

marily concerned with the individual and societal impact of new information and communication technologies. He can be contacted at Karsten.Weber@oth-regensburg.de. **Prof. Wolfgang Michael George, PhD**, is head of TransMIT Institute of Health Services and provider of the German Palliative Care Certificate. He holds an honorary professorship for Ethics and Health Technology Assessment at THM Technische Hochschule Mittelhessen, Germany. He can be contacted at george@transmit.de. □

Red Coat

Ted Kooser—Former Poet Laureate

Had you lived longer, perhaps
you might remember, or pretend
to remember, holding my hand
at that funeral on the last day
I'd see you alive, the two of us
meeting in that crowded vestibule
by chance after so many years,
both of us looking for space
on the coat racks, finding none,
leaving our coats on, a topcoat
for me, sweeping red winter coat
with white scarf for you, how
the usher, not sensing the history
flowing into that moment, seated us
shoulder to shoulder in a pew
far at the back. Then you asking if
I'd hold your hand, and I did,
feeling all of those lost years
beginning to pass back and forth
through our hands as we sat
looking forward, proper, respectful,
then stood to sing, fumbling
the hymnal. Would you remember
even a little of that? But you
couldn't remember, as sometimes
I will, how after the funeral you
appeared from the back, walking
away, carefully, lame on your cane
over ice and a little new snow,

your long white hair thrown over
your shoulders, in that red coat,
the brightest red anywhere, ever.

Ted Kooser lives and writes in rural Nebraska. He is a former U.S. poet laureate (2004-2006) and winner of the Pulitzer Prize in poetry for his book *Delights & Shadows* (2004) in 2005. He also established “American Life in Poetry,” which is the syndicated column that appears in U.S. newspapers featuring a selected poem. He can be contacted at Kr84428@windstream.net. □

Death and the Pandemic: A Poem by Ted Kooser, U.S. Poet Laureate Emeritus

Judith Harris—Poet and Scholar

Abstract: Analyzing Ted Kooser’s poem, “Red Coat,” presents an interesting look at the current state of our world that is still suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: ambiguous-loss, concrete-mourning, developmental-mourning, funeral, grief, poetry-collection, “Red Coat”

When I asked Ted Kooser for an unpublished poem we could print in *Clio’s Psyche* on the topic of death and dying during the pandemic, he responded by sending me his poem “Red Coat.” Despite not seeing any overt references to the virus in the poem, I realized that this was an elegy within an elegy. It considered not only the mourning of a friend or loved one but also life events that involve what psychologists call nonfinite or ambiguous loss. According to Darcy Harris (2019) in *Non-Death Loss and Grief: Context and Clinical Implications*, starting in childhood, individuals begin to organize schema, which reflects all that a person assumes to be true about the world and the self as well as refers to the assumptions and beliefs that create a sense of continuity and meaning to life. As a result, a significant life event that fails to conform to our beliefs can challenge fundamental assumptions about that experience. Countering a disruptive occurrence, people who mourn a past relationship, just as the speaker of the poem does, initiate a reweaving process that incorporates past events into present ones. This process is inseparable from the social context as incidents are filtered through social norms and structures that individuals identify or reside within.