

# The Problem of Loss and Mourning

Psychoanalytic  
Perspectives

David R. Dietrich  
Peter C. Shabad

# THE PROBLEM OF LOSS AND MOURNING: Psychoanalytic Perspectives

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INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES PRESS, INC.  
Madison Connecticut

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*Second Printing, 1990*

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

The Problem of loss and mourning: psychoanalytic perspectives / David R. Dietrich and Peter Shabad, editors.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographies and indexes.

ISBN 0-8236-4349-2

1. Loss (Psychology) 2. Bereavement—Psychological aspects.  
3. Grief—Psychological aspects. 4. Psychoanalysis. [1. Attitude to Death. 2. Grief.] I. Dietrich, David R. II. Shabad, Peter.

[DNLM: BF 575.G7 P962]

RC455.4.L67P76 1989

155.9'3—dc20

DNLM/DLC

for Library of Congress

89-2128

CIP

Manufactured in the United States of America

To Nancy and Rachel

D.D.

Dedicated to the memory of Theodore Shabad

P.S.

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## *Preface*

This book is a carefully organized selection of contributions, all original, by many of the foremost psychoanalysts and innovative psychoanalytic clinicians and researchers working in the area of loss and mourning. One of our principal aims in this work is to bring together new, substantive contributions that shed light on some important and heretofore unexplored clinical, theoretical, and research areas. Another purpose of the work is to significantly extend and clarify some areas of our present psychoanalytic knowledge of loss, object loss, mourning processes, and their vicissitudes. There were some topics we would have liked to include, which for various reasons we could not. The present book is not a handbook nor is it intended to be a comprehensive volume or handbook. In addition, we hope this book will assist the analyst and therapist in their important daily clinical practice with and supervisory work of those patients who have suffered the inevitable pain of loss, grieving, and mourning.

A major advantage of assembling a wide range of original papers written from multiple perspectives (clinical, developmental, theoretical, conceptual, research) is that the final result, or gestalt, is more richly varied and more far-ranging than a work deriving from a single author.

We offer this book to the reader who is interested in the

fascinating, painful, and labyrinthine problems of loss and mourning: to the psychoanalyst, psychotherapist, supervisor, clinical researcher, and scholar—in the hope it will contribute to their important work.

David Dietrich  
Huntington Woods, Michigan

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## *Acknowledgments*

I wish to acknowledge and thank my patients, and those therapists I have supervised, who have taught me much about the complex and enduring effects of loss; the individuals who participated in my loss research; my friends, colleagues, and teachers at the Michigan Psychoanalytic Society and Institute for a clinically and intellectually rich atmosphere conducive to the exchange of ideas in psychoanalysis; and the members of my object loss seminar, which I taught from 1985 to 1986 at the Detroit Psychiatric Institute, whose questions helped clarify some of my ideas contained in this book.

My years at Washington University in doctoral training, at the Detroit Psychiatric Institute in postdoctoral training and as a faculty member and supervisor, and at the Michigan Psychoanalytic Institute in psychoanalytic training have stimulated my interest and work on loss, trauma, and mourning. Over the years, teachers, supervisors and others who have been particularly influential have included Marvin Margolis, M.D., Ph.D., Martin Mayman, Ph.D., Mayer Subrin, M.D., Saul Rosenzweig, Ph.D., Nathan Segel, M.D., Henry Krystal, M.D., Melvin Bornstein, M.D., and Channing Lipson, M.D. I am grateful for what they have taught me. I wish to thank those who read all or parts of my chapter, and appreciate their valuable suggestions for its improvement: Nathan Segel, M.D., Nancy Dietrich, Ph.D. candidate, and Peter Shabad, Ph.D.

Special thanks go out to each of the individual contributors to this book whose sustained interest, diligent work in the preparation of their chapters, and cooperation are genuinely appreciated. Their fine efforts have made this contribution possible. My heartfelt thanks.

I am especially grateful to my wife, Nancy, a psychologist, who functioned in many capacities as my additional "coeditor" in bringing this book to fruition. I deeply value her encouragement, support, and bearing with me during the mammoth amount of time, editing, and writing this project required throughout the entire project. Thanks go to Mr. Martin Azarian, President of International Universities Press, and to Dr. Margaret Emery, Editor-In-Chief, for their valued interest and helpful suggestions.

Thanks to Penelope Morris for the fine and careful job of typing she has done with my manuscript.

I also wish to thank my coeditor and friend, Dr. Peter Shabad, for all of the hard work and energy he put into this project.

A large portion of thanks go to my mother, Marian Dietrich, and my father, Francis Dietrich, for helping foster in me an early interest in the study of and healing of people, as well as in the pleasures of learning.

And I thank my daughter, Rachel, who taught me much about early childhood, development, and love.

D.D.

