

## BOOK REVIEWS

### THE MIRACLE OF DEATH

By Betty J. Kovács, Ph.D.

Foreword by Anne Baring

- MYSTIC POP: THE "NOW AGE" MAGAZINE (Nov./Dec. 2007)

The Miracle of Death is a true story of dreams and visions and synchronistic events after the death of loved ones that opened a family to multiple levels of reality. In this wonderful book Betty explores the interconnectedness of all life and the evidence she found that indicates a planetary consciousness shift is underway. In her words, "Your life depends on death," because the mystery of death offers great insight into life! Death is a part of living and The Miracle of Death provides a fascinating look into our future.

- SHIFT: AT THE FRONTIERS OF CONSCIOUSNESS MAGAZINE, No. 6 (Mar.-May 2005)  
(INSTITUTE OF NOETIC SCIENCES)  
Reviewer: Molly Leach

Mythologist Betty Kovács invites us to consider that life can be more broadly defined than just the time that passes between "birth" and "death." As a reflection on the experience of her son Pisti's death at the youthful age of twenty in a car accident, this brave and heart-opening book goes deeply into her family's personal experience of loss, and the openings and wonder that ensue even in their deep grief. Though such a death would be any parents' worst nightmare, Betty Kovács brings to the forefront a sense of great awakening in the midst of tragedy. The edges of experience indicating the gray areas of her life come alive with an open, pressing, question: If death "is no parenthesis," as the poet e.e. cummings beautifully put it, then what lies beyond and how does one make sense of the hints about the afterlife given to us while we are here? By weaving together images of past dreams-both her son's and her own-Betty Kovács makes mythical-symbolic sense of their lives. Betty Kovács' husband Istvan also experiences life-like contacts with Pisti, who tells him that "there is nothing but life" and to "experience each moment fully, then let it go." Betty Kovács relates that until her son's death, "neither facts nor experience could completely shatter the 'holding pattern' of my worldview. Only then would Istvan and I experience such 'marvelous complexities' of patterns-from the personal to the mythic-that the old limits would be dissolved."

- NETWORK: THE SCIENTIFIC AND MEDICAL NETWORK REVIEW MAGAZINE (Apr. 2003)  
Reviewer: David Lorimer David  
Director of the Scientific and Medical Network from 1986-2000  
He is now Programme Director, continues to edit the Review, and is author and editor of eleven books.

#### Trans-Formations

In her foreword to this book, Anne Baring writes that 'what matters is that we recognise the existence of a dimension of reality beyond the one we know and enter into a relationship with it'. This is the experience of Betty Kovács in this extraordinary narrative around the deaths of her son and husband. As an academic, all her training imbued her with the 'myth of matter' as the only reality, which insists that there is no inner realm and that the universe is empty of love, consciousness and therefore of meaning. She feels that this creates a 'civil war against the deepest organising principles at work in all of nature'. The rational mind is grounded in denial and doubt, and has therefore separated and severed itself from its own deeper source. Experiences of the Cosmic Mind advise us otherwise: that the Divine is not Other, but Self - hence we are intrinsically linked to the whole of creation.

Continued...

*The Miracle of Death* by Betty J. Kovács, Ph.D.  
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The book begins with the phone call that every parent hopes that they will never receive—the news that Betty’s son has been involved in a serious car accident and that he is unconscious in hospital. Although Pisti did die a few days later, the result was that she and her husband Istvan entered ‘a highly charged energy field of strange coincidences, synchronistic events, powerful dreams and waking visions’. It is these that give rise to extraordinary insights as the threads they represent are gradually woven together into a complex tapestry of meaning. Dreams that all three of them had experienced in the months leading up to the accident suddenly begin to make sense, including a detailed prefiguration by Pisti of his own accident, hospitalisation and death. Then further dreams and visions unfold within the narrative, all of which give the reader a new understanding of death in relation to life: that there is nothing but life (or, more accurately, consciousness).

Betty realises that there is a creative principle at work in every life, but that one has to listen and study in order to discern it, especially in today’s sceptical climate. Archetypally, the Egyptian jackal Anubis—Opener of the Way—makes an appearance as a symbol of decomposition and radical transformation. Although Pisti is no longer embodied, he is a powerful presence in altered states and the relationship with his father develops significantly as they realise the closeness of their interdimensional connection. The three of them are conscious within the Cosmic Mind, of which most people remain ignorant and from which they therefore feel disconnected. This means being out of touch with a larger intelligence that informs the rational mind and speaks in symbols and images, as C.G. Jung understood.

