starched white sheets,  
Although somewhere a bleeding  
Fist beats upon a friend's cold face  
And asks him not to die;*

*It is always didn't why  
Is how not, or when is right,  
But they've lied about  
Where the old man has gone  
Who used to be there when  
The merry-go-round broke down.*

*It is there most of the time  
As far as they know,  
And it's the only thing  
They know, as far as they know.*

—NIEL HANCOCK







## *death and the artist:* EDWARD WALLOWITCH

Truth has a nature of its own.  
We can neither make nor alter it.  
We may recognize it, but we cannot invent it.  
It is there.

*(All that exists is real, but not all that is real exists.)*

Art is an attempt to participate in the truth of things, not only in terms of existence, but in terms of a metaphysical reality that is more fundamental than existence. It is also an investigation into the unknown which affords a glimpse or a suggestion of that which is exempt from death.

*A simple twig, a silent house, that weeping child, those laughing people; he sees each in the fact of being as having a unity with his own being.*

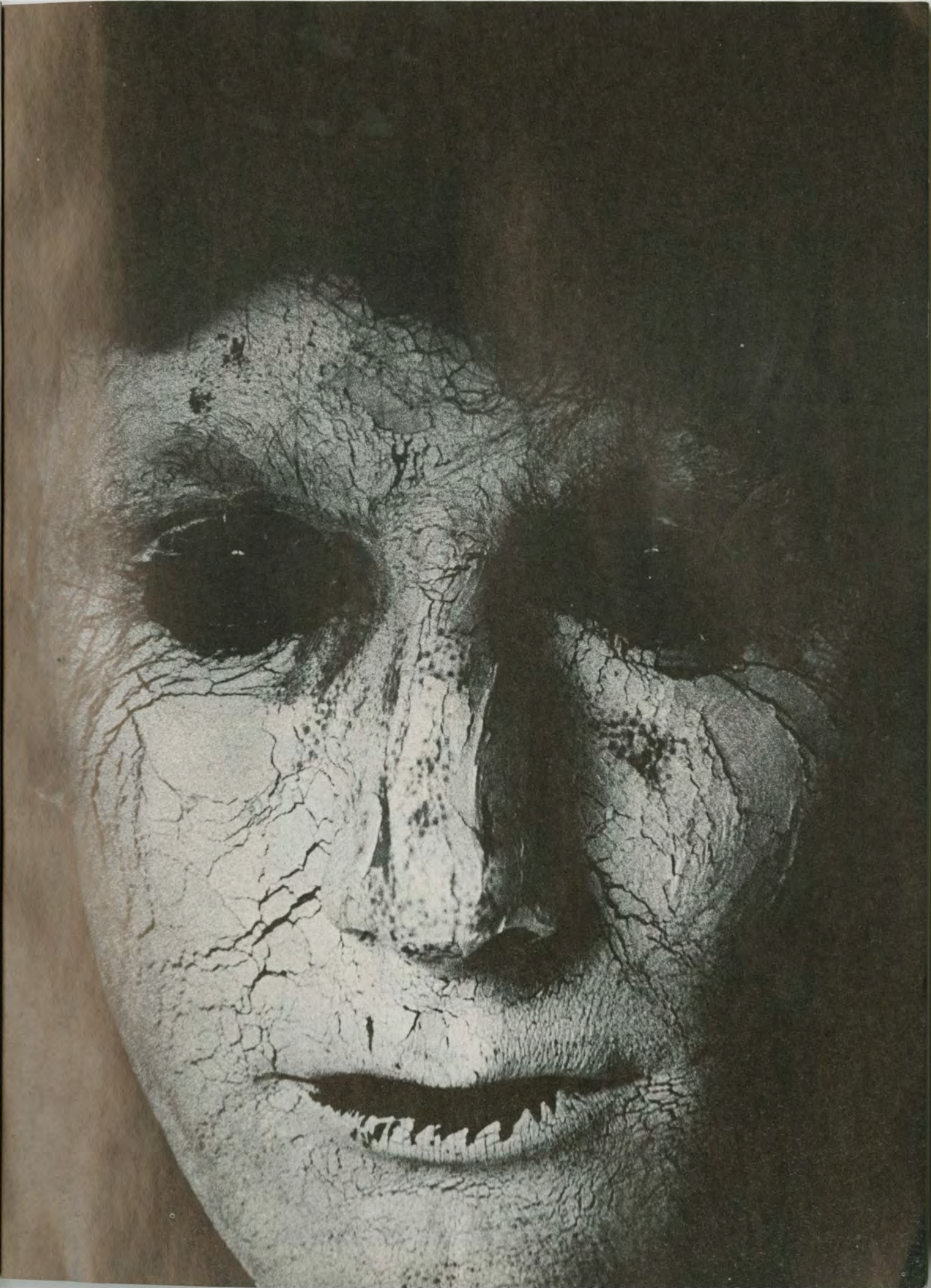
*He raises the camera to his eye and it becomes the acute extension of his inner eye.  
The shutter opens and closes.  
That bit of space and that bit of time are united in images of shadow and light.  
He makes of his choice a photograph.  
The photograph takes on a life of its own which can illuminate that moment of choice.*

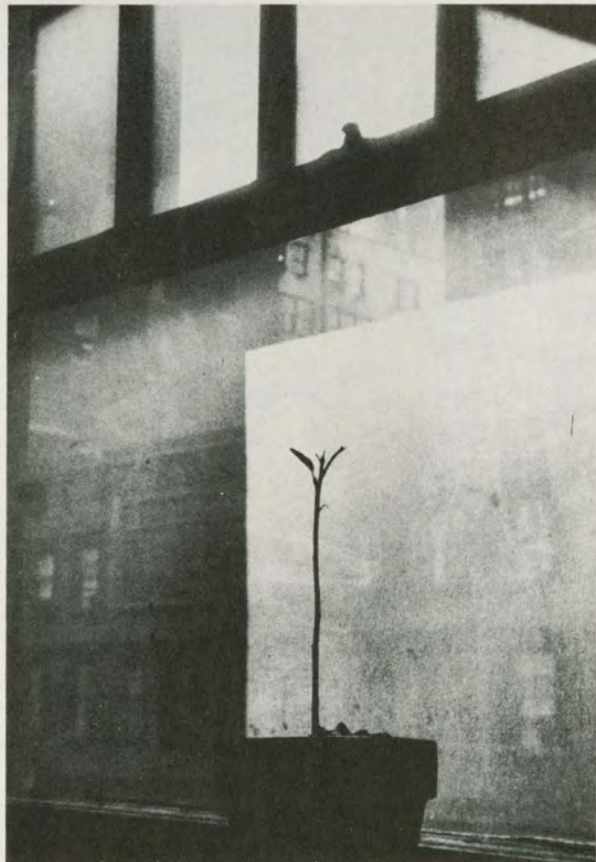
Photography as art is a preoccupation with life. Wallowitch's work is the instantaneous expression of his total person. By creating out of his own vision he affirms his being. He decides against death in favor of life.

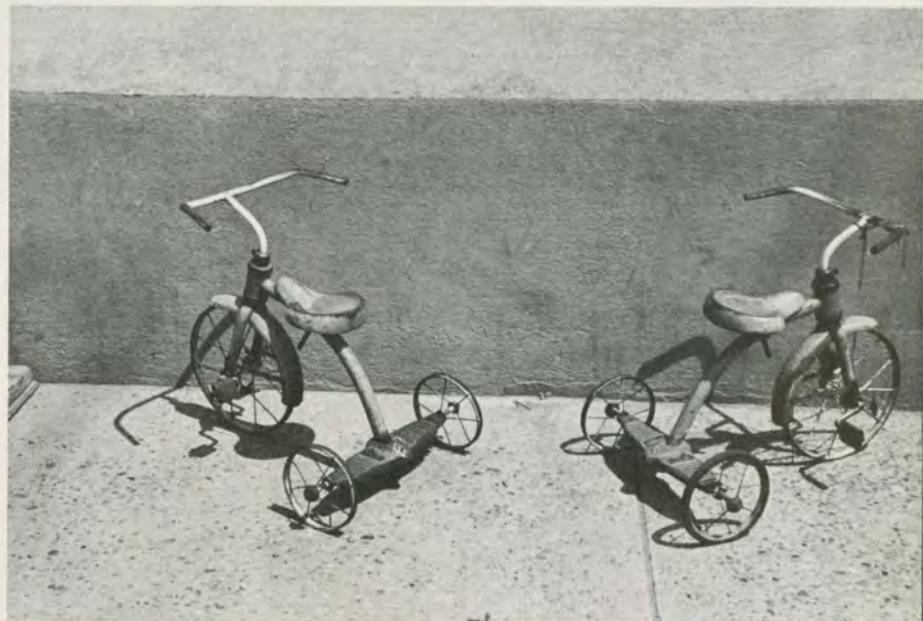
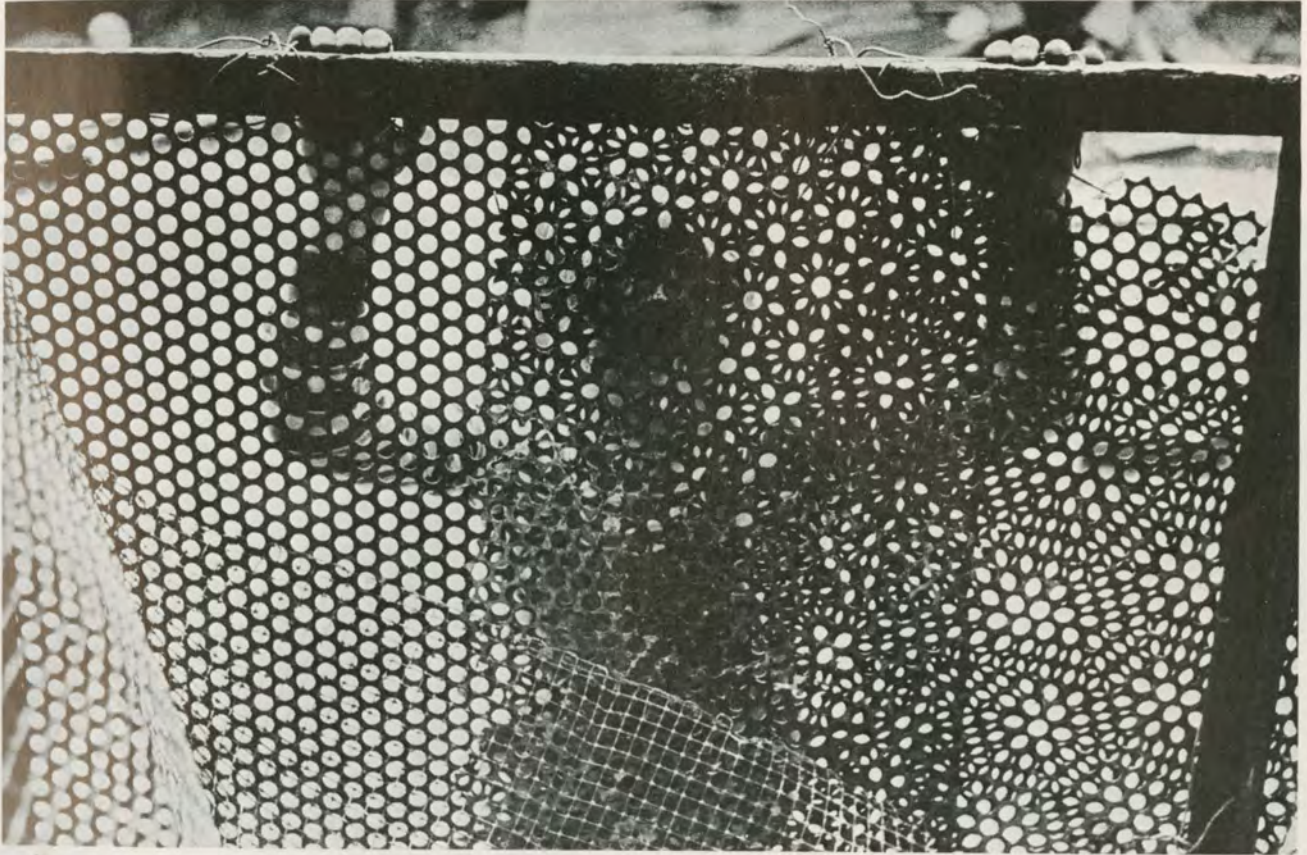
*(Death needs no decision.  
It's as close and silent as a noon shadow.)  
He knows that ultimately we are rewarded by our deathly speculations as much as would be a bird which sought to inform itself as to matters of earthly morality.  
It is being alive that concerns this artist,  
for that is the one thing he can know.*

BY NEAL KARRER

SELF-PORTRAIT















DESIGNED BY MARGARET RIGG, NASHVILLE, TENN.



### ELEGY NO. 1: FOR M.M.

*I cried. It was as simple as that, except  
for feeling like a fool with all those tears  
for a blonde;  
then I felt I ought to have cried more:*

*she lived with fear and tried for innocence.  
And we mustn't laugh at that or her dream: it seems  
she was standing nude in church, a sacrifice  
for all her guilt and ours, which means she loved  
uncommonly. She wanted to be wise,  
was not ashamed to be symbolical,  
and married two Titans to prove her need.*

*For this and all her comedy I write.  
I witness praise because she was the way  
we wanted her: magnificent goat without stench.  
And I pray the earth to her is kinder than our hands.*

—JAMES WHITEHEAD

### PROPOSAL AND CLAUSE

*For our sake, wash your feet  
in my life and be cleansed;  
come to touch and be strong*

*again, and stay long with your need,  
but I won't be absorbed like sand  
threading time in a glass hour,*

*for we must always be two, beating  
twice at different times, two,  
despite years and the same view*

*from the terrace, or children:  
existing one by one, like death  
pulls down pillars, one by one.*

—WILLIAM HEYEN

### ELEGY NO. 2: RAMBLING OVER

*To bury him is incorrect—giving  
A clean single bed he never had  
While living. In his place you think you're putting  
Him at last, though still he makes you mad,  
For he went everywhere for twenty years  
Uncivilized by railings of law or race.*

*Like a saint he ought to be burned far north of here  
And his ashes strewed on the river where his face  
Could float beneath a Huckleberry moon  
And touch the mythy feet that bless all water.*

*That would be the bed for one so soon  
Beyond the buckshot fields ashore: the matter  
Without mind, the roots long without life—  
Though the earth I hear once broke to heal all grief.*

—JAMES WHITEHEAD

# PREACHING DEATH

BY J. A. T. ROBINSON

ONE of the penalties of writing on the Last Things is that you find yourself becoming a sort of theological mortician. If anyone wants death brought up to date they say, "Oh, send for John Robinson." I really don't fancy myself in this macabre profession. In fact, I want to play death down rather than play it up. In one sense, of course, we don't think of it anything like enough. Indeed, the whole of American civilization could almost be said to be constructed with the object of evading what the Revised Standard Version so delicately calls, in the Lazarus story the "odor" of death. A little more healthy *memento mori* would not do any of us any harm.

But having said that, I want also to say the opposite, namely, that the whole of our Western tradition has contrived to give death an altogether inflated significance. There has been a vastly exaggerated focus on death and the moment of death. It began when the pages of the New Testament were hardly dry, and it is one of the most remarkable silent revolutions in the history of Christian thought.

Let me remind you of three ways in which you have been brought up to think of death—unless, that is, you happen to be the son of a biblical theologian born since about 1945.

(1) The whole of our teaching and our hymnology has assumed that you go to heaven—or, of course, hell—when you die.

(2) In consequence, death is the decisive moment. Though you may go on after that, on one road or the other, it is your life up till then that determines your destiny.

(3) We do not, of course, these days believe in anything so crude as the resurrection of the body; but, if there is to be any other form of existence, it is at death that we enter it.

Now I believe that each of these three propositions is in clear contradiction to what the Bible says, and that together they give death, and the moment of death, an importance to which it has no right in the Christian scheme.

First, the Bible nowhere says that we go to heaven when we die, nor does it ever describe death in terms of going to heaven. In the Old Testament, you went to *sheol* when you died (the only people who went to heaven were those like Enoch and Elijah who never died). In the New Testament, our destiny as Christians is indeed to be with Christ in the "heavenly places." But that is nowhere, because we



DETAIL FROM LUCITE ENGRAVING  
BY ARTHUR DESHAIES.

die; but because we are baptized, and *despite* the fact that in the interval we may die, Christ will include in his final triumph those who by their union with him are already risen men. Death for the New Testament is of great significance for the "old man" (which of course means most of us, most of the time): it is the sacrament and seal of sin, the last term of that stripping down which leaves us exposed and naked before him with whom we have to do. But death has no crucial significance in the calendar of the new life. Here the only relevant moments are baptism and the *parousia*.

The second assumption—that death is the decisive moment for our eternal destiny (whether we are actually judged then or, as it were, held in cold storage for judgment at the last day)—is one that has been deeply ingrained in both Catholic and Protestant thought. Indeed, St. Thomas Aquinas wrote it into his system to the extent of saying that, since only matter and that which was in matter could change, a man's condition after death was strictly unalterable. Death, as it were, was what "fixed" him—even though the dross might still have to be purged away. Hence the horror of dying in mortal sin and the dread of sudden, and therefore unprepared, death for which we still pray to be delivered in the Litany. And traditional Protestant thought, in reaction against "the Popish doctrine of purgatory," has gone even further and held that at death a man passes beyond the need even of purgation or prayer. If he is among the elect he is at once made fit for communion with Christ; if he is not, he is out.

Now, few people, I suspect, really believe this today. And yet the decisiveness of the place which death occupies in our thinking is unabated. If you are an Evangelical, saving a man before he dies, or, if you are a Catholic, baptizing him before he dies, is still a "must." But the Bible never says that a man must be brought to Christ before he dies, or else. . . . On the one hand, it says, "Now is the day of salvation—while it is called today." On the other hand, it says that God has the ages of ages in which to work and wills all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. The idea that God is finished unless one of his ministers can get me before the next bus runs me down in High Street is blasphemy. "Death, where is thy victory?" On this reckoning, it would seem, over ninety in every hundred. One would hardly think that Christ had cast death from its

throne if this were the limit it can still impose upon the saving work of God.