I would first like to thank my coeditor, David Dietrich, for his thoughtful suggestions regarding my chapter. I am glad that our collaboration has borne fruit.

I would also like to thank George Feden for providing valued friendship and professional support when it was most needed.

I am grateful to my brother, Steven, for introducing me to and sharing with me his pleasures and interests throughout our life together; his guiding influence has been integral to the forming of my identity.

Thanks go to my mother, Leslie Shabad, for her nourishing love, wise words, and psychologically minded ethic she instilled in me from an early age.

I am also grateful to my father, Theodore Shabad, who, before his untimely death, helped guide me with generous affection and love, calm wisdom, and, above all, a profound example of how to deeply appreciate the precious moments of one's life.

I am greatly indebted to my wife, Cindy Shabad, for her thoughtful comments, invaluable moral support, and steadfast perseverance in bearing with me during the course of this labor.

And finally, I would like to acknowledge my sons, Alexander and Benjamin, who in their own endearing ways lend me needed humility and perspective about what really is important in life.

P.S.

I fell down  
On the ship's deck and wept. Why? Why did they  
Have to die! I couldn't understand. I asked  
Unanswerable questions a child asks  
When a parent dies—for nothing. Only slowly  
Did I make myself believe—or hope—they  
Might all be swept up in their fragments  
Together  
And made whole again  
By some compassionate hand.  
But my hand was too small  
To do the gathering.  
I have only known this feeling since  
When I look out across the sea of death,  
This pull inside against a littleness—myself—  
Waiting for an upward gesture.

from *Gilgamesh*  
HERBERT MASON

It is the image in the mind that links us to our  
lost treasures; but it is the loss that shapes  
the image, gathers the flowers, weaves the garland.

from *My Mother's House*  
COLETTE

. . . memory nourishes the heart, and grief abates.

from *Letters*  
MARCEL PROUST

Although we know that after such a loss the acute state  
of mourning will subside, we also know we shall remain inconsolable  
and will never find a substitute. No matter what may fill  
the gap, even if it is filled completely, it nevertheless  
remains something else. And actually this is how it  
should be. It is the only way of perpetuating that love  
which we do not want to relinquish.

from a 1929 letter to Dr. Binswanger  
SIGMUND FREUD

# Contents

Contributors	xi
Preface	xvii
Acknowledgments	xix

## INTRODUCTION

DAVID R. DIETRICH AND PETER C. SHABAD	
<i>The Scope of the Problem of Loss and Mourning</i>	1

## Part I

### THEORETICAL AND APPLIED PSYCHO- ANALYTIC PERSPECTIVES

1	GEORGE H. POLLOCK	
	<i>The Mourning Process, the Creative Process, and the Creation</i>	27
2	WILLIAM G. NIEDERLAND	
	<i>Trauma, Loss, Restoration, and Creativity</i>	61
3	NANCY MANN KULISH	
	<i>Mourning a Lost Childhood: The Problem of Peter Pan</i>	83
4	PETER C. SHABAD	
	<i>Vicissitudes of Psychic Loss of a Physically Present Parent</i>	101

Part II  
DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVES

- |   |                                  |   |     |
|---|----------------------------------|---|-----|
| 5 | ERNA FURMAN AND ROBERT A. FURMAN | <i>Some Effects of the One-Parent Family on Personality Development</i>                         | 129 |
| 6 | FRED PINE                        | <i>The Place of Object Loss in Normal Development</i>   | 159 |
| 7 | JEROME GRUNES AND WENDY WASSON   | <i>The Significance of Loss and Mourning in the Older Adult: Clinical and Research Findings</i> | 175 |

Part III  
CLINICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

- |    |                                   |   |     |
|----|-----------------------------------|---|-----|
| 8  | MILTON VIEDERMAN                  | <i>Personality Change through Life Experience. III: Two Creative Types of Response to Object Loss</i> | 187 |
| 9  | DAVID W. KRUEGER                  | <i>The "Parent Loss" of Empathic Failures and the Model Symbolic Restitution of Eating Disorders</i>  | 213 |
| 10 | REBECCA LOHR AND MORTON CHETHIK   | <i>Parental Loss through Divorce: Dimensions of the Loss Experience</i>                               | 231 |
| 11 | ROBERT ZUCKERMAN AND VAMIK VOLKAN | <i>Complicated Mourning Over a Body Defect: The Making of a "Living Linking Object"</i>               | 257 |

Part IV  
EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON LOSS AND THEIR  
IMPLICATIONS: RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

- |    |                                    |  |     |
|----|------------------------------------|--|-----|
| 12 | DAVID R. DIETRICH                  | <i>Early Childhood Parent Death, Psychic Trauma and Organization, and Object Relations</i> | 277 |
| 13 | HENRY B. BILLER AND MARGERY SALTER | <i>Father Loss, Cognitive and Personality Functioning</i>                                  | 337 |