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The Face of Christ

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THE FACE OF CHRIST

Everywhere, in prints on walls, agonized or benign, suffering the little children or suffering Himself, but when the figure of Christ in a film first turned to face us, when the camera panned from extended hands to an actor's eyes, my father announced, "Day *of Triumph,* no, it's not," and refused any other film where Christ might show Himself: *King of Kings, Superstar, Johnny Got His Gun.* Those Christs had the Medusa face, the one which turns us into stone when we recognize their humanity, the sad eyes of someone who might blow smoke in our ears to ease an ache, who might bathe our feet in boric acid to disinfect us, who might, like the character in *Whistle Down the Wind,* claim to be Christ—authentic, allegorical, or a vagrant desiring the virginal Hayley Mills. My father walked out on this sacrilege. "Now all of us are equal," he muttered. "Now we have a democracy, God help us," dragging me through a side exit into an alley so dark I shut my eyes and started, before he pulled me again, a worthless prayer.