Both love and healing run powerfully through the book, expanding into an inspiring collective vision. In these turbulent times we are the earth dreaming to heal herself as we long for a world of love and peace. Betty writes: ‘our deepest aspirations had created the field necessary for them to be born on earth. This longing is the thread that connects us to our deepest nature....now, out of this very longing, we were creating new worlds’. So the earth can now ‘dream its future to itself through us—what a sign of hope!

These visions open up a new understanding of reality. Matter is experienced as ‘the infinitely diverse expression of Mind/Spirit in time and space’. This means that thoughts and feelings can affect the physical world and that the force behind creativity is Mind itself, which is Spirit, ‘the essence of life’. So ‘matter is spirit, birth and death are transformations within life, and each of us is “the nucleus of the nucleus” of that life’. Such an understanding can reawaken our innate knowledge of the organising principles of life.

One insight in the book has direct relevance to the current international situation. Drawing on Riane Eisler’s distinction between dominator and partnership systems. The dominators seek to destroy or at least control the darkness in the world, which means destroying ‘the other’ in ways that blind them to their own shadow: ‘the refusal to become conscious and thus responsible for their own individual darkness perpetuated a cycle of repression and violence’. We are still entirely caught up in this vicious dynamic, which will continue for as long as we fail to become conscious and evolve a system that builds on non-violence, trust, compassion, participation and love.

For Betty, there was another initiation to come: the death of her husband, also in a car accident. He too had experienced premonitions, against which his rational mind had fought. When she tunes in to him on the way to Budapest, he says ‘I didn’t go anywhere. I’m right here, everywhere, and nowhere. I’m simply in another dimension’. There is a reassurance about the unfolding of events and a trust that it will all be for the best, even if the rational mind finds some things unfathomable. If there is a collective forgetting then there is also a collective awakening; if suffering and tribulation is part of the purification process, there is also love and meaning beneath it. Perhaps young people know this but we have overlaid their insights with ‘education’. As the reader will realise, this is much more than a book about death, it is a book about life and a powerful call to connect with deeper orders of reality, to live our lives as consciously as possible, and to play our part in the healing of humanity and of the earth.

- **PAN GAIA MAGAZINE (Nov. '03 - Feb. '04)**  
**Reviewer: Stephanie Rose Bird**

#### A Brave New Vision

The Miracle of Death begins with a call to the author, saying that her son had been in an accident and that his condition is “very serious.” Dr. Kovács turns her grief into a lesson for us all. It is a privilege to enter the private sanctum of an author on such a personally devastating occasion. Kovács deals with some of the most difficult topics we ever encounter, with aplomb and resolve. When I read a synopsis of this book, I was skeptical, but the more I read, the more readily I came under her spell, ultimately finding her odd tales credible.

Prof. Kovács leads us toward a positive view of death. There is a beautiful synthesis of western and nonwestern thought in this book. The author has lived and taught in Europe and often reflects on the work of Carl Jung, yet she also considers the Native American Medicine Wheel, Celtic Spirituality, and Ancient Egyptian belief systems.

Family, community, and a supportive extended clan are the foundations that support the author’s growth. Kovács mourns the tragedies that strike her life, yet uses her considerable intellect to search for meaning. Her work demonstrates that every event, however, erratic, unplanned, or seemingly spontaneous, stems from a divine plan. Ultimately, art, dreams, and intuition lift the shroud of the phenomena called death. The Miracle of Death embodies the spirit of survival. Betty Kovács’ message is one of hope--thankfully, she has passed the torch on to light the way for the rest of us.

- **Reviewer: Evelyn Elsaesser-Valarino**  
**Author of Talking with Angel about illness, death and survival**  
**On the Other Side of Life**  
**Co-author with Kenneth Ring of Lessons from the Light**  
**www.Elsaesser-Valarino.com (May 18, 2007)**

I was deeply impressed by The Miracle of Death. Betty J. Kovács was well prepared to “listen to the force behind the force of pure creativity” (p. 37), being trained in the theory of symbolic language, yet the path was long and hard before she could see that “everything is real, whether it has form or not” (p. 98). She takes our hand and leads us to the “space and time of consciousness” and this journey transforms our understanding of reality irrevocably. Her access to multidimensional realities is based on (precognitive) dreams, which she interprets not in the classic analytical way but on the transpersonal and universal, thus spiritual, level. Betty J. Kovács describes powerful dreams and visions which prepared her unconsciously for dramatic events to come, “the soul can grieve for future realities” (p. 137). She and her husband had many visions of their departed son which can be put on a level with after-death communications (ADCs) and she shares those precious messages with the reader. “Live each moment fully. Then let it go” (p. 89), and “Dad, there is nothing but Life” (p. 63). Individuals who underwent a near-death experience (NDE) unanimously state that all events happen for a reason and are part of a bigger plan, confirming a vision Betty J. Kovács’ husband had some days before he was killed in a car accident, “Everything will work out the way it has to be. Don’t try to force things. Everything will be just as it has been intended, as we and you have chosen. Whatever happens will be for the benefit of everybody involved. Everything is on schedule” (p. 144). The author has the great benefit of having put the issues of death and survival on a more holistic level, paralleling the individual destiny with the one of planet earth and humanity at large, “I still had a long journey ahead of me, but this vision was a jewel that reminded me again and again of the power of every single person’s love, grief, and longing to create a better world for ourselves and our children” (p. 155). The Miracle of Death is about liberation, love and creativity and will transform all those who have the courage to accept “inner experiences which have no validation in the outer world” (p. 169).

