



Virtual Afterlives: Grieving the Dead in the Twenty-First Century (Material Worlds)

Candi K. Cann

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For millennia, the rituals of death and remembrance have been fixed by time and location, but in the twenty-first century, grieving has become a virtual phenomenon. Today, the dead live on through social media profiles, memorial websites, and saved voicemails that can be accessed at any time. This dramatic cultural shift has made the physical presence of death secondary to the psychological experience of mourning.

Virtual Afterlives investigates emerging popular bereavement traditions. Author Candi K. Cann examines new forms of grieving and evaluates how religion and the funeral industry have both contributed to mourning rituals despite their limited ability to remedy grief. As grieving traditions and locations shift, people are discovering new ways to memorialize their loved ones. Bodiless and spontaneous memorials like those at the sites of the shootings in Aurora and Newtown and the Boston Marathon bombing, as well as roadside memorials, car decals, and tattoos are contributing to a new bereavement language that crosses national boundaries and culture-specific perceptions of death.

Examining mourning practices in the United States in comparison to the broader background of practices in Asia and Latin America, *Virtual Afterlives* seeks to resituate death as a part of life and mourning as a unifying process that helps to create identities and narratives for communities. As technology changes the ways in which we experience death, this engaging study explores the culture of bereavement and the ways in which it, too, is being significantly transformed.

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