Third, this notion that a man's destiny is decided at death is one for which there is no real support in the biblical imagery.<sup>1</sup> It is in the Greek mythology that the fates operate at death with their scissors and scales. The reason why it seems natural to us as Christians is that we have come to regard judgment (as in the West we have come to regard persons) purely atomistically. Each man's ledger, as it were, is totted up independently when his account closes. And precisely the same applies to our thinking, if any, on the third point, the resurrection of the body. The resurrection body is pictured as a sort of new suit, tailor-made for us to put on the moment we set foot on "the other side." Observe the influence of the classical mythology in the Charon myth: the baptizing of it in Wesley's words "Bid Jordan's narrow stream divide, and bring us safe to heaven" has no biblical basis. Indeed, it would be interesting to know at what stage the Styx first became the Jordan.

The idea that we put on the resurrection body at death is again without scriptural foundation (though II Cor. 5:1—"we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," has sometimes been made to say this in the face of every other indication in the New Testament). Rather, according to the New Testament, we put on the new man (a) at baptism, when we are incorporated into the resurrection body of Christ, and (b) finally, at the consummation of God's plan, when the redemption of our body, the transformation of this order of existence into the new world of God's creation, will stand forth complete.

Meanwhile, though our outward man is decaying (despite death, that is, not in any sense because of it), our inward man, our new solidarity in the body of Christ, is being built up day by day. The resurrection of the body, like Christianity itself, is something social; it is "put on" as we are brought into Christ and built up into his body. That is why the resurrection of the body is always associated in the New Testament with the *Totus Christus*, the Complete Man, the revelation of Jesus Christ with all his saints. Like salvation (with which indeed the redemption

<sup>1</sup> Heb. 9:27, "It is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment" is often quoted to the contrary. But with the rest of the New Testament the author to the Hebrews associates the judgment with the *parousia*, with which indeed it stands parallel in this passage.

of the body is virtually equated in Romans 8), it cannot be complete for any until it is complete for all.

I have spent a great deal of time clearing away undergrowth. But let me end by trying to state the heart of the Christian hope, as succinctly and as positively as I can. And I will do it from a text which, typically, does not mention death at all. It comes from the third chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, vv. 20 and 21: "Our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself."

From this text notice briefly three things.

First, our commonwealth or citizenship is in heaven. Whatever else that means, it means that heaven is where we already belong. "Passports for heaven" is a phrase which sums up one whole way of thinking about Christianity. But if the Christian holds a passport, it is not a passport to get him to heaven (at death), but a passport from heaven to live within this world as the representative and ambassador of a foreign style of life. In Moffatt's inspired rendering, the Church's function is to be a colony of heaven—because its members are already by baptism citizens of heaven. If they only became so as they migrated from this world they would be a lot of good in this world!

The second point is that the Christian hope is not so much a hope for heaven as a hope from heaven: for "from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." The heart of the Christian hope is not that the housing committee of the celestial city council will one day move us from this slum to that "other country" of Cecil Spring-Rice's hymn, "whose shining bounds increase" as "soul by soul and silently" death transfers from earth to heaven those who are on its list. The heart of the Christian hope is rather that the life of God (heaven) will so penetrate the life of man (earth) that God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. Of that movement from God to man the Incarnation is the pledge, the *parousia* is the promise. For with the complete coming of Christ

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into everything, there is promised that new heaven and new earth which, as the Seer saw, must also come down out of heaven from God.

But, thirdly, what is the relation of the new to the old? This is the crucial point for our attitude to all the things of this world—to politics, economics and everything else. And, contrary to what is usually supposed, this is where the resurrection of the body comes in—not with death but with drains. According to a dominant, if not *the* dominant, Christian tradition, the world is regarded as a vast transit camp, in which the Church's job is to issue tickets for heaven and pack people off to paradise, leaving this old collection of Nissen huts to tumble to decay. But according to the Christian gospel God has prepared some better thing for the work of his hands. The gospel of the reign of God is not the salvaging of souls from a mass of perdition, but "the redemption of the body," that is, the reintegration of the whole man in all his relationships, physical and spiritual, in a new solidarity which creates personality rather than destroys it. And the gospel goes on to insist that this new man has already been created, in the body of Christ, and that within the life of the Church the new God-given structure of existence has even now begun to penetrate and transform this world. Into that new structure of existence the whole body of our present life is ultimately to be taken up and conformed to his glorious body, "by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself."

Such is the Christian's goal, the new world order, of which within this world he is the ambassador and the agent. And he will no more think it irrelevant to his life here than the communist will lose sight of his ideal and (he believes) coming society. What is irrelevant is that particular breaking point in the old order which we call death, and the pagan notion—endorsed by so much Christian spirituality—that life is the preparation for death. Concentration on that is what really takes the Christian's eye off the ball and makes him spiritually self-centered and politically futile. As if for risen men whose real death is behind them, the moment of physical death can any longer be the focus of their gaze! Our gaze as Christians is not at death, nor even beyond it at the skies, but at God's world from the other side of it. And from there, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, "O death, where is thy victory? O grave, where is thy sting?"



WOODENGRAVING

HANS ORŁOWSKI

## OLD

*I'm afraid of needles.  
I'm tired of rubber sheets and tubes.  
I'm tired of faces that I don't know  
and now I think that death is starting.  
Death starts like a dream,  
full of objects and my sister's laughter.  
We are young and we are walking  
and picking wild blueberries  
all the way to Damariscotta.  
Oh Susan, she cried,  
you've stained your new waist.  
Sweet taste—  
my mouth so full  
and the sweet blue running out  
all the way to Damariscotta.  
What are you doing? Leave me alone!  
Can't you see I'm dreaming?  
In a dream you are never eighty.*

—Anne Sexton

# life after death: *a study in contrasts*

BY JOHN HIGHT

**D**IVERSITY of attitudes in a congregation on any topic is usually assumed by most clergymen. However, most of us expect some norms or traditional criteria to be reflected in any single parishioner's attitude toward a specific doctrine or in an over-all congregational view toward common questions. I was not prepared for the spectrum of ideas and theories which confronted me in a recent study on "What do Christians *really* believe about life after death?" I was not prepared for the admixture of Greek, Hebrew, Christian, and hybrid views which I encountered.

The following material resulted from eight interviews with persons willing to record our conversation as part of "a research project in Christian beliefs." Each person was asked two questions to which he responded without any preparation or foreknowledge of the topic. The questions were: 1) What do you believe happens to a person after death? 2) What do you think of when you hear the phrase, "The resurrection of the dead"?

Mrs. A, age thirty-three, is a housewife. Her answer to the first question was that "the body quits functioning . . . the body decays . . . the person is never conscious again . . . we go to sleep and never wake up." She emphasized the finality of death by saying that nothing exists beyond death: "people don't come back or know anything." Mrs. A was reared in a Christian home, graduated from a church-related college, and is an active participant in church events. In her responses to the first question, there was no hint at the prospect of any manner of life after death, and she consistently advocated the idea of total oblivion.

She was asked what she thought about the resurrection. She replied: "What would there be to be resurrected?" After talking about this for a few minutes, she said, "Doesn't the Bible say there will be one day when all the dead shall rise? But I don't believe . . . no, I don't believe that people are resurrected now. They may be someday." Later she said, "I'm not sure there will be a day of resurrection." Mrs. A showed no hesitancy in doubting the biblical emphasis on resurrection.

Mr. B, about forty years old, is a government employee. When asked about life after death, he replied, ". . . the personality or the soul—the being that really is the person—lives on." He defined soul by saying, "There is something about the person that is the real person. The body, of course, dies and decays and goes back to dust. But certainly the personality or the soul . . . lives on." Mr. B was clearly expressing the Greek notion that the body is not part of the real self, but is a prison for the true being.<sup>1</sup> He not only supported the Greek notion of the immortality of the soul in contrast to the Christian view of the resurrection of the dead, but he also denied the concepts of heaven and hell though at the same time halfway affirming the idea of purgatory. When he discussed the future state of the soul, he said, "To me there would be nothing wrong in believing that a person would be reincarnated on one of the other millions of planets that may exist throughout the universe." He did not mention the resurrection until the second question was asked. In response he said, "I haven't given it a great deal of thought. I don't think it has been stressed much in the religious training I've had." Resurrection to him meant that we go into our graves, and are "dormant until the end of time . . . a time when Christ will come back down and all the graves will be opened and the sheep will be separated from the goats." Later, however, he said, "In the final analysis, I believe that when we die our spirit is immediately resurrected and we go on and live then."

The third interview was with a seventeen-year-old high school student. He conceives of heaven as a blissful dream, a place where everyone is walking, "constantly going toward Christ, but Christ will be with them all the time." He sees heaven as "that which is most pleasurable to everything that I feel

<sup>1</sup> In contrast to the Greek view, Bultmann writes, ". . . Paul did not dualistically distinguish between man's self (his 'soul') and his bodily *soma* as if the latter were an inappropriate shell, a prison, to the former; nor does his hope expect a release of the self from its bodily prison but expects instead the 'bodily' resurrection—or rather the transformation of the *soma* from under the power of the flesh into a spiritual *soma*, i.e., a spirit-ruled *soma*." *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. I, p. 201.



here on earth." But he said this did not mean sensual pleasures but "the satisfaction that has been won through righteous living." He sees heaven as a place without pain, but with work which results in being tired and having to rest. He wants his body to decay and return to the soil to fertilize the earth. He talked about his body serving some noble purpose after death, like becoming part of the growth of a tree, or grass "which cows will eat and provide milk for babies or just to be grass for people to look at." The minerals of his body may become "just the grass itself for some to look at and enjoy in that beautiful grass, whether they know I'm there or not." His conclusion, "Everything is just one big cycle." The second question drew this reply, "I believe there was only one resurrection and that was the resurrection of Jesus." The purpose of this resurrection was to keep alive the faith of the early Christians.

In interviewing the fourth person, Dr. D, I came upon a unique concept in which hell was virtually denied, but provision for reward and punishment after death retained. Dr. D stated that he believed the body decays after death, and the soul leaves the body. This separation is probably a blessing, he felt and quoted Milton in support, "Who knows but what the sweetest part of life is death." Dr. D said his belief had changed since childhood, and he no longer believed there was a "cut line" between heaven and hell, but that in heaven there would be "degrees." These degrees were described as "different levels" and "different planes." He said, "The people who were not as good as some other person would be on a lower plane." In reference to the stratified heaven, he said, "I believe very strongly about that." He also discussed the idea which he had heard preached that all would be dead until a resurrection day. After a brief hesitation he said, "But I don't believe that. I still believe that the soul leaves the body at the time of death."

A pattern seemed to be developing from the interviews. All indicated that they were aware of Christian teaching regarding the resurrection of the dead. In general, they evidenced some idea of what is contained in the Bible and what the church proclaims, but *they don't believe it*. Their ideas about life after death are predominantly Greek in that they think of man dualistically. Man, to them, is made up of a perishable body which imprisons an immortal soul. The soul does not die. It leaves the body at the time of death and "goes to be with God." To resurrect means to bring back to life. If man *is* body and soul, and if the soul does not die at death, there is no need for a resurrection.<sup>2</sup>

As the interviews proceeded, Greek dualism

<sup>2</sup> For a helpful discussion of the difference between Greek and Christian views of life after death, see Oscar Cullman's *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead?*

seemed to predominate. Mr. E, a seventeen-year-old high school student, said he had been brought up to believe that the body decays at death and that "a form of you" goes to a place of happiness where you will see your loved ones, and all is peace. He said, "That's the only thing I can believe." He doesn't believe in hell, and if a person doesn't "live right" here on earth he will have to wait in a form of "nothingness" until he is prepared to enter heaven. He has eliminated hell, but retained a form of purgatory. That's one up on Roman Catholicism, yet he has been under the influence of a Protestant community all his life.

When asked about resurrection, Mr. E related the idea to that of reviving someone recently deceased. He said that Jesus could do this "back then" but it doesn't apply to us today.

Mrs. F, a sixty-year-old housewife, opened with a statement approximating a doctrine of the resurrection. She said that we go to a place until "He is ready for all to arise." But then she said, "It is the spirit that goes on . . . the body decays."

Throughout the interviews, no one (except Mrs. A) ever said that the whole person dies at death. The doctrine of the resurrection—that the whole person dies and then is resurrected in a "new body"—seems to have had little impact on their thinking. These Christians are influenced more by Greek thought and Hindu mysticism than by their own tradition. The eight interviews on which my observations are based do not constitute an adequate base for drawing conclusions. I sampled one hundred and five adult members of the church school with a written questionnaire. Ninety-eight defined man as perishable body and immortal soul. Ninety-nine preferred the statement, "When death comes the body dies but the soul lives on," to the statement, "When a person dies, he is dead all over, but will be restored to life at some time."

This brief and limited inquiry indicates that substantial study could be made regarding the psychological origins of belief about life after death. Dr. D believes in a heaven with different levels. This gives him a place for himself. Others stated that the people needed the concept of life after death to enable them to exist. One said that if we did not have the "fear of hell" we would have no incentive to do right. Mrs. F said that heaven would be "better than what we have here" and in the same interview was distressed because she could not have her own way at home. Dr. D said that heaven was "a most wonderful existence, most wonderful. No pain."

What has happened to the proclamation that "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive"? Has the church failed to proclaim this message, or has the message simply fallen on deaf ears?



MAN  
MONOPRINT  
BY MARGARET RIGG

# THE ETERNAL NOW

BY PAUL TILLICH

It is our destiny and the destiny of everything in our world that we must come to an end. Every end that we experience in nature and mankind says to us in a loud voice, "You also will come to an end!" It may reveal itself in the farewell to a place where we have lived for a long time, the separation from the fellowship of intimate associates, the death of someone near to us. Or it may become apparent to us in the breakdown of a work which gave meaning to us, the ending of a whole period of life, the approach of old age, or even in the melancholy side of nature visible in the autumn. All this tells us, "You also will come to an end."

Whenever we are shaken by this voice reminding us of our end, we ask anxiously what it means that we have a beginning and an end, that we come from the darkness of the "not yet" and rush ahead towards the darkness of the "no more." When Augustine asked this question, he began his attempt to answer it with a prayer. And it is right to do so because praying means elevating oneself to the eternal. In fact, there is no other way of judging time than to see it in the light of the eternal. In order to judge something, one must be partly within it, partly out of it. If we were totally within time, we would not be able to elevate ourselves in prayer, meditation, and thought to the eternal. We would be children of time like all other creatures and could not ask the question of the meaning of time. But as

men we are aware of the eternal to which we belong and from which we are estranged by the bondage of time.

We speak of time in three ways or modes: the past, present, and future. Every child is aware of them, but no wise man has ever penetrated their mystery. We become aware of them when we hear a voice telling us, "You also will come to an end." It is the future which awakens us to the mystery of time. Time runs from the beginning to the end, but our awareness of time goes in the opposite direction. It starts with the anxious anticipation of the end. In the light of the future we see the past and present. So let us first think about our going into the future and toward the end which is the last point that we can anticipate in our future.

The image of the future produces contrasting feelings in man. The expectation of the future gives one a feeling of joy. It is a great thing to have a future in which one can actualize one's possibilities, in which one can experience the abundance of life, in which one can create something new, be it new work, a new living being, a new way of life, or the regeneration of one's own being. Courageously, one goes ahead toward the new, especially in the earlier part of one's life. But this feeling struggles with others: the anxiety about what is hidden in the future, the ambiguity of everything it will bring us, the brevity of its duration which decreases with

every year of our lives and becomes less the nearer we come to the unavoidable end, and finally the end itself, with its impenetrable darkness and the threat that one's whole existence in time will be judged as a failure.

How do men react to this image of the future with its hope and threat and inescapable end? Probably most of us react by looking at the immediate future, anticipating it, working for it, hoping for it, and being anxious about it, while cutting off from our awareness the future which is farther away, and above all, by cutting off from our consciousness the end, the last moment of our future. Perhaps we could not live without doing so most of our time. But perhaps we will not be able to die if we *always* do so. And if one is not able to die, is he really able to live?

How do we react if we become aware of the inescapable end contained in our future? Are we able to take it, to take its anxiety into a courage that faces ultimate darkness? Or are we thrown into utter hopelessness? Do we hope against hope, or do we repress our awareness of the end because we cannot stand it? Repressing the consciousness of our end expresses itself in several ways.

Many try to do so by putting the expectation of a long life between now and the end. For them it is decisive that the end be delayed. Even old people who are near the end take this attitude, for they cannot face the fact that the end can no longer be delayed.

Many people realize that this is deception and hope for a continuation of this life after death. They expect an endless future in which they may achieve or possess what has been denied them in this life. This is a prevalent attitude about the future, and also a very simple one. It denies that there *is* an end. It refuses to accept that we are creatures, that we come from the eternal ground of time and return to the eternal ground of time and have received a limited span of time as *our* time. It replaces eternity by endless future.

But endless future is without a final aim, it repeats itself and could well be described as an image of hell. This is not the Christian way of dealing with the end. The Christian message says that the eternal stands above past and future. "I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end."

The Christian message acknowledges that time runs toward an end, and that we move toward the



DEATH

DRAWING BY MARGARET RIGG

end of that time which is our time. Many people—but not the Bible—speak loosely of the "hereafter" or of the "life after death." Even in our liturgies, eternity is translated by "world without end." But the world, by its very nature, is that which comes to an end. If we want to speak in truth without foolish, wishful thinking, we should speak about the eternal which is neither timelessness nor endless time. The mystery of the future is answered in the eternal of which we may speak in images taken from time. But if we forget that the images are images, we fall into absurdities and self-deceptions. There is no time after time, but there is eternity above time.