- **Reviewer: Dennis Littrell**  
**www.amazon.com (Mar. 30, 2003)**

#### A transforming experience, beautifully articulated

I have known Dr. Kovacs–Betty, of course to all those who know and love her—for–it will be forty years this fall. She has been a teacher to me and a guide. She is a great teller of stories--that ancient form of human expression that, along with myth and ritual, poetry and song, dance and music, speaks to us on a level more immediate than the verbal. That she leaves out mention of this form in her delineation on page six is perhaps a slip of modesty.

She has found her voice here in this wonderful and amazing recollection of a miracle that she experienced, recorded, transcribed, and now relates to us as the wise shaman of old often did around the prehistoric campfire, night after night, our faces warm, our eyes dancing with the flames, and our ears tuned to the voice of wisdom, mystery, experience, awe and spirituality.

“The Bard,” as Betty calls this speaker, this charmer, this weaver of words--words that skip past the rational mind, dodge ordinary consciousness, to light into the very soul of the listener, is none other than herself, an expert on myth and culture telling us what was, what is and what will be, for herself, for those she loved and for those who loved her, and now for readers of this book. (A beautifully presented book, by the way, meticulously edited and artfully designed, clearly written, every word weighed and weighed again, and every sentence polished.)

Sometimes it is the smallest thing, a sudden rustle in the trees, the fall of rain out of a cloudless sky that awakens us to a realization of the extraordinary depth of things. In Zen this is seen as Enlightenment, something that comes and goes and comes again until perhaps we are ready and then it stays. With Betty, the Enlightenment was a supernova of sudden experience, the likes of which few of us ever encounter: the death of her mother in a car accident; and then a year later the death of her only, and much beloved, most beautiful son, also in an automobile accident; and then sixteen months later the death--still again in an auto accident--of her husband of over thirty years, the central love of her life, a man of extraordinary vitality and quiet wisdom, also my friend and guide.

Most people would not only give way to despair and depression, anger and a justifiable self-pity if in swift succession such events rained down like molten lead upon them. But Betty, always a teacher and an example, a guide and a person aware of herself as a spiritual being gave way not to any of that, but turned what seemed on the surface to be something beyond horror into the most amazing transformation of love and creativity. Working with dream, symbol and myth, she saw and lived and breathed what she calls “The Miracle of Death,” an enlightenment that flung open the doors of perception (always made opaque by the ordinary mind) to reveal a depth of Being beyond any ordinary comprehension of it.

“We do not die,” says the Gita, and in this book we learn that death and life are but different sides of the same coin, inseparable, miraculous features of a balanced and dynamic cosmology in which the peace that passeth understanding becomes immediate if only we are open to it.

Being does not exist without non-being. How could it? And life does not exist without death. That is clear. But what Betty wants us to know is that death is merely another aspect of life. As her son Pisti (wise beyond his years) said to his father, “Dad, there is nothing but life.”

In reading this book you may find, as I did, a resonance in Betty’s theme of “denied realities” (p. 33) or “realities beyond the rational” (p. 108) suppressed by the ordinary consciousness of the Western world. Or you may find an accord in her debunking of the “myth of empty materialism” (p. 42) clung to by Western culture. Professor Kovacs sees the “material myth” as the cause of our disassociation from our spiritual selves evidenced by, among other things, wide spread pollution of all kinds. But she sees a transformation coming. Not a “new age” (she studiously avoids this overused phrase) but a planetary shift in consciousness.

Death is as Divine as Life.  
Hold them in both hands, Kicsi.  
Play with them.  
Balance them.  
This is the Divine Game.

—a found poem by Istvan Kovacs

- **SIGNS OF LIFE Newsletter**  
Reviewer: Bob Ginsberg (Spring/Summer 2007, Vol. 4, Issue 2)

I must admit that I was compelled to read this book by the title, as I was both appalled and intrigued by the description. Why would anyone call death a miracle? The author was either seriously misguided or possessed unusual wisdom; as I read the book I realized that the latter was true.

