

The American Way Of Death Revisited

Winner of the Pulitzer prize in 1974 and the culmination of a life's work, *The Denial of Death* is Ernest Becker's brilliant and impassioned answer to the 'why' of human existence. In bold contrast to the predominant Freudian school of thought, Becker tackles the problem of the vital lie - man's refusal to acknowledge his own mortality. The book argues that human civilisation is a defence against the knowledge that we are mortal beings. Becker states that humans live in both the physical world and a symbolic world of meaning, which is where our 'immortality project' resides. We create in order to become immortal - to become part of something we believe will last forever. In this way we hope to give our lives meaning. In *The Denial of Death*, Becker sheds new light on the nature of humanity and issues a call to life and its living that still resonates decades after it was written.

Josh Slocum and Lisa Carlson are the two most prominent advocates of consumer rights in dealing with the death industry. Here they combine efforts to inform consumers of their rights and propose long-needed reforms. Slocum is executive director of Funeral Consumers Alliance, a national nonprofit with over 90 local affiliates nationwide. Carlson is executive director of Funeral Ethics Organization, which works with the industry to try to improve ethical standards. In addition to nationwide issues, the book covers state-by-state information needed by anybody who wishes to take charge of funeral arrangements for a loved one, with or without the help of a funeral director. More information about the book and related issues can be found at www.finalrights.org.

"Morbid and illuminating" (Entertainment Weekly)—a young mortician goes behind the scenes of her curious profession. Armed with a degree in medieval history and a flair for the macabre, Caitlin Doughty took a job at a crematory and turned morbid curiosity into her life's work. She cared for bodies of every color, shape, and affliction, and became an intrepid explorer in the world of the dead. In this best-selling memoir, brimming with gallows humor and vivid characters, she marvels at the gruesome history of undertaking and relates her unique coming-of-age story with bold curiosity and mordant wit. By turns hilarious, dark, and uplifting, *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes* reveals how the fear of dying warps our society and "will make you reconsider how our culture treats the dead" (San Francisco Chronicle).

... Here is a whole complex of commercial operations that result in funerals whose expense, display and mumbo jumbo are unrelated to any Christian or Jewish tradition and virtually unheard of in any other country today. And there is precise information on what is being done to lower the cost and raise the dignity of burial in the United States.

The Denial of Death

The Other America

Funeral Directors and the African American Way of Death

Remember Me

American Attitudes Toward Death, 1799-1883

Smoke Gets in Your Eyes: And Other Lessons from the Crematory

Death in Early America

Imparting an invaluable perspective on contemporary domestic affairs, a classic work of political theory examines the competing forces in American political discourse and how fringe groups can influence--and derail--the larger agendas of a political party. Reprint. 12,500 first printing.

Everything about Sarah Bernhardt is fascinating, from her obscure birth to her glorious career--redefining the very nature of her art--to her amazing (and highly public) romantic life, to her indomitable spirit. Well into her seventies, after the amputation of her leg, she was performing under bombardment for soldiers during World War I and toured America for the ninth time. Though the Bernhardt literature is vast, this is the first English-language biography to appear in decades, tracking the trajectory through which an illegitimate--and scandalous--daughter of a Jewish courtesan transformed herself into the most famous actress who ever lived, and into a national icon, a symbol of France.--From publisher description.

Presents the original report on poverty in America that led President Kennedy to initiate the federal poverty program

"A work of art as rich and subtle and unnerving as anything its author has ever done" (New Yorker), The Loved One is Evelyn Waugh's cutting satire of 1940s California and the Anglo-American cultural divide. Following the death of a friend, the poet and poet's mortician Dennis Barlow finds himself entering the artificial Hollywood paradise of the Whispering Glades Memorial Park. Within its golden gates, death, American-style, is wrapped up and sold like a package holiday--and Dennis gets drawn into a bizarre love triangle with Aimée Thanatogenos, a naïve Californian corpse beautician, and Mr. Joyboy, a master of the embalmer's art. Waugh's dark and savage satire depicts a world where reputation, love, and death cost a very great deal.