**W**E go toward something that is not yet, and we come from something that is no more. We are what we are by what we come from. We have a beginning, as we have an end. There was a time which was not our time. We hear of it from those who are older than we; we read about it in

history books; we try to envision the unimaginable billions of years in which we did not exist, nor did anyone who could tell us of them. It is hard for us to imagine our "being-no-more." It is equally difficult to imagine our "being-not-yet." But we usually don't care about our not yet being, about the indefinite time before our birth in which we were not. We think, "Now we are, this is *our time*"—and we do not want to lose it. But we are not concerned about what lies before our beginning. We ask about life after death, yet seldom do we ask about our being before birth. But is it possible to do one without the other? The writer of the fourth Gospel does not think so. When he speaks of the eternity of the Christ, he does not only point to his return to eternity, but also to his coming *from* eternity. "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I *am*." The Christ comes from another dimension than that in which the past lies. Those to whom he speaks misunderstand him because they think of the historical past. They believe that he makes himself hundreds of years old and they rightly take offense at this absurdity. Yet he does not say "I *was*" before Abraham; but He says "I *am*" before Abraham was. He speaks of his beginning out of eternity. And this is the beginning of everything that is—not the uncounted billions of years but the eternal is the ultimate point in our past.

The mystery of the past from which we come is that it is and is not in every moment of our lives. It is, insofar as we are what the past has made of us. In every cell of our bodies, in every trait of our faces, in every movement of our souls, our past is in the present.

In few periods has there been more knowledge about the continuous working of the past in the present than in ours. We know about the influence of childhood experiences on our characters. We know about the scars left by events in early years. We have rediscovered what the Greek tragedians and the Jewish prophets knew—that the past is present in us, both as a curse and as a blessing. For "past" always means both a curse and a blessing not only for individuals, but for nations and even continents.

History lives from the past, from its heritage. The glory of the European nations is their long, inexhaustibly rich tradition. But the blessings of this tradition are mixed with curses resulting from early splits into separate nations whose bloody struggles filled cen-

tury after century and brought Europe again and again to the edge of self-destruction. Great are the blessings *this* nation has received in the course of its short history. But from earliest days on, elements have been at work which have been and will remain a curse for many years to come. I could refer, for instance, to racial consciousness, not only within the nation itself, but also in its dealings with races and nations outside its own boundaries. "The American way of life" is a blessing coming from the past; but it is also a curse, threatening the future.

Is there a way of getting rid of these curses which threaten the life of nations and continents, and more and more, of mankind as a whole? Can we banish elements of our past so that they lose their power over the present? In man's individual life this is certainly possible. It has been rightly said that the strength of a person's character is dependent on the quantity of things that he has thrown into the past. In spite of the power his past holds over him, a man can separate himself from it, throw it out of the present into the past in which it is condemned to remain ineffective—at least for a time. It may return and conquer the present and destroy the person, but this is not necessarily so. We are not inescapably victims of our past. We can make the past remain nothing but *past*. The act in which we do this has been called "repentance." Genuine repentance is not the feeling of sorrow about wrong actions, but it is the act of the whole person in which he separates himself from certain elements of his being, discarding them into the past as something that no longer has any power over the present.

Can a nation do the same thing? Can a nation or any other social group have genuine repentance? Can it separate itself from curses of the past? On this possibility rests the hope of a nation. The history of Israel and the history of the Church show that it is possible, and they also show that it is rare and extremely painful. Nobody knows whether it will happen to *this* nation. But we know that its future depends on the way it will deal with its past and whether it can discard into the past elements which are a curse!

In each human life a struggle is going on with the past. Blessings fight with curses. Often we do not recognize what are blessings and what are curses. Today, in the light of the discovery of our unconscious strivings, we are more inclined to see curses than blessings in our individual pasts. The remem-



RESURRECTION

branch of our parents, which in the Old Testament is so inseparably connected with their blessings, is now much more connected with the curses they have unconsciously and against their will brought upon us. Many of those who suffer from mental afflictions see their pasts, especially their childhoods, only as sources of curses. We know how often this is true. But we should not forget that we would not be able to live and to face the future if there were not blessings which support us and which come from the same sources as the curses. A pathetic struggle with their past is going on almost without interruptions in many men and women in our time. No medical healing can solve *this* conflict, because no medical healing can change the past. Only a blessing which lies above the conflict of blessing and curse can heal; it is the blessing which changes what seems to be unchangeable—the past. It cannot change the facts: what has happened has happened and remains so in all eternity! But the *meaning* of the facts can be changed by the eternal, and the name of this change is the experience of “forgiveness.” If the meaning of the past is changed by forgiveness, its influence on the future is also changed. The character of curse is taken away from it. It has become a blessing by the transforming power of forgiveness.

There are not always blessings and curses in the past. There is also emptiness in it. We remember experiences which in the time they happened were filled with a seemingly abundant content. Now we remember them and their abundance has vanished, their ecstasy is gone, their fullness has turned into a void. Pleasures, successes, and vanities have this character. We don't feel them as curses; we don't feel them as blessings. They have been swallowed by the past. They did not contribute to the eternal. Let us ask ourselves how much in our lives does *not* fall under this judgment.

**T**HE mystery of the future and the mystery of the past are united in the mystery of the present. Our time, the time we have, is the time in which we have “presence.” But how can we have “presence”? Is not the present moment gone when we think of it? Is not the present the ever-moving boundary line between past and future? But a moving boundary is not a place to stand upon. If nothing were given to us except the “no more” of the past and the “not yet” of the future, we would not have anything. We could not speak of the time which is our *time*; we would not have “presence.”

The mystery is that we have a present; and even

more, that we have *our* future also because we anticipate it in the present; and that we have *our* past also because we remember it in the present. In the present our future and our past are *ours*. But there is no "present" if we think of the never-ending flux of time. The riddle of the present is the deepest of all the riddles of time. Again, there is no answer except from that which comprises all time and lies beyond it—the eternal. Whenever we say "now" or "today," we stop the flux of time for ourselves. We accept the present and do not care that it is gone in the moment that we accept it. We live in it and it is renewed for us in every new "present." This is possible because every moment of time reaches into the eternal. It is the eternal which stops the flux of time. It is the eternal "now" which provides for us a temporal "now." But sometimes it breaks powerfully into our consciousness and gives us the certainty of the eternal, of a dimension of time which cuts into time and gives us *our* time.

People who are never aware of this dimension lose the possibility of resting in the present. As the letter to the Hebrews describes it, they never enter into the divine rest. They are held by the past and cannot separate themselves from it, or they escape toward the future unable to rest in the present. They have not entered the eternal rest which stops the flux of time and gives us the blessing of the present. Perhaps this is the most conspicuous characteristic of our period, especially in the Western world and particularly in this country. It lacks the courage to accept "presence" because it has lost the dimension of the eternal.

"I am the beginning and the end." This is said to us who live in the bondage of time, who have to face the end, who cannot escape the past, who need a present to stand upon. Each of the modes of time has its peculiar mystery, each of them gives its peculiar anxiety. Each of them drives us to an ultimate question.

There is *one* answer to these questions—the eternal. There is *one* power which surpasses the all-consuming power of time—the eternal: He who was and is and is to come, the beginning and the end. He gives us forgiveness for what has passed; he gives us courage for what is to come. He gives us rest in his eternal presence.

Chapter by Paul Tillich, *The Eternal Now*, from the book *THE MEANING OF DEATH*, Herman Feifel, editor. Copyright © 1959, McGraw-Hill Book Company, by permission.

GOD CREATING SUN, MOON & STARS



CUTS FROM THE 1537 JACOB MYT BIBLE

NOVEMBER 22, 1963

This is not a eulogy for John F. Kennedy. He already has been praised by his enemies far more than their living actions justified, and by his friends more than finiteness can bear. Suffice it to say he was a brilliant and gifted man who brought wisdom and judgment to an exceedingly difficult job. Our own closeness to him was his youth. He was of our generation—he brought to the presidency the advantages and failings of today's generation. He was a twentieth century man bearing in his thought the indelible marks of this post-modern era.

Death and tragedy are both great teachers but "tragic death" may be the greatest teacher of all. Philosophy begins when we recognize the brute fact that all men are mortal and faith is probably born when we deal with the meaning of our finiteness. Remember Willie Keith in *The Caine Mutiny*? One of the sailors went to his battle station on the ship. A bomb from the Kamakaze plane hit right at his station and blew him to bits. The novel continues: "With the smoke of the dead sailor's cigar wreathing around him, Willie passed to thinking about death and life and luck and God. Philosophers are at home with such thoughts perhaps but for other people it's actually torture when these concepts—not the words but the realities—break through the crust of daily occurrences and grip the soul. A half hour of such racking meditation can change the ways of a lifetime. Willie Keith crushing the stub in the ashtray was not the Willie Keith who had lit the cigar." It's true of the reality of death—and it's true of us: literally a whole country has been made to face, collectively, what everyday individuals have to face sometimes alone and without solace.

America cannot be the same country today that it was on that November 22, Friday morning. The upset was sudden and unsoftened upon the American people. Our benumbed reaction was like a "dream state" that William Faulkner once described "in which you run without moving, from a terror in which you cannot believe, toward a safety in which you have no faith." But after the numbness and confusion has passed and we believe what we have seen and heard then our reflection may be revealing. Friday's tragedy brought home the truth again of what the Christian faith means when it talks about death as judgment. Judgment in the Greek means to discern, to see things in their true color. Death we have been told is a decisive shock treatment. The facing of death—especially a tragic death like this one—strips our securities and shocks us into a sense of reality. Jan Struthers once wrote that war was, "that glorious, awful and eye-opening time." Death opens our eyes and helps us see what is mortal and immortal about about us. Death enables us to discern.

In the President's tragic death, we see once again that our easy-going optimism about the future and our rather facile trust that "good guys" always win over "bad guys" are given another shattering blow. We are a "happy ending nation" and when calamity like this strikes our complacent existence we are stunned like a movie-goer who always knows that the scenario will end as it always does. Perhaps it is because we as an American people always seem to live on the surface of life—never risking its depths, never tasting its terror—that tragedy comes as such a shock to us. To a people accustomed to having malevolence hidden away, and death covered up or institutionalized,



the public assassination of the symbolic leader of our nation becomes almost too much to bear. If you add to this the real possibility that the man who killed the President perhaps was not a raving maniac or some kind of psychotic but a coolly rational and intelligent human being who might have believed that the way to deal with differences was to wipe out the man with the opposing ideas, then we are more troubled than ever. It may be that the pause we have taken out of grief and respect will enable us to reflect on whether our own culture has produced this kind of catastrophe or whether this was a meaningless mutation discontinuous with the civilization we are producing.

Another discernment that may come to us out of this profoundly tragic event is that there is so little time for any of us. Part of the burden of our grief, I think, came from the realization that this man was cut down in his youth, so many talents unused, so many dreams unrealized; his children not yet raised, a home barely lived in, a destiny unfulfilled. Our emotions are deeply moved by these thoughts—the deeply personal loss to Jacqueline Kennedy, the fatherless children unable to comprehend what has happened, the father of the lost son, troubled perhaps by the irony of his deep ambition to have a son in the Presidency.

But it is the youthfulness of Kennedy that reminds us that none of us has much time. Perhaps one of the illusions of the young that is shattered by an event like this one is that we have plenty of time. The psalmist says: "Teach us to number our days"—teach us to take time seriously. The young always believe there is plenty of time to learn, plenty of time to live, plenty of time to get started on a vocation. Then death intrudes prematurely into the life of a man of destiny and we are reminded that the time is short. It is short for each one of us, and it's short for our nation. We don't have forever to settle the cold war, we don't have eternity to lead the world toward real freedom; we don't have another hundred years to grant Negro citizens their rights. It's later than we think for all of us!

In the President's untimely and tragic death we discern how precarious are the arrangements for a balanced world and how uncertain are all our plans for peace. Within hours after the President's death the stock market was closed down to avoid panic selling, the capitals of the world expressed not only sympathy but deep foreboding of what his death might mean in terms of promises, treaties and commitments. We tell ourselves that everything is big, mechanical, impersonal and soulless. Then we discover in the sudden death of the President that—more than we know—peace, good will and trust hang by the thread of one man's word or posture. The thing that frightens us in the hint that all our plans for keeping a balanced and peaceful world, just short of nuclear annihilation, is as finite and mortal as the body of one human being. Our reflections on this ought to lead us to new bold ventures in our search for ways to live together in this world.

Death can teach us something about life, tragedy can bring us a discernment we did not have. For those who cry out of their frustration and confusion "Why did this have to happen?" the Christian faith has no simple answer. We bow before the mystery of this enigmatic evil like everyone else, but we cannot hurl the invectives of an outraged sense of justice before God as long as there is a cross planted in the midst of human life. God has tasted and endured what the world can do to a Man. The light which the cross sheds upon human suffering and tragedy is not an explanation but it is the basis for a trust that we need not succumb to tragedy so that it embitters us and drives us to meaninglessness and despair.

By all that is humanly explainable, John Kennedy should have died that dark night in 1942 when his PT boat was smashed. The mystery of his tragic death is no easier to explain than the miracle of his spared life on that dark night of the war. Both mysteries are in the hands of a God whom we trust will comfort and console his wife and family, and bring a sense of steadiness and purpose to our lives and to a world in confusion.

BY HOWARD R. MOODY

# DEATH, THE FILM, AND THE FUTURE

BY ROBERT STEELE

**A** WORK (note the implied act) of art involves commitment to expressing the most profound and significant facts of life; the artist cannot avoid dealing with death. In the past poetry and novels have excelled in the presentation of death. In drama from the earliest to the most contemporary, death has been an important theme. Painting and sculpture have shown death, but the nonlingual nature of these arts limits their power of interpretation. Music can make us feel something that may be deathlike, but it is almost powerless to make us ponder or accept it. Dance communicates emotions surrounding death, but its muteness limits its profundity. These art forms do not offer deep insights into the meaning of death because they are cut off from the decision-making responsibility involved in life. The film, with drama as its mother and other art forms as brothers and sisters, is not limited by its form in providing us with rich encounters with death that demand our contemplation, but it is limited by its short history and the shallowness of most film makers. Generally, film makers are doers and not thinkers. Many arts celebrate what is good and beautiful in life, but they have not gone deeply enough to let us see clearly what is being implied by the converse, death. Theologians and philosophers have gone far ahead of the artist in enabling us to understand the extent to which death is the maker of life.

How *could* enlightenment about death come from the world's film capital? Hollywood has been an embodiment of the herd mind; death has been such an embarrassment that it is ignored, concealed, or hidden among the winding paths of Forest Lawn. The land of happy endings has not made a contribu-

tion to reckoning with death, nor for that matter, with life. Because of the number of novels and plays that have been filmed, sometimes a screen death has been necessary. Usually it has been passed over lightly. Grandpa's death in *The Grapes of Wrath* was handled by John Ford with poignancy and reverence. Garbo's death in *Camille*, directed by George Cukor, based on the Dumas *fil*s novel *La Dame aux Camelias*, remains the most beautifully acted and incandescent film death in history. Garbo always seemed to have to pay for her adventures as a *femme fatale* by dying: under the wheels of a train (twice), drowning, crashing in a car, the firing squad, tuberculosis. Most film deaths have been handled as the natural course of events, touched with romance and/or melodrama.

The three principals in Von Stroheim's silent film *Greed*, all die miserably; they die tragically, victims of their own greed. (The film was such an offense to the "boy-wonder" producer, Irving Thalberg, that this masterpiece was slaughtered in the cutting room before it was released.) Lew Ayres' death in Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, directed by the venerable Lewis Milestone, was another tragedy. At the end of the film, after surviving until the end of the war, he is killed by the enemy when he reaches out of a trench for a butterfly. Chaplin's deaths in his own screenplays, *Limelight* and *Monsieur Verdoux*, are so philosophically and religiously rendered that they become victories. But these films were such anathema to the American public that Chaplin is yet to be forgiven; and he has vowed that *Verdoux* may not be shown in the United States again.

Because the films of Great Britain have aped Holly-

wood films in an attempt to ensnare an American market, they too have shied away from showing death as a meaningful part of our lives. Ustinov's film of Melville's *Billy Budd* may be a harbinger of change.

EUROPE, India, and Japan have proved they are not afraid to present death meaningfully on the screen. However, if we are looking for insight into death as fundamental for the growth of our lives and religious sensibilities, then like Hollywood, these countries' contributions are slight. Dreyer in *The Passion of St. Joan* and Renoir in *La Grande Illusion* have pursued lives of such heroic statures that voluntary death on behalf of an ideal was inevitable. Cloche in *Monsieur Vincent* unfolds a life that prepares for a death as a consummation and reward for great labor on behalf of the poor and sick. Clement's *Forbidden Games* shows the incomprehensibility of death for adults, as well as children. The absence of love and preoccupation with burial, ritual, and grave-markings provide a cover for this ignorance.

Even rarer are the films in which death functions to redeem. Gelosomina's death in Fellini's *La Strada* redeems some of the evil in Zampano. The death and bodily resurrection, by way of faith in Christ and the faith of a child, of the daughter-in-law in Dreyer's *Ordet* (*The Word*) reconciles two families who have been feuding over which has the better Christianity. *Ordet* forces us to look at a corpse, to participate in heartbreaking grief, to recognize the powerlessness of institutionalized Christianity to cope with death, to see that sufficiently radical Christian faith can evoke a resurrection even today.

Kurosawa's *Ikiru*, variously translated as *To Live*, *Living*, and (mistakenly) *Doomed*, is a long, demanding film wholly about death. The first shot is an X-ray of the hero's stomach, as a narrator tells us he is dying of cancer. The film follows the doomed man, Mr. Watanabe, as his life and work are gradually redeemed. His film death purifies a past life and places a seal of eternal love and worth upon him. What other directors have made statement comparable to this by Kurosawa: "The aim of my films is to give people strength to live and face life; to help them live more powerfully and happily. Occasionally I think of my death. Then I become restless, thinking of how I can breathe my last after living such a life. There is lots more for me to do while I am alive. I feel I have lived but very little yet. My heart aches with this feeling. My work *Ikiru* is based on this feeling." The film was a box-office failure in the United States. Spectators, drawn into the cinema by a still from a brief striptease scene, were put off



PHOTOGRAPH: JACQUELINE BARRETT

by lengthy mourning scenes during which Watanabe's life was reviewed.