Dr. Kovács lost her mother, her only son, and her husband in separate car accidents, all within a three year period. As a professor of literature, symbolic language, writing, and mythology, Betty was very much aware of cultural and mythological traditions that embraced the concept of death; however, the horror of such personal tragedy would now test the limits of her intellectual beliefs.

The author begins by recounting her childhood where her cultural interactions conveyed a sense of emptiness and lack of meaning. She describes a thirst for knowledge beyond the information that her education was portraying as truth. Instead of suppressing feelings that were not “logical” to the rational mind, she decided to embrace her connections to the universe and her intuitive mind. By exploration of the cosmic mind, she knew that “there is nothing but life,” and, as Ghandi knew, “Birth and death are not two different states, but they are different aspects of the same state.”

Much of her adult life was filled with dream imagery, most of which was meticulously journaled. Many of these experiences, detailed in the book, offered great insight into worlds that most cannot see in addition to being pre-cognitive. The author insightfully draws the comparison between the ancients who understood the mystery of death and birth, and modern quantum physicists who find that sudden elementary particles emerge from vacuums, even where there are no atoms, no elementary particles, protons or photons. This concept of life emerging from emptiness is similar to the spiritual notion that each of us is at the center of the universe, and is “an integral part of the flaring forth of this continuous creative act that began fifteen billion light-years ago with the Big Bang.”

The reader of this book will have the good fortune to share in many messages passed on from Dr. Kovács husband and son from the other side. One comes away with the belief that, as Betty writes, “Love and life are indestructible,” much as Forever Family Foundation espouses “The bonds of love cannot be broken, even by death.” I cannot help but think that one day in the near future science will actually discover that the emotion of love is a form of energy that allows this continuous communication. The concept of death giving birth to life is certainly not a new one; however, Dr. Kovács brings us a step closer to the knowledge that death is a unifying energy that merges with creativity, love and life.

- **THE SMALL PRESS BOOK REVIEW**  
Reviewer: Henry Berry (Mar. 31, 2003)

Betty Kovács uses her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and Theory of Symbolic Language from the University of California at Irvine and position as member of the Board of Directors of the Jung Society of Claremont, CA, to understand the mystery and the tragedy of the death of her son Pisti. Kovács’ husband Istvan shared in the journey to a profound understanding of this momentous event in their lives. *The Miracle of Death* has much broader appeal than its apparent New-Age topic. It will draw as well readers interested in grieving and grief studies, women’s memoirs, family studies, and psychological and spiritual journeys and quests. Kovács cites historical and mythological studies, individual experiences surrounding death, and cutting-edge science to support a radical change in the way we think about death and life.

In the course of her revelations, Kovács came to realize that her formal education and professional activity had imposed limitations on her understanding. She felt her customary ways of thinking and comprehending breaking down under the impact of her son’s untimely death. Moving beyond her past experiences and learning, she became open to experiences and aspects of reality she had been blind to. A short passage of Christopher Fry quoted by Kovács summarizes her journey and what she learned — “...there is an angle of experience where the dark is distilled into light...” Kovács found that angle. In so openly, honestly, and sensitively relating her experience in assimilating the meaning of her son’s death, Kovács can also open the reader’s life to ordinarily buried dimensions of existence and experience.

- **ROUNDTABLE REVIEWS**

**Reviewer: Deb Jones**

The *Miracle Of Death* seemed oxymoronic initially, but author Betty J. Kovács soon explained away the seeming discrepancy of the notion that “death” and “miracle” do not belong in the same sentence. This book takes the reader on a journey that is at once both spiritual and enlightening. The reader must first be willing to put aside long held cultural beliefs and open him/herself to possibility and ways of thinking that are ancient as time itself.

With her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and Theory of Symbolic Language, the author had a background into the understanding and acceptance of alternate belief and thought systems beyond traditional Western culture. In addition, Dr. Kovács studied the spiritual traditions of indigenous cultures, and worked with shamans from both the Andes and the Amazon. In short, this is one lady to be taken seriously when she speaks, not to mention the quotes from respected scientists that endorse Dr. Kovács’ message.

While the central theme of *The Miracle of Death* is about the circle of life, about the idea that physical death of the body is not the death of spirit, there is yet another message, namely, that allowing ourselves to experience our inner selves, in all the dimensions available to us, will allow us to experience life to the fullest extent. Through her book, Dr. Kovács explains just one of the benefits of being open to all dimensions by taking the reader through the injury and death of her only son. Despite the tragedy, and through the mourning, there is victory over the belief that death is the final act of a human being.

