

Reviews of Poetry of Mourning

"Our lives are filled with losses and gains. We keep mental representations, mental doubles, of lost persons with whom we have had meaningful connections. Through poetry Judith Harris describes our relationships with such mental doubles. This book opens windows to explore the role of creativity in human psychology."

--Vamik Volkan, Emeritus Professor of Psychiatry (University of Virginia) and author of Linking Objects and Linking Phenomena

"Judith Harris is that rare combination of extraordinary poet and gifted literary scholar. Her latest book, *The Poetry of Loss*, will be of interest to anyone who believes that writing about death, especially in an elegy, is a sacred ritual to memorialize those who are no longer alive but who dwell in the hearts and words of the living. Using psychoanalysis, trauma theory, and the latest research on bereavement, she shows how language can transmute grief into imperishable art. One of her most powerful insights is the distinction between writing about bereavement and writing through bereavement. *The Poetry of Loss* is a profound study that deepens our understanding of love, loss, and recovery."

--Jeffrey Berman, author of *Dying to Teach: A Memoir of Love, Loss, and Learning*

"Judith Harris's book is a work of reverence and intelligence. In this brilliant exploration of the purpose of elegy in grieving, she not only does a compelling literary analysis using psychoanalytic frames, but she brings the poets of the past, distant past, and present together in a way that creates kinship and continuity for the living reader and poet. I went with Harris to the moment of Keats' throwing plates in Rome as his anger at dying surfaced and to Kenyon's side as she sorts through a loved one's belongings and stops to lament and writes about a spec of gravy left on a gravy boat. This book brings joy through the acknowledgement that sorrow and its expression in words, brings levity and light through the wisdom that we uncover and construct when we are impelled to write for healing."

--Reinekke Lengelle, author of *Writing the Self in Bereavement: A Story of Love, Spousal Loss, and Resilience*

"In her new volume, *The Poetry of Loss: Romantic and Contemporary Elegies*, Judith Harris considers not only the functions of the elegy – for poet and reader – but also the ethics of this art form. In current times,

the move is towards memorializations that connect us through collective realizations that are disturbing rather than consoling. From that perspective, she suggests, we might move, not towards a chronic melancholy but rather towards affirming the value of what has been loved and lost. In this way, the poet's journey into the vale of death affords a vicarious experience through which the reader might revisit their own losses and emerge strengthened in the process, having traversed that space, not alone, but in good company. As a poet and psychoanalytic thinker,

Judith Harris affords us a worthy companion to take us through this journey alongside some of the great elegiac poets of past and current times, as we consider the relationships between love, loss, and the ethics of living well.”

-- Marilyn Charles (PhD, ABPP), Psychologist and Psychoanalyst at the Austen Riggs Center

“Judith Harris writes with the authority of a widely-published psychoanalytic literary critic and an award-winning poet... The Poetry of Loss will be of great interest not only to creative writers, literary critics, and teachers of writing but also to psychoanalysts. Reading The Poetry of Loss, one sees the movement toward love, loss, and recovery, a process that is central to the talking cure.”

-- Jeffrey Berman, English Department, University at Albany, SUNY (The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry)

“The human experience, in this instance, is “facing the death of a loved one”, which stands at the center of Judith Harris’ remarkable new book, The Poetry of Loss, Romantic and Contemporary Elegies. In this well constructed volume, Harris suggests that both reading and writing elegies can facilitate the grieving process, providing a medium for a rendering a healthy goodbye... [Harris] brilliantly succeeds in this heartfelt and scholarly endeavor.”

--Jack Schwartz, The Psychohistory Forum

We now know that traumatic responses can be passed from generation to generation on the level of DNA. But Harris ends her inquiry with the powerful suggestion that poems might be able to be passed along as well. Overall, her book offers a historical chorus of elegies and theories, elucidating the complexities of a poetics of loss and providing readers with new ways to think about mourning, poetry, and the politics of grief.

--Dawn M. Skorczewski, American Imago