



Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney

Jahan Ramazani

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Called the "mother of beauty" by Wallace Stevens, death has been perhaps the favorite muse of modern poets. From Langston Hughes's lynch poems to Sylvia Plath's father elegies, modern poetry has tried to find a language of mourning in an age of mass death, religious doubt, and forgotten ritual. For this reason, Jahan Ramazani argues, the elegy, one of the most ancient of poetic genres, has remained one of the most vital to modern poets.

Through subtle readings of elegies, self-elegies, war poems, and the blues, Ramazani greatly enriches our critical understanding of a wide range of poets, including Thomas Hardy, Wilfred Owen, Wallace Stevens, Langston Hughes, W. H. Auden, Sylvia Plath, and Seamus Heaney. He also interprets the signal contributions to the American family elegy of Robert Lowell, Allen Ginsberg, Anne Sexton, John Berryman, Adrienne Rich, Michael Harper, and Amy Clampitt. Finally, he suggests analogies between the elegy and other kinds of contemporary mourning art—in particular, the AIDS Memorial Quilt and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Grounded in genre theory and in the psychoanalysis of mourning, Ramazani's readings also draw on various historical, formal, and feminist critical approaches. This book will be of interest to anyone concerned with the psychology of mourning or the history of modern poetry.

"Consists of full, intelligent and lucid exposition and close reading. . . . *Poetry of Mourning* is itself a welcome contribution to modern poetry's search for a 'resonant yet credible vocabulary of grief in our time.'"—*Times Literary Supplement*

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