Death is ever present in Satyajit Ray's trilogy, *Pather Panchali*, *Aparajito*, and *The World of Apu*. The deaths are real and tragic, and mourning becomes a destructive force. The deaths are calamities and irreparable losses. They are given as important facts of life, and we are left to share the anguish, irony, and defeat of these separations.

If we were to put into words what is shown and

said about death in films, to make books of films, we would find probing thought about death almost nonexistent with the exceptions of *Ordet*, *Ikiru*, the late Chaplin films, and possibly Petri's *I Giorni Contati* (ninety minutes of contemplation of death by a man of fifty—shown last summer at Cannes but as yet undistributed in the United States). Death is presented in masses of films, just because some time or another almost everything has become a subject for a film. But usually death is no more than an incident, horror, evil, or *non sequitur*.

When death is conceived as the warp and woof of an individual's life, accompanying him from birth to earth, rather than as the last moment of life followed by nonexistence in this world, then we do have it in abundance of films. Occasionally, we have it significantly and meaningfully handled. Death is not taboo when it embraces the whole of life, and each life is perceived as full of death and dying by way of every divorce, parting, aging, and rebellion. Thought of death forces us to think of afterlife, if there is one; of heaven and hell, if there are such; and if there are, how we may experience them. The dying in the midst of life provides much of the here-and-now hell which we see in many films. Heaven in the here and now is absent, apart from the false, gilded heaven of the Hollywood Dream. The reality of the photographic image makes negation in life dramatically easy to present, far easier for the film maker than the risk of imagination and (perhaps) fantasy that would be the price of filming a heaven.

*La Dolce Vita* is concerned with people in hell, living circumscribed by the carnage of life, addicted to Via Veneto. One character in the film, Steiner, is trying to live meaningfully. He is the idol of Marcello, a debauchee journalist. At one point, the two friends enter a church. Steiner says he comes to this church often, and that, "Father Franz finally found this book I've been looking for. It's an old Sanskrit grammar." (The book is from a distant place, of another world and another time.) Steiner sits at the organ and plays a Bach fugue; they listen and are deeply thoughtful. Marcello watches a lone woman go to the altar, as Steiner says: "These are sounds we have forgotten how to hear. What a mysterious voice; it seems to come from the bowels of the earth." There is a grimness in Steiner's face as he plays. The one person to get out of this hell, to "escape" this world is Steiner. He acts while Marcello is incapable of acting; Steiner removes himself and his children by murder and suicide. By the end of the film Marcello has moved deeper into hell. He can't even hear a voice that would call him back

to another world for a moment. The longing of these two men is plain. They want a different world, a world freed of destruction and decay. They seem to be longing for infinity. According to Fellini dying in life and living in hell are the consequence of living without relatedness: "The most pressing problem for me is the terrible difficulty people have in talking to each other—the old problem of communication, the desperate anguish to be *with*, the desire to have a real, authentic relationship with another person. . . . Any research that a man does about himself, about his relationships with others and with the mystery of life is a spiritual and, in the true sense, religious search." The death and dying in *La Dolce Vita* result from nonrelatedness to anybody or anything. All communication seems to have collapsed. Belonging is nonexistent.

More than any other writer-director, Ingmar Bergman has given us death as an accompaniment of an individual's life as well as its physical terminus. He is almost an exception in that his presentation of death hints at, and even longs for, another life and a world that is a spiritual realm. Death-in-life culminated by physical obliteration is a pervasive and recurrent theme in all Bergman's serious works. In three films, death is fought head on. A kind of reconciliation to death is won in them all. In *The Seventh Seal* death is personified by an actor costumed to look like the grim reaper. Antonius Block, a knight newly returned from the Crusades, is searching for some significance in life before he gives himself up to death. When he is approached by death he asks for more time to find out what meaning there may be to life, if there is anything to believe which will rationally support faith, to do something which provides him with satisfying meaning before he is taken. His experience in the Crusades aborted meaning for his life. Block does not solve the riddle of death, and he is left without supportable faith, but he does find a satisfaction in life which results from his helpfulness to Jof, Mia, and their son. He is unable to bear himself without the hope of God, but he is left with the faith to support his hope, and he meets death willingly.

Isak Borg in *Wild Strawberries* has received much of the good that this world proffers. He has led a commendable life; he is on his way to his university, where he is to be honored. The journey provides the connective structure for him to relive his life and sift those events whereby he had added goodness to life from those through which he contributed damage and hurt. By dreaming and daydreaming for the duration of this day, Dr. Borg sees his life as it



was and as it might have been. The film opens with his dream of himself in his casket and being dumped on a personless street where time and perspectives seem otherworldly. His self-questioning reveals the extent to which his life of medical service has been in reality self-service. He was helpful primarily to his own ego. He has missed meaningful relationships with family and friends. He exposes the isolation of his life and the failures in his personality because of his inability to love others rather than himself. The progress of incidents in the film shows the divide between self-centered *eros* and *agape*. His perusal of his life as death comes near to him results in reconciliation with his son, daughter-in-law, and housekeeper. She has served him faithfully and lovingly despite his selfishness. Speech is unnecessary because at the end of the film we see and know that he has a newly found identity.

In *Through a Glass Darkly*, we have a family at odds. At the end, Karen has a vision of God as a great spider—a familiar mystical image that breaks down the boundary between the finite and infinite. Her vision, "death," and departure from this world to live in a world of the insane give the promise of new life, an enveloping life for the other three characters of the film. At the end of the film the young brother speaks as if a dawning has taken place for him when he says, "Father spoke to me."

Bergman's films are devoted to the meaning of birth, life, and death. For him the intellect is "the black lantern given to us to penetrate the blackness of the world we live in." At times he is obscure and seems to wish to shock and injure, but basically there is a positive philosophy and religious outlook in his work which strive toward emancipation and away from misery. Love as given, enables us to withstand the stresses of the world and conquer death. When asked about the intentions of his films, he has said, "I try to tell the truth about the human condition, the truth as I see it." And when asked about the general purpose of his films, he says, "... I want to be one of the artists in the cathedral on the great plain. I want to make a dragon's head, an angel, a devil—or perhaps a saint—out of stone. It does not matter which; it is the sense of satisfaction that counts. Regardless of whether I believe or not, whether I am Christian or not, I would play my part in the collective building of the cathedral." Bergman's films have given us probings into the nature of life and death. To the extent that he is speaking on that level, he speaks plainest through David at

the end of *Through a Glass Darkly* when he says, "God is love, love in all its forms."

**A** FEW films are helpful in interpreting the nature of life and death. We have to hunt, however, for that film which divulges spiritual enlightenment and the intensity of the sphere of the spirit. Films will deepen to the extent that they prod us to think about the meaning of death. When they do this, at the same time they will plant themselves into our consciousness so that we think about what makes life life and how we may live more of life before we die. The present-day presentations of death will be recognized as frequently empty, as is the case with the majority of our films; shallow, as in the case of even such celebrated works as De Sica's *Umberto D*; cold and remote, as in the Bergman films. As films deepen they will become better art through the gains they have made in universality of reach and meaning.

We look forward to films that will explore the significance and meaning of life and death. We may yet see death become voluntary when meaning has gone out of life. Death will not be feared, hated, or put off until all the dollars, doctors, and drugs are impotent to add another second to a "life." We will hope to see lives lived richly because of their constant awareness that they will end in the world's good time. Meaning in a life cannot exist in endless time, or in the illusion that we have endless time. Films can remind us constantly of our finitude by compressing the span of life of an individual or nation, so that we can more clearly see and thereby choose life against death from day to day. Additional films of the stature of *Ikiru* can help us to perceive the paradox of death. When some time is left to us, death is our enemy. All living is a battle against our inevitable physical terminus. But at the end of a life that has embodied value and meaning, the "enemy" becomes an invited guest whom a host goes out to meet. Mr. Watanabe was left only a few months to salvage the life he bypassed. He lived those few months so meaningfully and intensely, he was transformed from an automaton to a personality, and as a consequence his horror and fear of death were transformed. Such films, showing radical transformation, reconciliation, redemption, and peacemaking relationships imbued with life-giving potency have been neglected. They are harder to conceive and realize, but when such films are achieved, we will have finer films and more honest art.



UPROOTED PINE

DRAWING: GREGORINO PRESTOPINO  
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# SONG OF THE ARCHER

A PROSE BALLAD

BY MARY SHUMWAY

IT WAS the month of the hunter and the sun spewed blood like a slaughtered bull over a brewing storm burning the pines black. He crouched wounded below the hill in massive tracks shaking blood from his head, from his eyes, and the light spattered in pulsing garnets on the sand. The river slugged east clotting above the dam where the drain gave in short squirts like a numbed sphincter. There was no sound though the sky boiled overhead. An old hound humped and snuffed dust from his snout and turned to licking an old wound. Two cats coupled deep by the shed. In the rust wood where centuries rutted and spilled Novembers, a young chit squeezed off her boots and blew the hair out of her eyes. She had a pact with dusk but she tasted fire in the sweat and set out for home.

Hi Peach, she said, and the old hound groaned; only his eyes moved toward the breach no moss would heal. She tossed her boots on the porch, hid her book in the steps. "That is no country for old men./The young in one another's arms," she said as though the saying solved some old problem.

*Strangers we have come from a stranger land than this; but listen, we have seen no stranger thing than this, this child lamp-eyed in the crimson dusk.*

(DOWN THE HILL SHE SAW HER GRANDFATHER CARRY PEACH TO THE RIVER WITH A SHOVEL. "WHERE YOU GOING WITH PEACH, GRAMP? HEY GRAMP, WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HIM? PUT HIM DOWN, GRAMP . . . DON'T TAKE HIM." BUT HE HAD SOMETHING ELSE ON HIS MIND. SHE RAN BUT THE WIND WAS THICK AND IT PUSHED HER HEAD BACK ON HER SHOULDERS. SHE COULD SEE IT WAS HER GRANDMOTHER PUSHING THE CARRIAGE: "WHY, HER MOUTH WAS GOING FASTER THAN A WHIPPOORWILL'S TAIL IN BLUEBERRY TIME" BUT NO SOUND CAME.)

A green crow cut the wind when the screen door slammed; from the humming spring, "Go split the wood for morning, Chris; the scuttles are already full. Then we'll eat." She reached down roughing the old hound's ears and she scratched his rump until his hind leg whumped dust into thundering invisible herds. When she'd tethered the wild horses of the wind and the smoke dissolved, she pulled on her boots and sticking her tongue out at the fury seething overhead—and things in general—headed out back to the woodpile. The earth turned slow from the dying sun and blood seeped from the veined dust into a million tiny serpents shimmering in the turning, the tiresome turning. The wind whimpered.

(HER GRANDMOTHER CAME RUNNING WITH A RAKE AND KILLED A SPRINGING SNAKE SHE WAS PLAYING WITH ON THE ROAD, BUT SHE GOT TO KEEP THE INJURED BIRD AND BUILT A CAGE UNTIL HE DIED OF OATMEAL.)

Is it ready, Mother?

What?

She held the chunk firm on the log with her boot and swung. The handle was hard and smooth and sang good in her hands.

Supper.

The low hum of the turning earth faded when a rapid drum muffled rode dusk down the river. *Everything else was drawn as dying and old Chiron sang from the harp of his bow, "It was the month of the hunter and the sun spewed blood like. . ."* Some kindness made a flight of swallows in her wrist. She spit.

Yes.

She turned, and through the kitchen screen she saw the deep wet sky in her mother's eyes.

(HER EYES WERE TWO PREACHERS AT A SPRING REVIVAL INTONING A WEARINESS OF SIN, "BUT SHE LAY HER HAND ON MY REPENTANCE AND MY BLOOD SANG SALVATION WITH SWALLOWS DEEP IN MY PROVERBS . . . HOW'RT THA BOTH MARY AND THAIS, MA CUNT AND MOTHER, AND I THY LOVE AND LOVER?"

That's enough. Come on in, Chris. *She's just like her father. I don't know.*

(Weren't we always, Mother, or did we begin somewhere? Her hair caught light like chestnuts do in falling suns, and the deep cabala of the marvelous eyes) and her wrists went swallows. . . .

What're we having?

Side pork and milk gravy. The words grinned. She knew her Chris.

Don't like the looks of that sky. Something rotten in Denmark if you ask me. I wish it'd storm if it's going to.

She stomped in slamming the door and darkness scattered like a flock of startled crows. "Where'd you get that saying, Gran?" and she picked at a scab on her knee.

What saying?

'Something rotten in Denmark.'

Oh, Shakespeare I guess. Quit. Hans' schoolteacher said it was. I don't know.

(I WANT TO WEAR IT PROUDLY, I WANT TO WEAR IT ON MY FACE PROUD AS AUTUMN FLAMES, STARK AS WINTER FRAMES HER BLACK BRANCHES IN A CHRISTWHITE PURITY. THIS IS NO GETHSEMANE FOR SOLITARY PRAYER. . . .)

If it's a good book I'd like to have it sometime.

(I AM ALL INNOCENCE AND ADAM, HUGE AND UNABASHED, HAVING FOUND YOU IN THE WORLD TO LOVE.)

We'll see. Wash your hands.

O Lord, how plentiful thy gifts. . . .

That drum is still going. One of the Indians must be dying.

I hope it's not Suzie Redhorn, but I guess she's old enough.

No, Chris, 't hain't our Indians. Must be that family come for the ceremonial from out West. 'T hain't our Indians, though Lord knows they drum enough with that shell game going ever afternoon over to the trading post. You cross the slough to ride them horses again today, Chris?



Yup. And Yellowthunder said I could go hunting with him and Hans. With bow and arrows. Next week maybe.

We'd better see about that. You was sick for two days last time because they smoked squirrel outa the hollow "instead of shooting fair" you said. Your mother had to chop wood. Fine grease spot you'll make in the devil's kitchen.

Maybe I said that. Maybe I won't even go. Maybe I wouldn't even want to if I could have Hans' canoe only one afternoon. . . .

Ask Hans. We'll see.

Honestly, Chris, I don't know if you should be out on that river alone. . . .

Oh Mom, Jim Decorah and I are going to hunt turtles just in the slough. If we promise not to go behind the steamboat . . . ?

We'll see. Eat something besides potatoes and gravy, hon.

And the sky hung like a full skin of ripe wine.

(. . . IN THINE EYES THE GETHEMANE GIFT AND THE ENVIOUS SUN SCUTTLES THY KIDRON IN FLUTED RIFFS OF LIGHT. . . .)

All you ever say is "we'll see" . . . well, when *will* we?

(. . . IN THINE EYES ARE THE FINGERS OF NIGHT FONDLING PROPHECIES. . . .)

Eat your dinner, Chris.

She made a face at her plate.

(. . . AND SUCH IS THY WISDOM AND INNOCENCE THAT ALL CREATION COULD BUT SHIELD THY PROPHECY. . . .)

She's been eatin' like it 'as goin' right outa style. I never saw a girl eat so much.

'When I have fears that I may cease to be/before my pen has gleaned my. . . .' What does "gleaned" mean? Exactly.

What's that now, Chris?

Oh, "gathered" I guess.

A book by Sheets and Kelly.

Her mother laughed.

A poem.

Slow down, hon . . . Keats and Shelley.

That's what I said.

Well, it's good she likes her school. . . .

No I don't. Except the music, "Awake the harp, the harp awake!" Some of the books are all right. I like gym. Her foot swung under the table and she conducted the vast invisible chorus with her fork.

Eat your dinner, Chris.

Say, can I learn to play the violin? I *am* eating. We heard a record in school. A song by . . . Fritz Kreisler played it on the violin. A "Meditation" from something or other. . . .

Massenet's *Thais*.—

. . . and I'd like to learn that piece if I could.



HEMLOCK

DRAWING: GREGORINO PRESTOPINO  
COURTESY, NORDNESS GALLERY, N.Y.

And the old house turned from the setting sun to the song of the archer, the dance begun, neither started nor ended there, and light dimmed like the final assault in the eyes of a woman loved. Ever one of my brothers could fiddle. We'll see.

(WE'LL SEE.)

A single cry of a broken bird trilled in her fingertips. The drum stopped. Well, I guess that's that. It's sure none of us gets outa this world alive.

The great cat smiled feathers and dissolved in dusk. She rocked and cried quietly and quietly . . . .

(‘NONE OF US GETS OUTA THIS WORLD ALIVE’—O LORD, HOW PLENTIFUL THY GIFTS. . . .)

Clear the table, Chris, and go help your grandmother. She's going to set buckwheats for breakfast. Can I give Peach what's left? He sat on the back porch watching the conversation through the screen. I guess so. He whined and snorted.

In the pantry under steep stairs an old woman moaned and faltered. I'll carry that, Gran. Give it to me. . . .

Never mind now. Get outa the way. I carried hundred-pound flour sacks since I was a girl. Guess I can carry thi. . . .

. . . but she paled. . . .

Gran! What's the matter?

. . . and that kindness faded in the umber dusk. (OH LORD, HOW. . .)

Tired. Turrible tired. . . .

Then came thunder long and low shaking night from the trees, grieving the very timbers of the old house. Even the dust trembled. Shadows clotted and ran under the bulb's yellow pulsing.

*Born by the goldenrod, child of the sun, she came from the sleeping hollows and the hill to this land where light lay down the wind and cascading flocks on the summerwood danced in the wine of quiet blossoms, where sweet owls called a comforting wide night. We have seen August reach into autumn without holding back thieving winds nor catching leaves from swift brooks plying a chrisomed shore; we have seen sun come and go without the seven trumpets . . . ah, we worry the very daylight with how to become what we anyhow must become. . . .*

Mother!

She slipped silken to the floor, but the low moan came from another room.

What is it, Gran . . . what's the matter? (but he had something else on his mind) Mother! and no sound came.

