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Rest in Peace: A Cultural History of Death and the Funeral Home in Twentieth-Century America

By Associate Professor of American Religious History and Culture Gary Laderman

Oxford University Press Inc, United States, 2005. Paperback. Book Condition: New. 223 x 145 mm. Language: English . Brand New Book ***** Print on Demand *****.Though it has often been passionately criticized-as fraudulent, exploitative, even pagan-the American funeral home has become nearly as inevitable as death itself, an institution firmly embedded in our culture. But how did the funeral home come to hold such a position? What is its history? And is it guilty of the charges sometimes leveled against it? In *Rest in Peace*, Gary Laderman traces the origins of American funeral rituals, from the evolution of embalming techniques during and after the Civil War and the shift from home funerals to funeral homes at the turn of the century, to the increasing subordination of priests, ministers, and other religious figures to the funeral director throughout the twentieth century. In doing so he shows that far from manipulating vulnerable mourners, as Jessica Mitford claimed in her best-selling *The American Way of Death* (1963), funeral directors are highly respected figures whose services reflect the community's deepest needs and wishes. Indeed, Laderman shows that funeral directors generally give the people what they want when it is time to bury our...



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