

Mourning and memorialization are at the very centre of literary culture. They take on forms deeply resonant of the sundry traditions of poetic elegy even when those elegiac conventions are displaced, concealed, or plainly unintentional. For all of its pervasiveness, however, the 'elegy' remains remarkably ill-defined: sometimes used as a catch-all to denominate texts of a somber or pessimistic tone, sometimes as a marker for textual monumentalizing, and sometimes strictly as a sign of a lament for the dead. This Handbook is the single most comprehensive study of its subject. It provides both a historical survey and a thematic engagement with the relevant issues in elegy. It is responsive to a pressing need for clarification of the relevant issues, and to the exciting developments currently underway in elegy studies.

Such a volume is especially timely, since in recent years there has been a veritable explosion of interest in elegies about AIDS, cancer, and war; various reconsiderations of the role of women in the history of elegiac writing; and readings of elegy in relation to ethics, philosophy and theory, and political structure.

With 38 chapters by leading specialists, ranging from Gregory Nagy's reconsideration of Ancient Greek elegy through Stuart Curran's novel engagement with Romantic elegiac hybridity, and on to Elizabeth Helsinger's consideration of elegy and the visual arts, this Handbook offers groundbreaking scholarship and remarkable historical breadth.

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