*Once the wash of wind lay open the quick heart shall the heavens tell and shall we hear the song of the archer roaming the early hill; under the panicles of goldenrod sleeps the hunter . . . when light lay downwind from the summer stars. . . "It was the month of the hunter and the sun spewed blood like a slaughtered bull over a brewing storm burning the pines black. . . ."*

Even the grass began its whisper under the groaning elms and loose sand rasped and coughed at the windows. She ran to the kitchen. The screen door muttered under the wind. Mother?

(WE'LL SEE . . . WE'LL SEE.)

She slammed out the back door (*Mother!*) and the rupturing storm hung overhead. Darkness pressed against her eyes, against the hard cry and it ricocheted with the wind. She ran but the wind was thick pressing her head back (*it was her grandmother pushing the carriage*) and in the falling sun she saw her.

*(O Lord how plentiful thy. . . )* Mother! but no sound came. And the sun lay dying in the eyes of . . .  
*("How'rt tha both Mary and Thais, ma cunt and mother, and I thy love and lover—and in the falling suns, O Lord, how plentiful, how plentiful thy . . .")*

Mother!

She stood a slender rib of dusk against the deepening sky. Old Peach sniffed west and moaned with the low howl of the wind. Her arms were crossed like conversation and she stood straight and still and no sound came. (BUCKWHEATS FOR BREAKFAST, CHRIS.)

(SOMETHING ROTTEN IN DENMARK IF YOU ASK ME.)

(OH, GRAN, I'LL CARRY IT. LET ME. I DON'T WANT BUCKWHEATS FOR BREAKFAST. I'LL SLEEP IN THE WIND, LIE IN THE BELLY OF THE SUN FOR THY WISDOM, THY WISH, THY GIFT. . . .)

For heaven's sake, what is it, Chris?

Oh Mom, she's sick, she's sick. Come quick!

“‘ . . . BIRDS IN THE TREES/THOSE DYING GENERATIONS—AT THEIR SONG./THE SALMON-FALLS, THE MACKEREL-CROWDED SEAS,/FISH, FLESH OR FOWL, COMMEND ALL SUMMER LONG/WHATEVER IS BEGOTTEN, BORN, AND DIES.’ ”

She leaped like a marshland deer to the porch turning before the shadow turned. Her mother looked west again (“‘ An aged man is but a paltry thing. . . . ’ ”) and in the unfolding of her arms turned quietly toward the old house.

Mother!

The sun ran thick in her throat. She swallowed a great sob.

“‘ . . . I HAVE SAILED THE SEAS AND COME/TO THE HOLY CITY. . . . ’ ”

She walked toward the house like we'll see. (We'll see.)

(SHAKE THE GRATE, HON, AND CARRY OUT THE ASHES. “‘ O SAGES STANDING IN GOD'S HOLY FIRE. . . . ’ ”)

In the house she stood still as still and listened. Although she heard a song, a singing,  
“‘ . . . FASTENED TO A DYING ANIMAL/IT KNOWS NOT WHAT IT IS; ’ ”

Mother!

“‘ . . . GATHER ME/INTO THE ARTIFICE OF ETERNITY.’ ”

But she was in the kitchen doing dishes. Chris ran to the door but the air was thick and her legs heavy as the very Trickster. The old house tumbled in the tides of the boiling wind. . . .  
Oh Mom, come quick! Something's wrong with her. She's sick . . . she's sick!

(WE'LL SEE.)

Behind the yellow pulsing steam from the reservoir of the range the windows bled crimson. The air squeezed at her temples. Mother!

She turned from the sink slowly, slowly wiping her hands on the towel and walked toward the door,  
“I suppose we should at least see. . . .”

In her eyes Chris saw the quiet terror. . . . (DOWN THIS DUSK AM I COME TO THEE, DYING IN THE DYING . . . SUN . . .) She couldn't take her eyes from them, and in them she saw the old woman lying in the dusk. She saw a child walking from her kicking lumps of dirt until her boots shown the color of the prairie dust. (“‘ ONCE OUT OF NATURE I SHALL NEVER TAKE/MY BODILY FORM FROM ANY NATURAL THING, BUT . . . . ’ ”) and no sound came.

In her eyes charged great wild horses of the wind; she reined them in, singing the wild song that came from the harp of his bow, and she rocked and cried quietly and quietly. The open throat of the storm broke in her wrists. . . .

She saw the dying generations, the unbroken blood of them, and she backed away toward the old woman in the pantry. (“‘ . . . OR SET UPON A GOLDEN BOUGH TO SING. . . . ’ ”)

But something wet slapped her cheek and eye, and the old woman lay still, kind, and broken. Done. (AND WHERE DID WE BEGIN? DID WE BEGIN SOMEWHERE? HOW'RT THA BOTH . . . AND I . . .) and a hurt sang hard in her. . . .

And in her eyes she saw the child crawl from the pantry tearing at the wet string wound tight around her throat, blood shining in her eyes, in her hands which she held before her like two strangers. The old earth shuddered beneath her knees, the dam crumbled and dissolved in the boiling flood, and thunder rode dusk from the river to the hill where the storm lay broken. She saw the shallows flood, and the old house fell in the thundering wind darkly to the dark sun. She crawled toward them, into them, and with the single vision they were one, and sang

“‘ . . . OF WHAT IS PAST, OR PASSING, OR TO COME.’ ”

*'It was the month of the hunter and the sun. . . .'*



LONE TREE AND ROCK

DRAWING: GREGORINO PRESTOPINO  
COURTESY, NORDNESS GALLERY, N.Y.

I have a funny



feeling

that some very  
peculiar-looking



creatures  
are watching us

# Kenneth Patchen

BY MARGARET RIGG

**L**OTS of people would rather live in Patchenland than in almost any other contemporary visionary world.

The whole range of human experience is material for Patchen. With his creative imagination and discipline he generates a world of philosophy, poetry and painting. Each functions within the comprehensive totality of his vision, as a mode of his world-view.

We will soon discover that we cannot dissect these three modes of Patchen's vision. Consider his painting, for instance. The pages where he has given us creatures and words have the same infallible artistic construction of the ancient Celtic manuscript illuminators who wrought the *Book of Kells*. Their astounding interlaces of words, letters and figures show a depth of understanding about the artistic unity of word and image rarely found. It is the achievement of a unity of two antagonistic art forms in which the integrity of both is preserved and yet they never appear to dispute for separate attention. Along the route of the development of book design—from China, Persia, Ireland, Carolingian France, Egypt, Maya Mexico, India, Japan—down to the present, a heritage of this unique combination-form of the arts has been passed along to very few artists. The often-conflicting demands of the art of writing and the art of painting make most artists satisfied to remain specialists in one or the other alone. But Kenneth Patchen takes his place among the great book-and-page, word-and-image artists of all times.

Patchen, of course, does do paintings without words and poems without drawings. Once we have seen his poetry or painting, we feel ourselves in possession of his total poetic imagination as we read his poetry or contemplate his painting.

For instance, Patchen has many moods and feelings to express, which is only natural for a man who takes the whole range of our human experience for his material. He can be wildly funny or just puckish, sad or furious, fearful, longing, tender, wise, solemn, gay, innocent. And he can go through all of these in the space of one poem or one page. We may enter Patchen's world in any one of his expressed moods or in any one of his modes of construction: the philosophic, the poetic, the visual. But, suddenly, as if we are caught in the cross currents of life, we are whirled around and end up facing in the opposite direction. Those weird, grotesque animals—the "very peculiar-looking creatures watching us"—suddenly turn out to be friendly and

gentle. The foreboding implied in their looks and words fades from darkness into light under Patchen's power. There is a strange page, which at first seems full of terrifying mutations from some post-thalidomide era, but even while we are thinking this and shuddering, a doubt creeps in. Are they only critturs washed up from the seabottom, as confused and scared as the rest of us? Wherever they come from, they seem to understand about mankind. They share our problems. But as we begin to sink into the oblivion of such self-indulgent wailings the creatures chide: "Oh come now! There is A Beautiful Place! What do you think we're all looking out of. . . ." And with that our total vision of reality, our cramped and near-sighted world, is enlarged, transformed. When Patchen turns the philosophical and artistic tables on us like this, from despair into resolute affirmation, we see our self-indulgence for what it is.

But Patchen can contemplate the darkness, too. He addresses us with his art and poetry but remains one of us: "My Program? Let us all weep together." He shares warnings: "NOW IS THEN'S ONLY TOMORROW/As ever the trust of little birds/That the sky will be/Smart enough to appreciate/Their invention/Of flying/AH, YES! We'll please as we do." Or, tenderly he offers what he knows: "The One Who comes to Question Himself Has cared for Mankind."

Patchen's philosophy, it seems to me, is not unlike that of the great Sholem Aleichem or, perhaps, of Charlie Chaplin. It is a mocking, a wistful, a playful, tender, compassionate human- and life-oriented philosophy. But it is also tough and sometimes stern: His observations painted or written are forged out of the hardships and tragedies of life as well as from out of its joys and riches: "MAN IS NOT A TOWN/Where Things Live/But a worry and a weeping/ of unused wings." Regrets, hints of outrage at our waste of life. And in white heat of fury and terror: "But what can we do? GET READY TO DIE."

But even at the bottom of chaos he shows us his commitment to hope. He says: "ELEPHANTS and ESKIMOS/are the sort of inventions makes me sure that God has a couple three-four kids of His own." Sometimes he flings us a challenge: "Now When I Get Back Here, I Expect To Find All Of You Marching Through The Streets With Great Bunches Of Wild Flowers In Your Arms."

The child-world that Patchen's art seems, is really of the deepest mystery, and full of awe. Along come his tribes of

continued, p. 61

“ . . . a red chest . . . a yellow behind”

Bug, what do you think you're doin' way out here in this green field?—Clouds sailing up in the sky . . . What do you make of clouds, little bug? Aren't you afraid I'll maybe sort of just squinch you between my fingers? Ah—don't fool yourself—I could do it if I wanted to! So why don't I, you funny looking little bastard? I wonder how I'd look with a red chest and a yellow behind. Tell me something, what sort of a God have you bugs found for yourselves? How do you manage without any Michaelangelos and William Shakespeares? —from *Sleepers, Awake!*



**BECAUSE GROWING A MUSTACHE  
WAS PRETTY TIRING**

*The little green blackbird's father always said;  
"A bear and a bean and a bee in bed,  
Only on Bogoslof Island can one still get  
That good old-fashioned white brown bread!" This made a  
Very deep impression on the little green blackbird,  
So he decided to forget the whole thing.  
But first he painted a stolen motorcycle on the sidewalk  
And sold it to a nearsighted policeman.  
By then of course the little green blackbird  
Remembered that his father also did impressions  
Of J. Greenstripe Whittier on freshly-painted parkbenches.  
So he invited nineteen hundred rabbits over for dinner;  
And they each brought him a tin-planted goldfish,  
A handful of gloves, the drawing of a frosty breath,  
And one of those decks of newfangled playing cards,  
The kind that bite people. Well, when it came time  
To go home, all nineteen thousand rabbits filed out  
In pregnant silence, that was broken only  
By the sound of their low-pitched voices  
Raised in speech. Whereupon the father  
Of the little green blackbird quietly said;  
"It is our sentence, to endure;  
And our only crime, that we are here to serve it."*

—from *Because It Is.*





MAN IS NOT



A  
TOWN

Where Things  
Live

But a  
worry &  
a weeping



Of unused wings

Kenneth Patchen

THE DIMENSIONS OF THE MORNING

*Furtively sounding  
In the high  
Halls of God, the voice which is  
Life begins to sing.  
You will listen O you will not be afraid  
To listen . . .  
All these do:  
The wold, the fengy, the bear, the wide  
Fish; and the deer, the silky rat, the snail  
The onises—even the goat  
That waves his funny tail at trains  
Is listening.  
Do you now even faintly  
Hear the voice of life?  
I will allow you respect for  
Red apples and countries warm  
With the races of men; peep over  
The transom at China if you like  
But I will have no hatred or fear  
Entering this poem.*

*It is big  
Inside a man.  
It is soft and beautiful  
In him.  
Water and the lands of the earth  
Meet there.  
I take the word Europe  
Or the word death  
And tear them into tiny pieces;  
I scatter them at your feet.*

*Hand me a star.  
Take me to a new city.  
You are wasting your lives.  
You are going along with your pockets  
Full of trash.  
You have been taught to want only the ugly  
And the small;  
You have been taught to hate what is clean  
And of the star.  
A dog will throw up  
When he is sick;  
Are you lower than dogs  
That you keep it all down—  
And cram more in?*

*The voice which is life  
Shall sound over all the earth.  
And over all who lie deep  
In its green arms—  
Go you to lie there as a fool, or as a child,  
Tired from his beautiful playing,  
To fall happily asleep?*

—from *Cloth of the Tempest*.

BECAUSE MY HANDS  
HEAR THE FLOWERS THINKING

I scooped up the moon's footprints but  
The ground climbed past with a sky  
And a dove and a bent vapor.  
The other half of cling together wove by  
In the breath of the willows; fall in  
Sang eagle ox ferret and emerald arch.  
O we, too, must learn to live here;  
To use what we are, O fall in now!  
For only love is community! Of various likenesses, none  
Unless one love! In the lionleaf, the sonshade  
Spreading over the father's road! When we love,  
God thinks in us. And in that home-going time,  
We see with the eyes of grass; and in the trees  
Hear our own voices speak! So gently, gently, I say  
That sleep is the secret-releasing key to this world.  
Our lives are watching us—but not from earth.

—from *Because It Is*.

But what can we do?

got  
ready  
to die

Kenneth Patchon

NOW IS THEN'S ONLY TOMORROW

As ever the trust of little birds  
That the sky will be  
Smart enough to appreciate  
Their invention  
Of flying



Kenneth Patchen

AA, YES! we'll please as we do

My Program



Let us all



weep together

Kenneth Patchen



The One

Who Comes  
To  
Question  
Him  
self

Has cared for mankind



Oh Come  
Now  
There Is

A  
Beautiful  
Place!

What  
do you  
think  
we're  
all  
looking out of

Kenneth Patchen

ELE  
PHA  
NTS



and

ESK  
IMO  
S

are the sort  
of inventions  
makes me sure  
that God has  
a couple three-  
four kids of  
His own



Now, When I Get  
Back Here,  
I expect  
To find  
All of  
you  
marching  
Throught the  
Streets with Great  
Bunches of Wild Flowers  
On your Arms

continued from p. 53

fantastic creatures bent on reassuring us of life; even of the fantastic life. They are beings from the same streams of imagination and realization as the ones which inhabit the worlds of Thurber, Chagall, Edward Lear, Grandeville, Klee, William Blake. Artists who people such worlds do not so much manufacture a mythology of fantasy to be taken as reality, as they unite with existence in all of its dimensions including the absurd, the irrational and the fantastic. They put the beautiful bridge across the gulf which separates us from the possibility of our imagination. Patchen words transform themselves into visions for the eye; his creatures vanish only to become poetry. Patchen erases the careful line between the rational and irrational, between the serious world of man and the child's world of play. The demarcation between nonsense and rationality is a false sort of fortress and Patchen, with every page, lays siege to it.

Maybe that's why his creatures look so much like invaders from another planet, and you get the distinct impression that no man-made bastion could effectively keep them out. They appear: we believe in them. Their quality revives our lost sense of meaning. They speak to our sense of wonder.

And Patchen never lets us quite recover from the onslaught of wonder. He has like the Keystone Kops, another trick, another joke, a raucous pun, a dare, a warning of doom, or a broadly humorous commentary to make on life. His sense of the ridiculous reminds me of Ionesco, Beckett and Albee. His sureness with character is like Swift, Pope or Thurber. His nostalgic tenderness is like that of Synge or the *Little Prince* of Saint-Exupery. His drawing itself is genius, like the supple hand of Hokusai in his sketchbook.

His imagination unites us with the human race. It puts us in touch with our own humanity. His artistry dazzles and traps us. For color alone, his pages are masterpieces. Subtle and bold, they have to be seen to be believed. But so consummate an artist is Patchen that he refuses to follow the caprice of color for its own sake: he disciplines the whole, unmanageable contraption into a glorious art.

No wonder that a professor of English rose to lyricism trying to describe Patchen in a review to people who didn't

yet know him: "The world Kenneth Patchen lives in is wild with surprise, love and words, complete in its own fantastic system, which happens now and then to include the actual world. Its population, animal, human and otherwise, has never been really counted, all census-takers have come back to the office with a dazed sort of shining on their faces and never been the same since."\*

That sort of magic requires the delicate combination of one who lives fully, and knowing the grandeur and misery of man, can sing hymns to life in so creative a manner that it looks deceptively easy to the casual eye or the unseasoned life. All of Patchen is in dialogue. His painting, just as his prose and poetry, combine to issue and celebrate the last plea of man to man: "Dear Friends, Do we who so love all little creatures & this world's lonely sad wonders tear open our hearts beyond any telling—O cruel to say this truth! Now . . . O now do we despair for Mankind. But, dear friends, as the lights Of all reason and hope go out, We can and we must believe In one another!"

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**KENNETH PATCHEN** was born in the Middle West and attended the Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin. As a prose writer and a poet as well as a painter, his books, often illustrated, sometimes **handmade**, have been translated and published in France, Italy, Germany, Holland and Sweden; many have appeared in England. One wonders, too, if some have not filtered into Japan, for his message and painting suit the Oriental sensitivity toward the fantastic and abhorrence of the ugliness.

