



The Savage God: A Study of Suicide

A. Alvarez

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"To write a beautiful book about suicide . . . to transform the subject into something beautiful—this is the forbidding task that A. Alvarez set for himself. . . . He has succeeded."—*New York Times*

"Suicide," writes the noted English poet and critic A. Alvarez, "has permeated Western culture like a dye that cannot be washed out." Although the aims of this compelling, compassionate work are broadly cultural and literary, the narrative is rooted in personal experience: it begins with a long memoir of Sylvia Plath, and ends with an account of the author's own suicide attempt. Within this dramatic framework, Alvarez launches his enquiry into the final taboo of human behavior, and traces changing attitudes towards suicide from the perspective of literature. He follows the black thread leading from Dante through Donne and the romantic agony, to the Savage God at the heart of modern literature.

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