Dr. Kovács has given us a piece of herself in this book and a glimpse into what can be unfathomable dimensions of our minds. Optimism and humanity pervade the pages and infuse themselves into the reader. This book is not a light read, but it is a pleasant read and just may spur the reader to delve more closely into the mysteries of the human mind and spirit.

- **DENISE’S PIECES**

**Reviewer: Denise M. Clark**

Betty Kovács is part of a very unique family. She, her husband, Istvan, and their son, Pisti, shared a special gift—they experienced visions. But it was one particular vision that changed their lives forever.

Betty kept records of most of her dreams, as did her son—and it is these records that helped to show them the unique relationship between inner and outer events in their own lives, and its connection to those of us all. These dreams, visions and the events surrounding the death of her son allowed the author to come to a greater understanding of spirituality, death and how to combine the events of both to come to a heightened awareness of new possibilities and dimensions.

*The Miracle of Death* is a moving account of one woman’s struggle to overcome the death of her son. It is also a testament to the urge in all of us to further our own knowledge and understanding of events that we may have no control over, but which don’t necessarily have to devastate us to such intense degrees.

Well written and filled with emotion and experience, readers will find much to gain from within the pages of this very personal journey toward enlightenment.

- **MYSHELF.COM**

**Reviewer: Kristin Johnson (Oct. 25, 2004)**

*Fear Death No More*

Despite the popularity of shows such as “*Crossing Over with John Edwards*,” Western society seems to have forgotten Rainer Maria Rilke’s belief that the afterlife and the living life interact, and as Antoine de Saint-Exupéry wrote in *THE LITTLE PRINCE*, “What is essential is invisible to the naked eye.”

It took the death of 20-year-old Pisti (Hungarian for Istvan or Steven) Kovács in a car accident for his academic mother Dr. Betty “Kicsi” Kovács and father Istvan to put into perspective Western civilization’s rejection of death and the institutions, including organized religion, that cause us to fear “a consummation devoutly to be wished,” in Shakespeare’s

words. Interestingly, Dr. Kovács argues against a dichotomy of thought that cut off the instinctive and dream knowledge as ruthlessly as Puritans arrested women for being witches. She condemns Christianity's eschewing older forms of knowing, i.e. dreams and visions and speaks of Jesus Christ dancing the Round Dance and embracing a "radically egalitarian" view. She borrows from the Eleusinian Mysteries, Hellenistic religion, the I Ching, ancient Egyptian gods, and the world's great religions (though one wonders why the treatise on the nature of spirit, the BHAGAVAD-GITA, isn't included). Her Greek imagery and symbolic language is not the empty Dionysian dialogue of Nietzsche's nihilism, but a richness of metaphor and history. It is also a language of dreams, the prophetic symbolic dreams Kovács, Istvan and Pisti's beloved girlfriend Jenny experience before and after his death. The dream imagery guided Dr. Kovács toward stunning insights about the meaning of death.

Dr. Kovács' subsequent loss of her beloved husband Istvan, who like her had come to accept the reality of death and a new spiritual dimension, crystallized her belief that there is nothing but life, and that Western civilization's ignorance of that truth has caused a breakdown of our society. As we begin to search for understanding of the death and horror of September 11, Dr. Kovács' loving insights, which offer an alternative to our worldview though not a prescription for transformation, deserve to be heard, so that a new creativity of thought and being can emerge.

## NORTHEAST BOOK REVIEWS

Reviewer: P.D. Matuskel

In this book, Dr. Kovács explores her dreams and those of others after her son is killed in an accident. By looking back on her dream journal and talking with her husband, she finds there were hints in their dreams as to this impending tragedy. Even her son, before his death, shared some dream images with her, and these become part of her exploration. Having a background in mythology or Jungian theory is helpful to the reader but not required. Readers who are acquainted with the writings of Ken Wilbur will find much of interest in this work. This is a deep book, which requires significant thought. It looks at the reality of death in a far more complex way than some other texts and does so from a personal perspective.

Lori Ann Soard

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) (Apr. 18, 2003)

Unique Perspectives

When I first sat down with Betty Kovacs's MIRACLE OF DEATH, I wasn't thrilled to read it. First, it wasn't a book by one of my author friends and secondly I wasn't sure about the topic. Then I read the first page, and couldn't put it down. Dr. Kovacs weaves emotion into the pages that will leave you gripping the book, refusing to put it down. I finished it in one sitting and was left with some new insights into life, death and the relationships between the two.

I highly recommend this book to anyone looking for something deeper to read.