Patchen's work in graphics is in direct and intimate relation to his total vision of reality. His books include: *POEMSCAPES*, Jargon Books (Highlands, N.C.); *HURRAH FOR ANYTHING*, Jargon; *FABLES*, Jargon; *MEMOIRS OF A SHY PORNOGRAPHER*, City Lights Publishers (San Francisco); *POEMS OF HUMOR AND PROTEST*, City Lights; *SLEEPERS, AWAKE!*, Padell Books, N.Y.; *THE JOURNAL OF ALBION MOONLIGHT*, Padell; *PICTURES OF LIFE AND DEATH*, Padell; *FIRST WILL AND TESTAMENT*, Padell; *THE DARK KINGDOM*, Padell; *CLOTH OF THE TEMPEST*, Padell; *WHEN WE WERE HERE TOGETHER*, New Directions; and *SELECTED POEMS OF KENNETH PATCHEN*, New Directions. None of his books sells for more than \$3.50 and many for far less. Anyone wanting to own one of his fabulous "Painted Books" or silkscreen portfolios, has only to write to him directly at: 2340 Sierra Court, Palo Alto, California. The price of these marvelous handmade books is about \$15.00. Then, too, Kenneth Patchen has recorded his poetry: *KENNETH PATCHEN READS WITH THE CHAMBER JAZZ SEXTET, LP 12"*, Album #3004, Cadence Records (119 W. 57th Street, N.Y.), \$3.98.

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\* John Holmes, *The New York Times Book Review*, Sept. 5, 1958.



WOODCUT: OTIS HUBAND



# PARADIGMS FOR THE LIVING

## *finitude and mortality in homer*

BY PAUL LEE

*Perhaps the blessing of mortality consists in this, that as mortality grows upon us it strengthens in us the intimation of what is demanded of us—no more and no less than ourselves. Perhaps this is the one thing we need to know, somehow—unmistakably, unerringly conveyed as a demand as inescapable as it is incomprehensible, and beyond our capacity to bear.*

—Henry Bugbee

LAST year I conducted a noncredit seminar at Harvard which was half-seriously, half-humorously entitled, "Finitude, Mortality, and Just Plain Having-To-Die." We started with *The Iliad* and concluded with Plato's dialogues on the death of Socrates. The synoptic account of the life and death of Jesus and selected cantos from Dante's *Commedia*—originally included—were not covered because of lack of time. In exploring the theme of death in these works, we recognized that many other themes and problems would be ignored; nevertheless, we focused on mortality as a concept of pervasive emphasis and repeated reflection in these works.

But our aim eluded us almost from the beginning. It was easy to interpret the central theme of *The Iliad* as a reflection on the death of Achilles, and the implications of this theme lead all the way to the death of a civilization (Mycenaean). We confidently argued that this was the very heart of *The Iliad*, the main focus, the only way adequately and decisively to understand what the poem was about. Whatever else one wanted to say about the poem was incidental to the main line: the unique revelation vouchsafed to Achilles that he is to die, and the unfolding drama of his response to this revelation. Enthusiasm often ruins attempts to stress importance, and indeed, our excitement over the importance of this theme gave rise to extravagant claims for its predominance over other themes. We didn't care. Something happened to us and to our relationship to Homer when his poem was read from the point of view of man's having-to-die. A venerable and esteemed epic poem became a vital and engrossing existential discovery with acute relevance to each one of us in our commonly shared mortality.

In Homer we confront the early Greek view of death. From the opening of *The Iliad* to the end of the

poem, Homer focuses on a relentless view of inconsolable death and demands that we resolutely fix our gaze on it. He begins:

*Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus' son Achilles  
and its devastation, which put pains thousandfold upon the  
Achaians,  
hurled in their multitudes to the house of Hades strong  
souls of heroes, but gave their bodies to be the delicate  
feasting of dogs, of all birds, . . .*

This is the fate awaiting the heroes at Troy. The Greek does not make the customary distinction between soul and body, as one would suppose from the translation. The text should read that their "life-breath" (*psyche*) was gasped out onto the ground and went down into death's house, whereas they themselves (*autous*) were made a meal of, spoiled by dogs and birds as they lay dead on the ground. Whereas one moment there was a pulsating, enlivened, vital and powerful hero fighting, now there is a dead thing, devoid of power, strengthless, inert upon the ground, empty of life and bereft of meaning—like a tree torn up by the roots, prostrate and prone. Homer mercilessly documents the imagery of death. His documentary reaches a peak in the death of Hector, honored as a god within his city by all the Trojans. Hector, the pride and honor of that great city, is finally caught by Achilles after a rather ignominious chase around the Trojan walls. Apollo forsakes him; he knows that the end is near. (The gods depart when death is imminent, abandoning the heroes and leaving them helpless and powerless.) He pleads with Achilles to swear to a pact that the body of whomever is killed as the outcome of their combat will not be violated but will be given back to his parents for proper burial. Achilles, pride and strength of the Achaians, snorts an answer:

*Argue me no arguments, Hector. If I could I  
would hack away your meat and eat it raw. Your body,  
you, will be defiled by birds, and dogs will feed  
upon your head.*

Earlier, when Hector had killed Patroclus, Achilles had rescued the body of his friend from Hector's efforts to take it back into the city as a trophy where he would have "cut the head from the soft neck and set it on sharp stakes." Achilles, speaking to the dead Patroclus, declares:

*I will not bury you till I bring to this place the  
armour and the head of Hector, since he was your  
great-hearted murderer.*

Achilles then ministers to his dead friend, elaborately bathing and washing the body. Anointing Patroclus with olive oil and treating his gashes with unguents, Achilles lays him on a bed, the body wrapped in a white sheet and covered with a white mantle. The tenderness, solicitude, and loving care are in violent contrast to his insane grief and what he does to Hector. Achilles has cut him down with his ash spear and now he thinks

*of shameful treatment for glorious Hector.  
In both of his feet at the back he made holes by the tendons  
in the space between ankle and heel, and drew thongs of oxhide through them,  
and fastened them to the chariot so as to let the head drag,  
and mounted the chariot, and lifted the glorious armour inside it,  
then whipped the horses to a run, and they winged their way unreluctant.  
A cloud of dust rose where Hector was dragged, his dark hair was falling  
about him, and all that head that was once so handsome was tumbled  
in the dust; since by this time Zeus had given him over  
to his enemies, to be defiled in the land of his fathers.*

Before defiling Hector, Achilles speaks to him, even though dead at his feet, and says:

*Die: and I will take my own death at whatever time  
Zeus and the rest of the immortals choose to accomplish it.*

The poignancy, the sad but courageous acknowledgment and affirmation, which sounds through this line is understood only when one remembers that the prophecy pronounces that Achilles shall die after Hector. Prior to this acknowledgment and acceptance of his fate, Achilles had tried to cheat his fate. He quarreled with Agamemnon, removed himself from the fighting, and sat brooding by his ships. In a wishful dream, he wondered whether to return home and live a long and glorious life as ruler of his people or remain at Troy and die. But he is to die at Troy; there is no other way.

Achilles had one hope: Patroclus. It was prophesied that he must die at Troy, but not Patroclus. His friend must be spared. Before Patroclus goes into the fighting, wearing Achilles' armour, Achilles prays:

*Let glory, Zeus of the wide brows, go forth with him.  
Make brave the heart inside his breast, so that even Hector  
will find out whether our henchman knows how to fight his battles  
by himself, or whether his hands rage invincible only  
those times when I myself go into the grind of the war god.  
But when he was beaten back from the ships their clamorous onset,  
then let him come back to me and the running ships, unwounded,  
with all his armour and with the companions who fight close beside him.  
So he spoke in prayer, and Zeus of the counsels heard him.  
The father granted him one prayer, and denied him the other.*

Achilles had been using Patroclus as an antidote for his having-to-die. Patroclus was his one consolation in response to this awful revelation. But Zeus was of another mind. Achilles will die alone, will die his own death, following his friend into death's house. Patroclus is now dead. And

*Achilles led out the thronging chant of their lamentation,  
and laid his manslaughtering hands over the chest of his dear friend  
with outbursts of incessant grief.*

Achilles has his fill of mourning and sets out to vent his wrath on the corpse of Hector, but even Achilles, who has vowed to behead twelve Trojan children before the burning pyre of Patroclus, does respond to the pathetic plea of Priam who begs for the return of the corpse that it might receive burial. Achilles thinks of his own father, soon to mourn the death of his son, and complies with his request. Homer not only knew what death was, but he also knew the meaning of grief and mourning. The men and women of Homer's poem glut themselves with grieving. But they know when they have had their fill of mourning, at which point they stop and feast.

Homer's imagery of death is inexhaustible in its meaning and import. The focal point of this imagery is that Achilles must die. Possessed with the being of a warrior, it is his fate to fall before the Skaian gates of Troy. Nevertheless, Achilles affirms his fate. The isolating revelation which had filled him with anxiety and dread until he had removed himself from the fighting has been acknowledged and overcome. But it took the death of Patroclus to break through this isolation and now Achilles, resplendent in his flaming heroism, burns out in a flash of glory that is transmuted into deathless song. Achilles will die foremost of all the warriors who lost their lives at Troy.

**A**ND now a look at this theme in the *Odyssey*. Odysseus was "born for trouble," and the consequences of such trouble are having-to-die, which he also accepts and acknowledges. But he has an option. It is not, as in Achilles' case, a matter of indulgence, a hypothetically entertained option to mull over

and brood about. It is a real option: whether to stay with the goddess, Calypso, and be granted immortality, or to "steal home" on condition of eventual death. Odysseus prefers Penelope even if it means having-to-die.

*Son of Laertes, versatile Odysseus,  
after these years with me, you still desire  
your old home? Even so I wish you well.  
If you could see it all, before you go—  
all the adversity you face at sea—  
you would stay here, and guard this house, and be  
immortal—though you wanted her forever,  
that bride for whom you pine each day.  
Can I be less desirable than she is?  
Less interesting? Less beautiful? Can mortals  
compare with goddesses in grace and form?*

To this the strategist Odysseus answered:

*My lady goddess, here is no cause for anger.  
My quiet Penelope—how well I know—  
would seem a shade before your majesty,  
death and old age being unknown to you,  
while she must die. Yet it is true, each day  
I long for home, long for the sight of home.*



WOODCUT: OTIS HUBAND

Odysseus seeks a homecoming, but in order to do so he must journey to the house of the dead and hear the prophecy of Tiresias, who alone has sense and wit, while all the others dart as shadows. Kirke gives him his sailing directions:

*home you may not go  
unless you take a strange way round and come  
to the cold homes of Death and pale Persephone.*

As Achilles sought a way out of his fate through Patroclus but was contradicted, Odysseus' efforts to achieve his aim meet with a curious reversal and he must take a strange way that leads through death.

Sailing into the region of the men of Winter where the Sun is never seen, they approach the realm of the Dead. In a chapter as rich as Book 11 of the *Odyssey*, selections must suffice in order to sketch the Homeric view of death. In the *Iliad*, the Homeric heroes are referred to as "dogfood." Another apt metaphor is "bags of blood." When the bag is punctured, the blood pours out on the ground, and the slight noise and mist issuing from the gushing blood is all there is to what is referred to as "soul." This hissing vapor flutters off to Hades with a noise that a bat makes. The psyche is that faint fluttering vapor of spilled blood. This vapor is in some sense associated with a man's shadow, which in most cases is a metaphor for memory. Death's house is the dwelling of the memory-shadows. The reflection one has cast during one's life, so to speak, is picked up in that noise, that squeak, that hiss, which one makes when the blood-bag is punctured. But it is no more than one's shadow and it has nothing whatsoever to do with a so-called immortal soul. The man dies. There he lies. But the life-breath which is spilled out on the ground along with the blood seeps down into death's house, where it dwells like a memory image, a memory shadow of the man. To this extent, albeit modest, death is withstood—the living remember the dead, and Achilles will not forget Patroclus even in the house of death.

If one is not remembered, does one's shadow fade and disappear? Can we say that the shadow in the house of the dead is the reflection cast by those who remember? When they forget, when they die and are dead, and are forgotten themselves, does one's shadow vanish altogether? This is why the strengthless dead are referred to as *memory-shadows*. Another aspect of this problem is the relationship between the

funerary rite of cremation and memory-shadows. The man is burned, but the shadow cast by those who remember him continues in death's house as long as they remember. Connected with memory is the theme of guilt, for although the dead are insubstantial, there is some note of judgment in death. Minos, the judge of the dead, appears in Homer's underworld, "the son of Zeus, enthroned, holding a golden staff, dealing out justice among ghostly pleaders arrayed about the broad doorways of death." (Plato expands and elaborates on this judgment of the dead, in a way reminiscent of the *Odyssey* in his myth of Er, the Pamphylian—who travels to the Underworld and returns to tell the tale of what he saw there concerning the judgment of the souls—in the last book of the *Republic*.) Tityos, Tantalos, and Sisyphos are seen by Odysseus as undergoing the tortures of the damned.

Independent of the theme of judgment is the question of being forgotten. To the Greeks it seems that the final and most brutal anxiety over having-to-die is to be forgotten. Consequently, the desire is to do great deeds, achieve *arete* (excellence in battle) so as to be sung about forever. Indeed, the view of Homer can almost be summed up in the words of the King of Phaiakia, Alkinoos, to whom Odysseus sings his tale of the dead:

*This the gods wrought: they spun the thread of death for some,  
that others in the time to come might have a song.*

To be remembered! Is this the one means of withstanding the inconsolable fact that one dies? To be caught up into some poet's song, named, one's deeds told: is this, in some sense, a victory over death? What of the memory-shadows in the house of Death themselves?

When Odysseus reached the land of the dead, elaborate preparations were made for bringing forth the memory-shadows. Odysseus is to save this tale and return to tell it. Like a poet himself, he sings the song of his descent, the experiences of one who has seen what no mortal man lives to tell even though all men meet this judgment when they die. All of this is recited at the Phaeakian court as he sings of his journey to the dead. He is the living one who sustains the being of the dead. But if one is not remembered, does one's shadow fade and disappear?

Achilles himself recognizes Odysseus in the land of Death and calls to him. Odysseus responds:

*But was there ever a man more blest by fortune  
than you Achilles? Can there ever be?  
We ranked you with immortals in your life time,  
We Argives did, and here your power is royal  
among the dead men's shades. Think then, Achilles:  
you need not be so pained by death.*

And Achilles' answers:

*Let me hear no smooth talk  
of death from you, Odysseus, light of councils.  
Better, I say, to break sod as a farm hand  
for some poor country man, on iron rations,  
than lord it over all the exhausted dead.*

And Odysseus sails home to die.

What can finally be said about Homer's depiction of death? This poet and theologian enshrined forever the sharp contrast between those who die (men) and those who are deathless (the gods). Could the Greeks sing of death in poems of such radiant beauty because they were able to look at death with such relentlessly unyielding honesty? Was mortality something less than a blessing because it was not beyond their capacity to bear? Was Homer able to penetrate the darkness and nothingness of death so as to cast light back into life? Are the stories of the dead paradigms for the living? Homer tells us much about what it meant for a Greek to die. He opens for us a vision of death, a vision vouchsafed to "the blind one . . . who sang that they should not die."

Quotations are from *The Iliad*, translated by Richmond Lattimore and *The Odyssey*, translated by Robert Fitzgerald.

JESSICA MITFORD  
AND STUDS TERKEL  
DISCUSS

## the american way of death

For more than ten years, Studs Terkel has been part of the creative programming of Chicago's WFMT. His interviews with leading authors, actors, artists, and "thinkers" have given listeners hours of enjoyment and enlightenment. This recent conversation with Miss Mitford reveals some of the current mores and rituals which symbolize our society's attitudes toward death.

**Terkel:** Jessica Mitford . . . your writing itself is marvelous. At first, it might seem incongruous that a book on death should take a witty approach. But it's not witty for the sake of being funny, but for the sake of making a point. Pertinent points—about how death affects our pocketbooks, how our emotions are juggled and played with . . .

**Mitford:** Yes, that's the sad part—what really happens to people when they are confronted by death. This is the thing that I keep learning more and more about from letters from all over the country. Particularly letters from ministers who see so much of the commercialism that is made of death. Ministers from all faiths are getting increasingly concerned.

**Terkel:** I think it can safely be said that *The American Way of Death* is the blockbuster among nonfiction books of our decade. Perhaps none since *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has caused Americans to take such a long look at one aspect of our folkways and mores. I suppose you shall be known as the mortician's darling.

**Mitford:** I would like to think so.

**Terkel:** In the work—the research—for the book, I suppose the thought has come to you that this topic has been an unspoken subject in American customs throughout the years?

**Mitford:** Yes, and for a very good reason. The undertakers themselves have tried constantly and traditionally to avoid the spotlight of dazzling publicity. They hate publicity; they prefer to work behind closed doors and in the dark. It is rather hard to find out many aspects of their practices. The research itself presented a few problems.

**Terkel:** The research involved talking to. . . . We

shouldn't say undertakers, should we? What are they known as? Funeral directors?

**Mitford:** Mortician is rather going out at the moment. Funeral director is current, but fast being replaced by funeral service practitioner. There is a constant upgrading in this field, you understand.

**Terkel:** And we don't say cemetery, but memorial park.

**Mitford:** Yes, and it's a memorial estate—not a grave.

**Terkel:** There's a new vocabulary of euphemisms here. Of course, the word coffin is never used—it's a casket. And the crypt is . . .

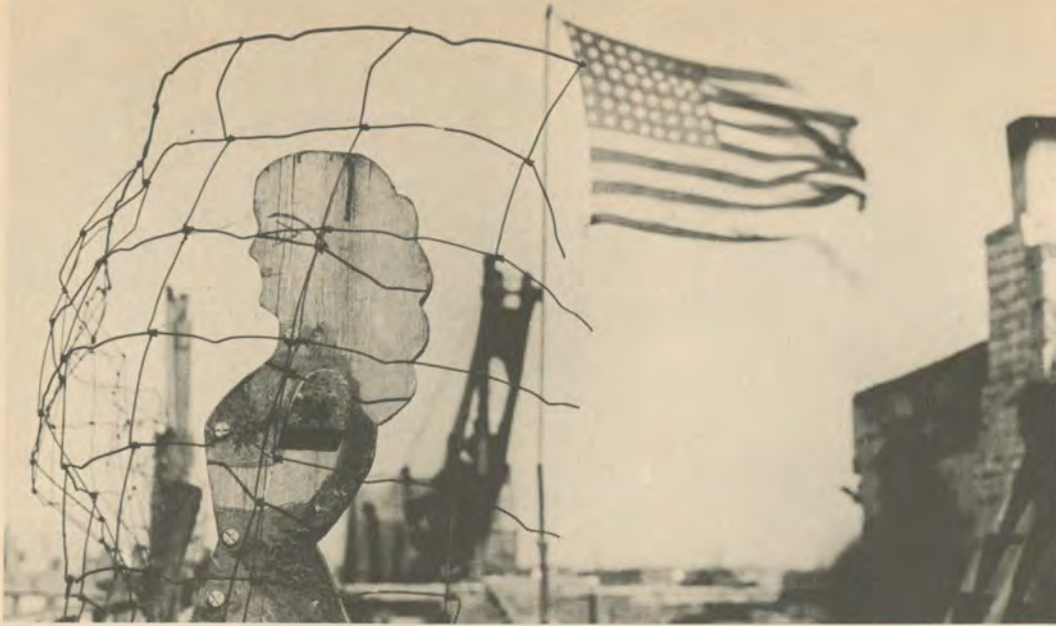
**Mitford:** Well, a crypt is still a crypt at the moment.

