Death as a Hidden Gem in Mircea Eliade’s “The Trenches”

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Mircea Eliade’s “The Trenches” (Șanțurile) is a World War Two story in which death is a reintegration into the divine. This Romanian language story is a variant of the legend in which Alexander found a gem that enabled him to see in darkness. In this venture into the fantastic, Romanian mountain villagers search for a hidden treasure at a juncture where legend momentarily demonstrates “the function of the unreal.” Affirming his belief in a Romanian nationalism that coalesces around a mythical Dacian past, Eliade belongs to a literary tradition that includes the poet Mihai Eminescu and the playwright Vasile Alecsandri.

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“In the history of peoples… only creative acts have importance. Only from them can another man learn anything. And what is the virtue of learning, if not to learn about an aspect of eternity?”

“The Trenches” (Șanțurile), a Romanian language short story by Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), the distinguished historian of religions, is set during World War Two, immediately after Romania switched sides from the Axis to the Allies in August 1944. The story concerns a search for a buried treasure that turns out to be a juncture between Heaven and Earth. In accordance with a Dacian worldview, death reintegrates the characters

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