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Abstract:

In an ever more deadly and uncertain world, rhetoric honoring the deceased is still examined as though that was its primary, if not only, function. Some critics of eulogia also identify the consolation of survivors but rarely define it precisely or analyze its rhetorical execution. This article introduces a framework for the critical analysis and production of eulogia that draws from comforting mechanisms recognized in the interpersonal communication, social psychology, and grief therapy literatures. Self-disclosure, problem-focused coping, positive reappraisal, and the affirmation and continuation of relationships with the deceased are shown to inform criticism of five contemporary eulogies. Challenges inherent in the invention and appreciation of eulogy rhetoric are thus illuminated and addressed.