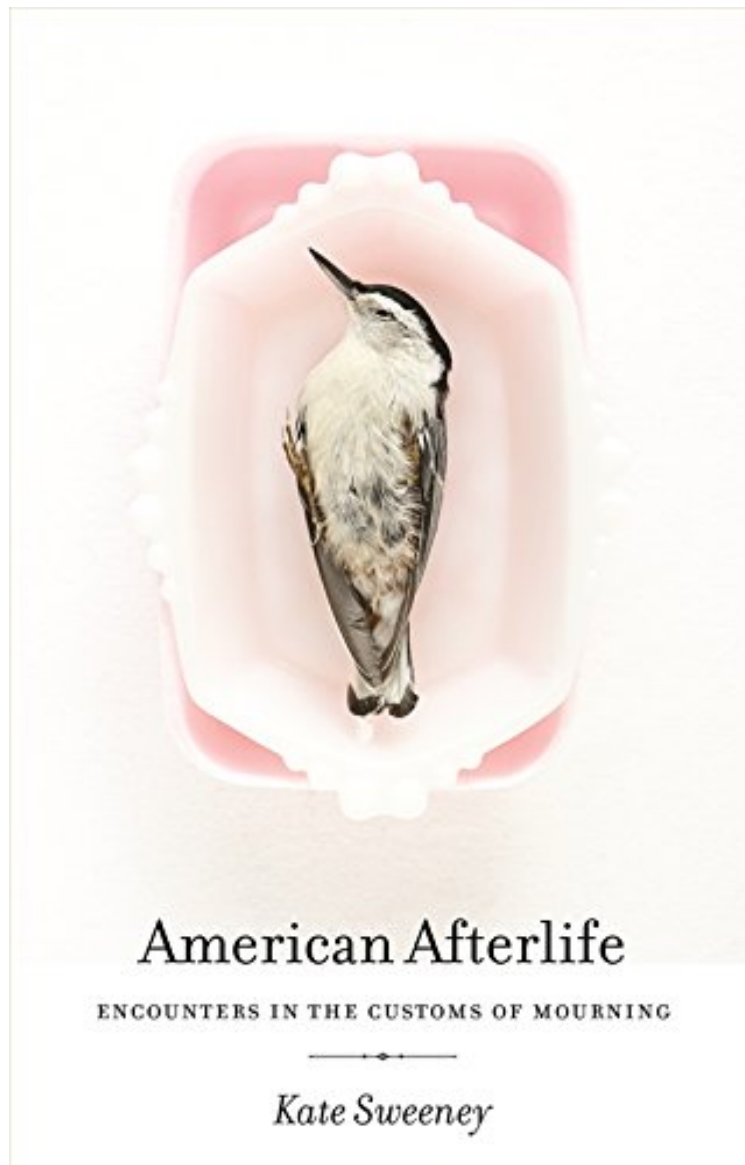


[Free] American Afterlife: Encounters in the Customs of Mourning

American Afterlife: Encounters in the Customs of Mourning

Kate Sweeney

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#2374609 in Books Kate Sweeney 2016-10-01 2016-10-01Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.33 x .60 x 5.34l, .0 #File Name: 0820350583232 pagesAmerican Afterlife Encounters in the Customs of Mourning | File size: 26.Mb

Kate Sweeney : American Afterlife: Encounters in the Customs of Mourning before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised American Afterlife: Encounters in the Customs of Mourning:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Enlightening without morbidityBy Pam R McGaheeKate has written

a very informative book about how Americans have responded to death in the past, and how some of us deal with it in the present. Customs following death during the Victorian age, how they were adapted through the Industrial period, and on into our highly technological society of today are explored. The people written about within these pages are earnestly seeking ways to honor and remember their loved ones, employing ways that mean the most to them. Some need to memorialize their dead loved ones, some need to feel pain in a different way, and others find very creative ways in the disposition of the remains. Kate explores the choices of each family here without judgment or inappropriate intrusion upon another's grief. Funeral customs and the evolution of undertakers into the funeral directors of today are particularly interesting as well. American Afterlife is not morbid in any way, but rather enlightening, and really entertaining to read. It will be reread specifically because it IS entertaining. 7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Only remotely historical and very filled with personal anecdotes. By Rob Slaven. Every once in a while I actually pay money for a book and in this case I rather wish I hadn't. Usually I go into a "positives vs negatives" analysis on books but in this case I think I'll opt for more of a "this is what this book is" concept. Firstly, what I expected was hard non-fiction. I wanted a tightly-connected book that described the history of funeral practices in some level of detail. Instead what this book gives you is a rather loose cobbling together of a few historical tidbits and a surprising amount of memoir. Imagine something of the form, "roadside memorials have become increasingly popular; Steve built a roadside memorial in 1976 when his wife died in a terrible accident. She was blonde-haired and blue-eyed and stood 5'8 with a wispy figure and a penchant for pancakes that would make any man weak in the knees." OK, I'm making all that up but that's the general form we're talking about. The book seems to be about 15% history, 15% current day practices and 70% personal anecdote from the author's time writing the book. It's well-written certainly and entertaining in some ways but it's completely not what I expected when I plunked hit the 'buy' button. The second important thing to know is that the book is not really terribly historical. The first chapter talks about funeral practices of days gone by from hair jewelry to cooling boards but the second chapter is about memorial tattoos and from there we're very much stuck in the present day. So this is a book about TODAY and only remotely historical. In summary, it's entirely possible that you'll love this book. The author is a good writer and entertaining in a certain sense of the word but you should not buy this book with the idea that it's going to teach you much about the history of the mourning process. It contains a plethora of anecdotes both relevant and not; some entertaining and some not but if you, like I was, are just looking for an exploration of the morbid history of how we deal with those most final of destinations.... this isn't that book. Mary Roach's "Stiff" is probably more your cup of tea.--It's my endeavor to write reviews that are, above all, helpful to you as you make a buying decision. If I've accomplished that then great! If I've failed you in some way then please leave a comment letting me know what you would want to know. I'm always ready to improve my reviews and your feedback is a key component of that. thanks for reading this far! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating and fun book about death! By pablogordon. According to the author, I am like most Americans in my avoidance of death and my hopeful belief that it is something I will not have to personally address until much late in life. What is fantastic about Sweeney's book is that it ushers us into the world of death gently, with a guide who is just as nervous as we are about the "foreign" customs taking place. It also forces one to think about death in a productive way...How would I like to be memorialized? How would I react when faced with the death of a loved one? And presents us with the full range of quirky and fascinating subcultures that are hidden just out of our view. This is a very funny and moving book, and also one of those engaging non-fiction books that presents fun facts and opinions that you instantly want to share a passage with the person next to you. A wonderful piece of journalism about a topic you might not expect to enjoy reading about. Also features gorgeous cover art to show off on your coffee table. 5 1/2 stars!