**Terkel:** Throughout, yours is a witty book about a subject that doesn't involve too much humor. At the same time there is a strange kind of macabre humor. Your writing is light and at the same time perceptive. We can't avoid a humorous look at strange customs.

**Mitford:** The trouble is that so much of it struck me as being hilariously funny and yet sad at the same time.

**Terkel:** In sadness and seriousness, you point out the effect on the living as well as the dead. There's the matter of status symbols . . .

**Mitford:** This is something which I believe has been put over on people more or less by the undertakers—funeral service practitioners—themselves. But what I have gathered from letters I have received from all over the country since the book came out is that the average person is particularly anxious to avoid this business of status symbols. This is one area of our affluent society where people are really yearning for a return to simplicity and an ordinary, decent way of doing things. Perhaps a return to the



PHOTOGRAPH: EDWARD WALLOWITCH

customs of our forefathers in some respects.

**Terkel:** When did the change take place? I mean, the traditional American funeral custom was the simple pine box, with the relatives laying out the body and a few friends appearing.

**Mitford:** Yes, this was the standard kind of funeral until about the turn of the century. Of course, there are always exceptions. It happens in all societies. As a matter of fact, I'm fully for diversity in all things—including funerals. I believe that if a person wants a \$15,000 bronze casket and all the works, then he should have the right to have it. But I'm concerned about those who would like a pine box, and want to avoid being transformed by the embalmers into a beautiful "memory picture."

**Terkel:** So you're attacking the conformity that binds us—the open casket, embalming itself, the public ignorance and confusion about the laws involved.

**Mitford:** In my opinion, embalming is the cause—the crux, really, of the American way of death. If you embalm somebody and restore them, then it's easier to convince survivors to choose a suitable, expensive casket in which to display this work of restorative art. The undertakers began embalming on a wide scale at the turn of the century, and it was about then that the present conformity began to mold the American funeral.

**Terkel:** The cosmetics, the artifacts, embalming—it all has an almost necrophilic aspect to it.

**Mitford:** This has been charged—especially by the clergy who have become increasingly upset over the distortion of what they look upon as a fundamentally serious religious rite into a sort of hero's macabre farewell party—where the guest of honor is the corpse.

**Terkel:** You have a chapter called "The Nosey Clergy." It seems the clergyman is considered something of a threat to the funeral establishments.

**Mitford:** Yes, the funeral services particularly dislike it when the clergyman comes with the bereaved family to help them choose the casket. They dislike any outside person coming in, but particularly the clergymen who know exactly what is coming off, and who know something about the price of caskets. The undertakers spend hours in their conferences and conventions hearing speeches and discussions on how to deal with the clergy, and how to keep them out of the picture.

**Terkel:** I know the funeral directors have been trying to answer your book. What are they saying?

**Mitford:** Well, Wilber Krieger, managing director of the National Selected Morticians, issued a press release in which he said that I had not said one word about the religious ceremony connected with funerals. I thought that rather odd. I wonder if he actually read the book because there is quite a lot about that. He also said that I was trying to substitute Russian communistic funerals for our American way of death. He doesn't seem to have noticed that the best embalmers in the world are the communists.

**Terkel:** Yes, think of Lenin's tomb itself.

**Mitford:** That's right. They haven't answered any of the substantial points made in the book, however. Howard C. Raether, executive secretary of the National Funeral Directors' Association, also issued a statement in which he said that he thought my estimate of \$1,450 as the amount spent for the aver-

age adult's funeral was very high. But he failed to give an estimate of his own.

**Terkel:** In the very opening of the book you quoted Raether's epigraph, "Funerals are becoming more and more a part of the American way of life."

**Mitford:** Yes, I loved that quote.

**Terkel:** "The American way of life . . ." I suppose the ceremonies involved do reflect the American way of life, don't they? The fact that so many status symbols are involved. . . .

**Mitford:** They do reflect it in a sort of weird and nightmarish fashion. But people fall for most status symbols with their eyes open, you know. You do have a choice of whether you buy a Cadillac or a Pontiac. But in the case of funerals it is very different. People stumble into the gruesome and ghastly status symbols—not wanting to, not of their own free will—but because of the situation they are in at the time.

**Terkel:** One of the key costs is the casket, isn't it?

**Mitford:** Yes, and the method of selling one is very subtle and quite interesting. The key factor is the placement of the casket in the "selection room." There is a complicated system, worked out by Wilber Krieger, which is designed to make the family buy something more expensive than they were planning to. The funeral director does this by putting all the expensive caskets in what he calls the "avenue of approach" which leads to the right. The reason that it leads to the right is that most people are right-handed, and they tend to turn to the right. The cheaper ones are all crowded into a beastly area called "resistance lane."

**Terkel:** Then we come to the funeral costs. You quote an astonishing fact that it is the third highest expenditure by a family, following the cost of the home and the car. You estimate an annual national expenditure of between 1.6 and 2 billion dollars.

**Mitford:** Yes, the Chamber of Commerce estimates that what we call the "personal expenditure" for funerals—in 1960—was about 1.6 billion dollars. But that doesn't include the burial of indigents, nor the huge expenditures for flowers, burial vaults, transportation of the dead, and "pre-need" selling of graves and crypts.

**Terkel:** You have a chapter called "P.O." It means "Please Omit Flowers," doesn't it? And it's a taboo phrase in the press.

**Mitford:** The idea is that the florists have practically intimidated newspapers all over the country—the

estimate is at least in more than two hundred metropolitan dailies. The newspapers are asked to delete the phrase, "Please Omit Flowers," even if the decedent has expressly said in his will that the phrase was to be in the death notice.

**Terkel:** You say in the book that funeral directors fight this phrase . . . .

**Mitford:** Very much so. Because they feel that omitting flowers leads to simplicity and plainness in all things. And once people can be convinced that floral offerings are inappropriate ways of celebrating a death, they will also begin to seek simplicity in other things. And, of course, this can cut down on the whole thing.

**Terkel:** So, we begin to see the many forces at work. What about insurance and death benefits? I know that many unions and associations are wondering if it is worth fighting for more death benefits if the beneficiary will not be the worker's family, but the funeral director instead.

**Mitford:** Exactly. They are concerned about this, and I've had many letters from trade-unionists who are now considering establishing plans in connection with their pension funds for some kind of protection for the members, and their widows.

**Terkel:** Let's hear about Forest Lawn. You have a chapter on this titled, "Shroudland Revisited."

**Mitford:** It was called that because Evelyn Waugh's book, *The Loved One*, is perhaps the best-known book about this whole subject, so I sort of revisited Forest Lawn after Evelyn Waugh. But the memorial park has gone way beyond Waugh's descriptions, and is now far more elaborate. They never had a gift shop, for instance, at the time . . . .

**Terkel:** You say there's a gift shop?

**Mitford:** Yes, and I brought you a gift. It's a coloring book, priced at 59 cents. It's called, "*Forest Lawn Coloring Book*, twenty-nine scenes from Forest Lawn treasures." And then you see the ghastly treasures.

**Terkel:** "Songs of the Angels." "Cart of David." By the way, what about the reproduction of Michelangelo's *David*?

**Mitford:** Eaton (the creator of Forest Lawn) got a copy of *David*, but for reasons known only to himself, he affixed a fig leaf which makes it look absolutely horrible and indecent. The thing about Forest Lawn is that it's an enormous place and everything is almost ten times life size. The guide book to the



park is very conscious of dimensions and costs and this kind of thing.

**Terkel:** It's appropriate that this be near Hollywood, isn't it?

**Mitford:** It's very appropriate. Oh, and then there are the ghastly statues brought from everywhere. Some are of little kiddies . . . little children called "Little Mother Duck," "Little Pals," "Look, Mommy!" There is something for everybody there.

**Terkel:** What about the prices?

**Mitford:** This is a description of my tour through Forest Lawn: "Wandering through Whispering Pines, Everlasting Love, Kindly Light—(by the way, these are the names of the zones in Forest Lawn)—and Babyland, with its encircling heart motor road. I learned that each section of Forest Lawn is zoned and named according to the price of burial plots. Medium-priced graves range from \$434.50 in Haven of Peace to \$599.50 in Triumphant Faith. (Weird pricing, isn't it? They're always priced like that, like bargain basement stuff.) It's \$649.60 in Ascension. The cheapest is \$308 in Brotherly Love—even that commodity comes high at Forest Lawn."

**Terkel:** Seems that Brotherly Love is more economical than Ascension! Let's go back to the complete funeral. What does one cost from start to finish?

**Mitford:** This is the sort of thing I've been hearing so much about since the book was written. You have to be extremely tough in order to get anything that's really simple and plain. I got a letter from a young woman who had nursed her elderly father who was dying, and had sacrificed a great deal not only to provide the essentials but certain luxuries which she wanted for him. He died. The undertaker was absolutely shocked when she said that everything in his establishment was too expensive, including the cheapest casket, which was \$629.50. She said (which is the hardest thing in the world to say), "If you won't give me a plain wood coffin for half that price, I'm going to take the body elsewhere." Faced with this, he gave her the plain wood coffin at half the price—which is still approximately ten times more than it cost him wholesale—and he told her relatives that she was a bit off in the head. If this girl had not been the tough girl that she was, you can be sure that she would have spent a few thousand dollars before she was through. The funeral directors charge what the traffic will bear.

**Terkel:** You have a chapter on funerals in England.

Is what is happening uniquely American, or is it happening in other countries?

**Mitford:** It is uniquely American and Canadian. The Canadians follow the Americans completely in this respect. But in England most of these things would be completely unheard of and considered so weird and so contrary to good taste, you know, that it is unlikely these practices will ever catch on over there. For example, the idea of having a public showing of a dead person would be unheard of in England.

**Terkel:** Now, about reactions to your book. I've seen letters to the editor in various papers, and the funeral directors are furious over this attack on their establishment, which is also an attack upon their way of . . .

**Mitford:** . . . making money.

**Terkel:** Making money. And yet there seems to be some effect. You mentioned an ad from Denver which presented questions and answers on the industry, and spoke of \$150 and \$200 funerals.

**Mitford:** This has had an over-all effect. Forest Lawn is taking enormous ads in Los Angeles. And in San Francisco, they have taken ads with huge amounts of white space, saying, "For simplicity and dignity. . . ." This was never done before. It was always something on peace of mind protection and things of this kind which they were advertising. But never simplicity!

**Terkel:** It seems that your book, aside from being an incredible exposure of an unspoken, unwritten aspect of our mores of life and death, appears to be having a salutary effect.

**Mitford:** Yes, I had thought it might be a controversial book, because, after all, death is a very serious thing, and the subject is very close to all of us. But instead of being controversial in the ordinary sense with people taking violently different sides, the controversy seems to be shaping up with the funeral industry on one side and the people—the clergy and everybody who is not a funeral director—on the other. I have yet to hear from a satisfied customer.



PHOTOGRAPH: EDWARD WALLOWITCH

# BOOKS

Paul Tournier, *The Strong and the Weak*. (Translated by Edwin Hudson.) Westminster, 254 pp., \$4.

The translation from the French of Paul Tournier's 1947 volume, *The Strong and the Weak*, provides another illustration of the perceptive work of the famous Swiss physician. We find here the same compassionate understanding of human need and the same honest examination of the depths of human nature. Tournier engages his readers in genuine dialogue. One cannot go through a Tournier volume without both meeting the author and confronting himself.

Tournier's thesis is that all men are anxious, fearful and weak, and tend to respond to their condition by either strong reactions or weak ones. The strong are characterized by reactions of gaiety, condescension, self-satisfaction, aggressiveness, glibness of tongue and the like. The weak response is one of inhibition, flight or inertia, including depression, self-pity, self-reproach, life-weariness, panic, and torpor. Psychoanalytic cures, Tournier holds, are usually oriented toward helping the weak to overcome their inhibitions and to adopt strong reactions.

Such reorientation often violates the person's authentic moral conscience, Tournier feels. He is skeptical of curing a man's sickness through repression, whether of his instincts or his conscience. He believes that what man needs is the wholeness that comes through confession of one's sin and weakness, and through opening oneself to the grace of God. This is the road to the true strength that does not need to hide behind the masks of reaction patterns, whether "strong" or "weak." The real freedom of the Christian, Tournier holds, is not to be confused with weak reactions. Misinterpretations of the Sermon on the Mount have often falsely identified Christianity with repression of even natural aggressiveness. Tournier rejects such an ethic, which gives us a watered-down Christ and anemic human beings. There is a legitimate defense of the person which is grounded in the will of God as well as in psychology, he contends.

Tournier represents a contemporary attempt to overcome the divorce of depth psychology and theology, not only in theory but in practice. He has been criticized severely for not observing his professional limits as a physician and a man of science. His response to such criticism is that all healing of persons depends ultimately on our conception of the nature of man, and thus on metaphysical rather than scientific assumptions. Therefore he is not "unprofessional"; only more open and systematic about his controlling values than most scientists.

—ARTHUR L. FOSTER

John MacQuarrie, *Twentieth Century Religious Thought*. Harper & Row, 376 pp., \$5.

This is an ambitious work which undertakes to survey and evaluate all the major trends of twentieth-century theology. The results of such an undertaking by a single writer within the scope of one book are bound to be of uneven quality and to fail comprehensiveness in every instance. Nevertheless, this is a work of major importance and well worth the most careful study.

Among the various theologies and theological methods dis-

cussed are idealism, philosophies of spirit, positivism and naturalism, philosophies of history and culture, pragmatism, phenomenology, realism, neothomism, logical empiricism, theologies of the Word, and existentialism. There are valuable elucidations, construction of backgrounds, and enlightening connecting chapters. In all, the views of more than one hundred philosophers and theologians are analyzed and evaluated. Some of these discussions are not particularly novel in their judgment, and many deal with men whose views already have been reported in many quite adequate earlier books (e.g., F. H. Bradley, Josiah Royce, F. R. Tennant, W. Windleband, A. J. Toynbee, Karl Barth). However, one of Macquarrie's principal contributions is to place many of them in a new juxtaposition and thus to suggest new perspectives regarding their contributions to the development of twentieth-century thought.

The first five chapters deal with various forms of metaphysical idealism and the place of value theory in philosophy and theology. Here the analyses are well done and as thorough as can be expected within the scope of one book. Yet, unavoidably the author's own stance seems to lead him to miss the real strength and significance of idealistic philosophers and to fail to understand how and to what extent contemporary scientific developments strengthen an idealistic interpretation of reality (though in chapter XV he appears to recognize this!). Neither does he wholly grasp the personalistic-idealistic ground for asserting that personality is the highest value in the universe. He writes, "the weakness of personal idealism seems to be its assumption that because personality is the highest kind of being known to us, it must therefore also be the highest in the universe. It is, however, possible or even probable that God transcends personality by, let us say, as much as man transcends mere animality. This would be especially probable if God is identified with the absolute." (p. 57) Macquarrie here fails to recognize that there are serious epistemological problems involved. The personalist specifically attempts to develop an empirical approach to the nature of God, and would deny the legitimacy of "identifying God with the absolute" as wholly arbitrary and lacking in evidence. The personalist believes that the principal grounds (both emotional and rational) for believing in God at all point to a God possessing personality in highest form. It would appear to this reviewer, further, that Macquarrie actually falls back on an appeal to ignorance (a practice disconcertingly frequent among theologians), i.e., "it seems possible or even probable" that God is something other or more than the evidence indicates.

The real question is not what God *may be* beyond man's capacity to understand, but what God *is* so far as man *can* understand, granting that man's best efforts are of limited capacity, and all statements about the nature of God are projections from human experience.

In Chapter V the discussion of value philosophy and theology stemming from neo-Kantian and neo-Ritschlian philosophers is penetrating, though one may well be disappointed that the author seems not to understand the extensive interaction between the implications of personal idealism and the focus upon values.

One of the strongest chapters in the book treats of positivism and naturalism. Macquarrie recognizes the attractiveness of an approach that seems to rest on wholly "verifiable facts." The ultimate weakness of positivistic and naturalistic philosophies emerges with the absolutism into which some naturalistic philosophies develop, after beginning with a polemic against all absolutisms. Thus, according to K. Pearson, "There is the affirmation of the right of science to investigate all fields of knowledge . . . there is also the denial that there can be any knowledge out-

side of science, which means that theology and metaphysics have no contributions to make." (p. 99) The author's criticism of this absolutism is pertinent. "Science does turn into a 'church' with Pearson and Haeckel. There is more than a touch of fanaticism—Pearson prefers to call it 'enthusiasm'—both in their polemics against Christianity and in their apotheosis of science. To us who look back over sixty years of troubled world history, however, there is something pathetic in the faith of some of these men in scientific enlightenment, and their expectation that with increasing diffusion of such enlightenment, the twentieth century would be an era of unprecedented contentment." (p. 112)

The author has a realistic appreciation of the contributions of anthropology and psychology to the study and understanding of religion. He notes that such studies as these must be profoundly disturbing to religious smugness of exclusivism. "But for Christians who think of the revelation given in their own religion as continuous with a general revelation of God to mankind, there is nothing at all disturbing . . . in anthropology." (p. 114)

The book is too involved to permit extensive discussion of each section within the scope of this review. The chapters which deal with implications of the "new physics" for philosophy and theology are very useful. Here he does recognize what he failed to see (or at least to mention) when discussing idealism; namely, that the "older naturalism" and all mechanisms are being discredited, and that reality as studied by the contemporary scientist seems more "mind-like" than ever! He is probably correct in observing that "the most subtle interpretations of the new physics are probably to be found in the process philosophies of realistic metaphysicians. . . ." (p. 251)

His treatment of "post-liberal" theology in Britain and America is brief but satisfactory. The reviewer misses any adequate reference to neoliberalism—which may well prove to be the wave of the future, particularly when the impact of analytic criticism has been fully assessed and when the nostalgia for the Reformation has subsided.

