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For sequel volumes see the end of this volume.

LIFE  
CREATIVE MIMESIS OF EMOTION

*From Sorrow to Elation:  
Elegiac Virtuosity in Literature*

*Edited by*

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*The World Phenomenology Institute*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In bringing this fascinating collection to the public, I want to express my vivid appreciation to all the authors who have taken up this forgotten subject with enthusiasm and expertise. The wealth of their approaches accounts for the extraordinary richness of the inquiry, bringing to new life this most significant philosophically literary genre and style.

Our devoted assistant editor Mr. Robert Wise must be thanked for the editing of the papers and Isabelle Houthakker for the preparation of the index.

*A-T. T.*



A group of participants at the reception in the Institute: left to right, front row: Yu Liu, Alberto Carillo Canán, Hans Rudnick; middle row: Marlies Kronegger, Jadwiga Smith, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka; back row: Tony Raczka, Sabine Coelsch-Foisner, Raymond Wilson, Ralph Ellis, Bruce Watson.

## THE THEME

### THE MIMESIS OF EMOTIONS AND THE ELEGIAC REDEMPTION OF GRIEF

Could we not say that the stuff of literature is emotion?

All literary media: description of scenes from life, of natural events, as well as dialogue, poetic evocation, philosophical reflection, play to the emotions with which the experiential system of our lived existence is filled, with which it undulates.

First, natural emotions – those of vital significance (like pain, horror, pleasure) – are awakened by means of the calculated dynamism of rhythms which the author skillfully establishes to arouse our receptive sensibility and prepare it to react in a special, intended way. But, second, once aroused, our entire experiential system is activated. The natural emotions do not reverberate alone; they enter, sometimes vehemently (as is the case with outbursts of pity, outrage or fear) into the network of our freewheeling feelings, sentiments, imaginations, ideas, values. Sometimes, they arouse us in a barely perceptible fashion (as when in the midst of a musical description of a serene landscape a string sounds a note that only with the later unfolding of the entire work will disclose its foreboding quality).

Entering into play with our experiential system, these emotions are filtered through our most intimately personal tastes, inclinations, tendencies, imaginings, ideals, moral sentiments, etc. Thus they are transmuted because they are molded accordingly so that their coarse vital sense is left behind. They enter into the aestheticized sphere of our existence. Is this not how the natural and vital mesh with our life and world? The emotions become intimately interwoven in our transformed flesh as the wealth of our aesthetic spark lights them up, and becoming translucent they expand into the airy sphere of the generally beautiful, the sublime.

One might think that aesthetic beauty and hard reality stand apart from each other. It is precisely one of the focal points of the joint inquiry presented in this collection to show that they are not. Seemingly separated, they are, in fact, most intimately and essentially attuned to each other within “human reality”.

Indeed, even the crudest “realism” (e.g., that of Zola) does not “depict” life as a “factual reality”. Zola wants to reveal life’s inner core as he feels it. When we speak of the “mimesis” accomplished in literature with respect to reality, we certainly do not mean “imitation” nor “photographing” reality.

Mimesis refers precisely to the passage in the author's creative weaving in which he has already transformed reality by filtering it through his own experience so that as he fashions reality into a poem, drama, novel, a pattern emerges encompassing several spheres of experience: emotions, feelings, sentiments, moves of the spirit. As Aristotle already pointed out, reality when transposed into the literary work is not "as it is" but "as it should be." Precisely here we find that he means an inner law of reality proper to this or other work, an inner law that runs through established patterns. We may add that the contemporary author Ernesto Sabato in talking about his protagonists insists that once outlined in their situation, they acquire a life with a chain of necessities quite separate from the author's reality which the author has to follow then just to do justice to the work.

The focus of the studies in the present collection is precisely this "inner logic" of aesthetic experience. This logic is not of the plot of events in a story, nor the inexorable fate which the protagonists bring upon themselves from the very moment of their emergence in a literary work, but is the logic of the transformation, transmutation, modulation of the entire spectrum of emotions, feelings, sentiments in a specific aesthetic sequence. This sequence leads from the natural, vitally significant, "real" emotions of dread, anguish, horror, etc. which underscore an existential loss, the death of a loved one, the loss of a dear friend, of home, of innocence, of faith in life as the loss encounters or evokes/touches upon the lyrical chord of aesthetic experience, which then delineates itself through the transmutation of feeling in an ascending progression of liberation. We move from an overwhelming feeling of loss, through longing, regret, mourning, melancholy, toward innermost acceptance and resignation, joy over the order of things, reconciliation. In following this creative play of emotions, feelings, sentiments, the reader ascends from the abysmal depth of despair toward the elation ecstasy of the highest metaphysical experience. As the lyrical symphony unfolds it is not only in the aesthetic experience of the reader that this vital pain-redeeming process takes place; on the contrary, it is obvious that this is also the path of our aesthetically inspired experience in real life. The lyrical chord resounds through reality: natural, psychic, spiritual through and through.

In the present collection we offer a selection from this reality.

*Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka*