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ABOUT SUFFERING

On Louise Glück

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About Suffering

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Abstract: Poetry has always courted suffering. Poets sing their suffering, we've been told, and there can be no poetry without suffering. Louise Glück wasn't too sure about that. Suffering features centrally in her poetry, and she discussed its role in poetry in her critical writing, where she often retained the language of poetry as martyrdom. However, she was keen to stress that suffering's part in composition has been misplaced and misunderstood, its function idealised and fetishised. Surveying a wide range of texts about poetry's relationship to suffering, and drawing surprising links between very different voices, this Element situates Glück both in the tradition of Rainer Maria Rilke's lyrical suffering and in the tradition of T. S. Eliot's impersonal approach to poetry. Glück's most powerful and characteristic discussion of suffering, it argues, takes place in her 1992 volume, *The Wild Iris*.

This Element also has a video abstract: www.cambridge.org/EIPP_Hadjiyiannis

Keywords: suffering, poetry, Louise Glück, *The Wild Iris*, Rainer Maria Rilke

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