The final chapter, "Concluding Comments," is one of the most perceptive and most useful. His criteria for choice of some understanding of religion are interesting and would seem to call almost directly for haste in the development of neoliberal views:

"(1) Our understanding of religion should be a *reasonable* one. . . ."

"(2) Our understanding of religion should be *contemporary*. . . ."

"(3) An understanding of religion ought to be *comprehensive*, that is to say . . . as an attitude of the whole personality. . . ."

"(4) . . . any understanding of religion must be *on the way*."

This follows from the denial that we can possess absolute truth." (pp. 373-374)

The reviewer would especially endorse Macquarries' last section on "Future Outlook." "When we think of names like Maritain, Berdyaev, Barth, Marcel, Otto, Tillich, to mention only a few, we see that twentieth-century man has not fallen below the level of his predecessors in the earnestness and perspicuity with which he has addressed himself to . . . religion. Some of us believe that this is because these problems belong to the very being of man himself, and that he cannot rest until he has come to terms with them." (p. 375)

Walter Lowrie, *A Short Life of Kierkegaard*. Anchor Paperbook, 226 pp., 95 cents.

Soren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*. Translated by Howard and Edna Hong. Harper, 383 pp., \$6.

*A Kierkegaard Critique*, Edited by Howard A. Johnson and Niels Thulstrup. Harper, 311 pp., \$6.

George Price, *The Narrow Pass: A Study of Kierkegaard's Concept of Man*. McGraw-Hill, 224 pp., \$5.50.

Interest in the life, work, and thought of Soren Kierkegaard continues to grow. The republication of two already well-known books, one by Kierkegaard and the other about him, is indicative of the liveliness of the interest. Surely Kierkegaard's rescue from the virtual oblivion he had previously endured to the degree of pre-eminence he now enjoys is one of the really important contributions made to the world by the twentieth-century philosophers and theologians.

Twenty years ago Walter Lowrie wrote and first published his *Short Life of Kierkegaard* and now this classic is available in a very readable format from Anchor paperbacks. The work was never meant to be a substitute for the scholarly and much longer biography which Lowrie wrote prior to the *Short Life*. Whereas the former was replete with all the reference parapher-



—RICHARD N. BENDER

GRILL

DRAWING

BY MATHIAS GOERTZ

nalía one could desire, the short version is a charming and lucid introduction to the enigmatic Kierkegaard for the general reading public. It should be emphasized that it was not an abridgment of the longer and earlier book but rather stands as a classic of its kind in its own right. Anchor should be commended for making it available so readily.

Another new edition of an already well-known and highly reputed primary writing is Harper's new translation of *Works of Love*. These discourses on ethics, especially in social contexts, are not quoted so often as some of his better-known and more popular writings. This attractive new volume hopefully will help to elevate this work to its rightful place in evaluations of the Kierkegaard corpus. The translators provide an incisive introduction which was particularly interesting to me because of the seriousness with which the Hongs take Kierkegaard's statement of intentions in all his authorship which he stated in *My Point of View as an Author*. Often by looking too wisely with the expectation of finding more than Kierkegaard meant, scholars have not been as receptive in reading *Point of View*. The Hongs' taking him at face value—a characteristic of George Price and at least of some of the contributors to the *Critique*, also—is important because it is a recognition that on occasion, at least, Kierkegaard just might have meant what he was saying to be nothing more nor less than a straightforward statement. Such an acknowledgment, even if not finally the answer, may contribute to clarifying the otherwise hopelessly ambiguous morass of critical judgments about what Kierkegaard has contributed to our understandings. Regarding the reliability of the Hongs' translation, I had no access to the earlier edition of this work by another translator for comparative purposes, nor do I read Danish. But the previous acceptance of their translating ability is sufficient grounds for expecting this new work to be of equal quality. For Kierkegaard scholars no comment upon this work is necessary, but for anyone whose interest may be budding, this scintillating excerpt should send him straight to his bookseller's.

Your friend, your beloved, your child, or whoever is the object of your love, has a claim upon its expression also in words when it really moves you inwardly. The emotion is not your possession but the other's. The expression of it is his due, since in the emotion you belong to him who moves you and makes you conscious of belonging to him.

If the Hongs' translation of *Works of Love* seems competent and very readable, the same will hardly be said for some of the essays in *A Kierkegaard Critique*. The editors, Johnson and Thulstrup, even candidly admit that "nobody in his right mind would set this book before young pupils as a model of English style." (p. 5.) The screening by translators and editors has persuaded them that clarity—if not felicity—has resulted in each essay. These essays were drawn together by the editors from sources in several languages—Danish, German, French, and English. The major *raison d'être* for the book is a rescue mission to save some of these significant thoughts about Kierkegaard in relation to a wide range of people and attitudes from the oblivion of obscure journals not otherwise readily accessible. The English reading public with an interest in Kierkegaard should be grateful for the accomplishment. The seventeen essays deal with a range of subjects involving efforts to understand Kierkegaard that are scarcely to be found between the covers of any other book. Some of the authors with whom the American reader is most likely to be familiar include Howard Johnson, Helmut Thielicke, Paul S. Minear, John Wild, Regin Prenter, and Hermann Diem.

My own appreciation of the book was heightened by the disunity of approach and the contradictory conclusions among the various authors. The editors apparently felt that such a kaleidoscopic presentation of positions is particularly appropriate to the subject of Kierkegaard's paradoxical notions. The venture struck me as quite bold and effective. The major unifying factor in the whole set of essays is the implicit judgment by seventeen different thinkers that in one respect or another Kierkegaard is worthy of their intellectual examination. For example, seldom does one read an essay by a contributor that is at obvious odds with a counter position presented by an editor. But in the *Critique* you may read a passage from Paul Holmer's "On Understanding Kierkegaard":

The historical origin of that theory [about the possibles] is not the understanding of that theory any more than Kierkegaard's historical contemporaneity (actuality) was a possibility or than the mediated ethical reality of another is the immediate encounter with duties and obligations for oneself . . . the extrinsic worth of historical scholarship as an aid to understanding Kierkegaard's writing is little. (p. 53)

There is little ambiguity in that judgment! And further into the book Thulstrup, a co-editor, presents these words:

This [the inaccurate use of Kierkegaard's thought by some philosophers and theologians] means that the problem presented by Kierkegaard, with his works at the center, must *first* be studied from a purely *historical* point of view. . . . (p. 296, italics are his.)

No matter where the reader's own sympathies may lie, these unequivocal arguments will force him to come to terms with the problem inherent in all criticism. Beyond noting this disarming quality of allowing an inclusive degree of freedom, I should mention the range of subject matter in this book. Here the selective processes of the editors are much more evident than in the positions taken by the contributors. The material very nicely supports another of Thulstrup's statement in which he argues that "There are three aspects to the problem called Kierkegaard: a *historical* aspect . . . a *systematic* aspect, and one which concerns *criticism*." (p. 290.) The thematic treatment is suggestive, usually quite readable, and in any account most commendable for the myriad faceting of Kierkegaard's thought. Dialogue with so seminal a thinker as Kierkegaard is greatly enhanced by such studies as this one.

The fourth (and most recent) of these books is in an entirely different class from the previous three. Price has achieved remarkable success in demonstrating the propriety of his thesis:

*The unity of a fundamental theme*, that is of a certain understanding of man, of which all the works are but an elaboration . . . all Kierkegaard's ideas, even the apparently contradictory ones, have their fitting place in this theme. . . . (p. 14)

To appreciate fully why the book is so remarkable requires a quick set of observations. On the one hand, there have been many readers of Kierkegaard's writings who have come to absolutely opposed judgments about the meaning and importance of any and/or all of his ideas. Not uncommon, for instance, is the categorical judgment by Neils Thulstrup in the *Critique* (see above) that no single doctrine has the power to pull together the disparate threads of Kierkegaard's thought. Price is arguing that the disagreements between the scholars and such judgments as Thulstrup's are predicated upon a gross oversight of one idea that serves to emphasize the singularity of Kierkegaard's purpose: *the doctrine of man* is the unifying principle upon which Price seeks to ferret out the underlying unity of Kierkegaardian authority. Of course, some will accuse Price of pedantry and

reductionism. Price, however, seems steeped in the requisite disciplines of history and philosophy and psychology to satisfy even the most scrupulous critic, given a fair hearing. In my opinion he has compellingly and convincingly refuted the long-standing prejudice that there is no such unity in Kierkegaard's writing. And unity does not mean, at least in this case, simple-mindedness. A doctrine may be at once both complex and unified, and Price argues that such is an apt description of the doctrine of man in Kierkegaard's thought.

The pattern of Price's analysis is particularly appropriate to the subject matter. Four questions provide the movements of his exposition: What is Man? What Can I Know? What Ought I to Do? What May I Hope? The Kantian questions deal with ultimate human concerns in language appropriate to the day and intellectual milieu in which Kierkegaard wrote. In response to each question Price allows Kierkegaard to answer loudly and clearly for himself. This is the epitome of the systematician's skill—to bring together in a cogent and cohesive whole the scattered thought of the thinker who left no system and yet in the process not to violate the original force and intent of the author.

This book should be valuable for the neophyte and the veteran Kierkegaard scholar alike. The critical apparatus alone is invaluable. The book may serve as an introduction to the spectrum of Kierkegaard's interests and methodology, or, in another instance, it may provide an alternative position to the prior notions many have embraced about the impossibility of systematizing Kierkegaard's thought. This is the kind of major statement we need in many fields.

—JAMES WIGGINS

John A. Hutchison, *Language and Faith*. Westminster, 316 pp., \$6.50.

Among philosophers of the analytical tradition, it is fashionable to question the intelligibility of religious assertions. Hence whether it is true that "Jesus Christ is Lord" concerns the contemporary philosophical skeptic much less than what an assertion of this sort could possibly mean. If we take statements like "There is a God" to be meaningful, we must be prepared to show what observable differences would result if there were no God as well as what evidence would count for the truth of the assertion.

Hutchison's book is the most recent attempt to introduce and to encompass the whole problem of religious language. A first distinction, he says, must be made between the statements of or in religion and those about religion which a theologian or anthropologist might assert. The former are primarily though not exclusively expressive while the latter are referential or informative. Language is multifunctional, he argues, so that some information as such is intended in any religious utterance even though clearly utterances like confessions of faith are not primarily intended as informative in the sense that ordinary empirical statements may be. One important distinction is that a statement of religion deals primarily with images rather than concepts, images whose function is to give existential significance to the life of the user who, he says, "puts himself under their authority . . . seeking from them and through them light and power, or . . . total life orientation" (p. 292). Hence the stock in trade of religious language as such are those images which emerge in the consciousness of the participant of a particular religious community.

Religious statements are best characterized as life-orientation statements. The main theme of this book states that "religions

may be construed as symbol systems whose function is total life orientation" (p. 266). The nature and purpose of religious language or art for that matter differ functionally from what is being done in assertions of a more purely informative character. Yet the believer is not trafficking merely in useful fictions. Even the most elemental confessions such as the Shema of Judaism are referential as well as confessional. But the truth value of the informative part of the utterance is another question. We must ask ourselves what religious assertions are doing. "Modern linguistic philosophy," Hutchison says, is "largely and even exclusively concerned with the referential uses of language" particularly as "it is found in the natural sciences" (p. 56). Theories of meaning and the intelligibility of discourse therefore have been based largely on the descriptive functions rather than others.

The contemporary skeptic has been misled into an unnatural association of meaning and intelligibility with the descriptive function of language. To be meaningful, he says, an utterance must describe some possible state of affairs. But a theory of meaning or intelligibility which prescribes its criteria is both unempirical and mistaken. The standards of meaning and intelligibility of any discourse must derive from the discourse itself. They cannot be imposed from without.

Hutchison points the way by identifying a main function of religious language as confessional as, e.g., in utterances such as "Jesus is Lord." Utterances of this sort, he says, function as spontaneous cries of the heart, so to speak, although they are not devoid of reference. That there is a God who is incarnate in Jesus the Christ is usually indicated. The other functions which he identifies are prayer, ritual (which confessions and prayers tend to become), myth or sacred story, moral imperatives, sermons or exhortations, and scripture or sacred writing.

Though Hutchison has failed to note adequately the new emphasis of the ordinary language analysts on the actual functioning of language as observed and analyzed, he has himself pointed in the same direction. He agrees with these latter-day analysts that the answer to the problem of the intelligibility of religious language is not to be found in the imposition of meaning criteria from paradigm cases drawn exclusively from the natural sciences or those in which the descriptive function prevails. It is not necessary that one literally say something in order to be intelligible. Indeed the only proper approach to language is the one suggested by the great analyst himself, Ludwig Wittgenstein, who in his later writings told us to look and see what people are doing with their language. Language performs in many ways and in accordance with many rules. Its analysis reveals not only the criteria and rules appropriate to its use but also the beliefs of the users. More attention should be given to what the participants of the Christian community themselves actually say and do and less to explaining and prescribing by the observer, whoever he may be.

Hutchison notes that each cultural effort "creates its own distinctive language through which it is articulated and communicated," and each "may be approached and studied fruitfully through its language" (p. 158). All language "is an activity that expresses the human self," he says. We are literally what we do and say, for saying is a form of doing, and saying may be expressing as well as referring. Thus the meaning of religious language is to be found in its function or use, in what it reveals of itself and its user to the observer and not in conformity to any externally imposed criteria of meaning whether by the theologian, the philosopher, or the scientist.

—MILTON D. HUNNEX

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**Poets:** **MILLER WILLIAMS**, 1963-64 Lowell Travelling Fellow, was last heard from in Santiago de Chile, where he is teaching and writing. **JIM WHITEHEAD** has published in several little magazines; he and **WILLIAM HEYEN** are both studying in the Writer's Workshop at State University of Iowa. **NIEL HANCOCK** writes both fiction and verse in Canyon, Texas. **ANNE SEXTON's** poem is from her latest volume, *All My Pretty Ones* (Houghton Mifflin), by permission. Her work appears widely. **NEAL KARRER** is a free-lance writer in New York City. **KENNETH PATCHEN** is one of the most important poets of this century—and one of the most neglected. His work appears everywhere, as if by magic.

**Artists:** **ROBERT REGIER**, art editor for *The Mennonite* (North Newton, Kansas), has done a series of woodcut prints on the Migration of God's People. **ARTHUR DESHAIES**, a well-known graphic artist, has experimented wonderfully with engraving on lucite and plexiglass and now plaster, which liberates his work from size limitations. He lives in Norton, Massachusetts. **HANS ORLOWSKI**, internationally known woodengraver, has done illustrations for the Psalms. He lives and works in Berlin, and at 70 is more than ever a leader in his field. The **MYT BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS**, cut from wood around 1537 by an unknown artist, show a deft line and a sense of imaginative humor and insight. **GREGORINO PRESTOPINO**, in a series of "landscape experiences in black and white" shows his mastery (even though he grew up in New York City) in depicting nature freshly. These drawings were done in 1959, and exhibited by the Nordness Gallery. **OTIS HUBAND**,



now on leave in Europe, pursues his powerful insights into the human condition by way of the woodblock print. He is a Virginian and a teacher. **MATHIAS GOERITZ**, who lives in Mexico City, has done many stained glass windows there. His drawing expressed the depths of the human condition and his compassionate involvement within it. **Photographers:** **EDWARD WALLOWITCH**, a Philadelphia native, now lives and works in New York City. He has an immediate sense of drama in all that he sees and captures on film the continuities of existence. **PHIL TROYER**, finishing his A.B. at Cornell College, Iowa, follows the art of photography, always making and recording new discoveries.

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 MAGAZINE

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CONTENTS JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1964 VOLUME XXIV/4-5 A DOUBLE ISSUE

	1	PSALM 90
b. j. stiles	2	DEATH: RELUCTANT PILGRIMS AND CHASTENED SURVIVORS
joseph w. mathews	4	THE TIME MY FATHER DIED
viktor e. frankl	11	EXISTENTIAL ESCAPISM
millar williams	15	POEM: SHIBUMI: LINES FOR A BURIAL
william heyen		POEM: AND THE SUN GOETH DOWN
niel hancock		POEM: WHEN ARE THE ALWAYS RIGHT
neal karrer & margaret rigg	16	AN EDWARD WALLOWITCH PORTFOLIO
james whitehead	25	POEM: ELEGY NO. 1: FOR M.M. POEM: ELEGY NO. 2: RAMBLING OVER
william heyen		POEM: PROPOSAL AND CLAUSE
j. a. t. robinson	26	PREACHING DEATH
anne sexton	29	POEM: OLD
john hight	30	LIFE AFTER DEATH
paul tillich	32	THE ETERNAL NOW
howard moody	38	NOVEMBER 22, 1963
robert steele	40	DEATH, THE FILM, AND THE FUTURE
mary shumway	44	FICTION: SONG OF THE ARCHER
margaret rigg	52	KENNETH PATCHEN: A PAINTER-POET
paul lee	62	PARADIGMS FOR THE LIVING
jessica mitford & studs terkel	68	THE AMERICAN WAY OF DEATH
	72	BOOKS
	76	CONTRIBUTORS

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