Someone dies. What happens next? One family inters their matriarch's ashes on the floor of the ocean. Another holds a memorial weenie roast each year at a green-burial cemetery. An 1898 ad for embalming fluid promises, You can make mummies with it! while a leading contemporary burial vault is touted as impervious to the elements. A grieving mother, 150 years ago, might spend her days tending a garden at her daughter's grave. Today, she might tend the roadside memorial she erected at the spot her daughter was killed. One mother wears a locket containing her daughter's hair; the other, a necklace containing her ashes. What happens after someone dies depends on our personal stories and on where those stories fall in a larger tale that of death in America. It's a powerful tale that we usually keep hidden from our everyday lives until we have to face it. American Afterlife by Kate Sweeney reveals this world through a collective portrait of Americans past and present who find themselves personally involved with death: a klatch of obit writers in the desert, a funeral voyage on the Atlantic, a fourth-generation funeral director even a midwestern museum that takes us back in time to meet our death-obsessed Victorian progenitors. Each story illuminates details in another until something larger is revealed: a landscape that feels at once strange and familiar, one that by turns odd, tragic, poignant, and sometimes even funny.

From cooling boards to cremationists, obituarists to embalmers, Kate Sweeney's American Afterlife holds a mirror up to human mortality and mortuary praxis and gives us a reading of the vital signs. Her book braces and emboldens our

eschatological nerve a reliable witness and wellwrought litany to last things and final details. (Thomas Lynch author of *The Undertaking: Life Studies from the Dismal Trade*) At a brisk pace, but with frequent stops to relish the magnificent oddities of the terrain, Kate Sweeney guides readers down the lanes and boulevards of the American way of death. As we look into the grave, she looks at us, with an unflinching gaze that would be the envy of Jessica Mitford. Revelatory and dare I say it? terrifically entertaining. (Peter Trachtenberg author of *Another Insane Devotion: On the Love of Cats and Persons*) *American Afterlife* is an insightful, warm, and lively tour of how we say goodbye. Kate Sweeney's quest for the why behind mourning rituals has given us a book in the best tradition of narrative journalism. (Jessica Handler author of *Braving the Fire: A Guide to Writing about Grief and Loss*) As radio reporter and producer Sweeney notes in this unsettling, compassionate volume on American mourning customs, death was once a ubiquitous part of American life; the Victorians raised mourning to an art form. . . . Her stories originate mostly in the South, but have universal relevance. Sweeney writes with a deft touch and with empathy for mourners, whose stories she relays with clarity and care. (Publishers Weekly) From WABE reporter-producer Sweeney comes a funny, edifying American road trip that bears witness to our most revealing and eccentric funerary customs. (Gina Webb *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*) [Sweeney's] enthusiasm . . . makes *American Afterlife* such an entertaining read. In the face of oblivion, Sweeney doesn't miss the occasional chance to marvel at life. . . . Sweeney makes no pretension of grappling with the totality of death. But through the constellation of her details we begin to see the practical shape, that thing we will only fully understand when we all inevitably meet it. (Wyatt Williams *Creative Loafing* ("20 People to Watch in 2014")) Respectfully illuminating both the ludicrousness and the significance of mourning and its accompanying memorialization rituals, Sweeney reports the unsavory details alongside the poignancy of grief and sorrow. Written with the grim wit and appreciation of investigative reporter Mary Roach, the author delivers informative history on the murky business of death. A considerate exploration of mourning, just haunting enough to attract those with a penchant for macabre oddities. (Kirkus) Sweeney's wicked sense of humor renders the topic of death not so scary, and her good-natured affection for the obsessives, the oddballs, and the entrepreneurs in the dismal trade make her a bewitching tour guide. (Teresa Weaver *Atlanta Magazine*)

About the Author KATE SWEENEY is a producer for NPR affiliate WABE 90.1 FM in Atlanta, Georgia. She has won five Edward R. Murrow awards and two Associated Press awards for her work.