Death and the American Civil War

Let the Lord Sort Them

Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism

The Harlem Book of the Dead

Final Rights

Undercover at Walmart, Applebee's, Farm Fields and the Dinner Table

The Right Way of Death

Thirty years after its publication, The Death and Life of Great American Cities was described by The New York Times as "perhaps the most influential single work in the history of town planning....[It] can also be seen in a much larger context. It is first of all a work of literature; the descriptions of street life as a kind of ballet and the bitingly satiric account of traditional planning theory can still be read for pleasure even by those who long ago absorbed and appropriated the book's arguments." Jane Jacobs, an editor and writer on architecture in New York City in the early sixties, argued that urban diversity and vitality were being destroyed by powerful architects and city planners. Rigorous, sane, and delightfully epigrammatic, Jacobs's small masterpiece is a blueprint for the humanistic management of cities. It is sensible, knowledgeable, readable, indispensable. The author has written a new foreword for this Modern Library edition.

This provocative book shows how and in what circumstances Americans give birth. It is not about the miracle of life, but about the role of money and politics in a lucrative industry; a saga of champagne birthing suites for the rich, and desperate measures for the poor. It is a colorful history -- from the torture and burning of midwives in medieval times, through the absurd pretensions of the modest Victorian age, to this century's vast succession of anesthetic, technological, and 3natural2 birthing fashions. And it is a comprehensive indictment of the politics of birth and national health. Explores conventional and alternative methods.

A revised version of an expose of the funeral industry includes new chapters on the practice of prepayment for funerals and other issues

Death and the American South is an edited collection of twelve never-before-published essays, featuring leading senior scholars as well as influential up-and-coming historians. The contributors use a variety of methodological approaches for their research and explore different parts of the South and varying themes in history.

Death and the American South

This Republic of Suffering

The Rise and Fall of the Death Penalty

A Journey Through the Modern Funeral Industry to a Natural Way of Burial

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

The Death and Life of Great American Cities

To Serve the Living

A complete guide for those making funeral arrangements with or without a funeral director. Families, friends, and support groups who want to say goodbye in a meaningful way—no funeral director—will find detailed and practical legal information in this unique guide. By taking an active role in funeral and memorial arrangements, families can save thousands of dollars and honor the emotional needs of loved ones. Caring for The Dead gives the legal requirements of each state, how to obtain and file permits and death certificates, explanations of cremation procedures, and other necessary information. Readers learn how to shop for the best services at the most reasonable prices, while avoiding fraudulent and deceptive mortuary practices. This book helps readers take control of one of life's most intimate experiences—the final act of love for a friend or relative.

Gary Laderman traces the origins of American funeral rituals, & looks at the increasing subordination of religious figures to the funeral director in the late 20th century, demonstrating how far from Mitford's manipulator of 'The American Way of Death'.

For readers of Being Mortal and Modern Death, an ICU and Palliative Care specialist offers a framework for a better way to exit life that will change our medical culture at the deep level. No one teaches you how to let a patient die. Jessica Zitter became a doctor because she wanted to be a hero. She elected to specialize in critical care—to become an ICU physician—to rescue patients from the brink of death. But then during her first code she found herself cracking the ribs of a patient so old and frail it was unimaginable he would ever come back. No one questioned her choice. Extreme Measures charts Zitter's journey from wanting to be one kind of hero to becoming another—a doctor who prioritizes the patient's values and preferences. In our current medical culture, the old and the ill are put on what she terms the End-of-Life Conveyor belt. They are intubated and sent away in care facilities to suffer their final days alone, confused, and often in pain. In her work Zitter has learned what patients fear more than death itself: the prospect of dying before their loved ones. Extreme Measures, for patients and caregivers, formulates plans to allay patients' pain and anxiety, and enlists the support of loved ones so that life can end well, even beautifully. Filled with rich patient stories and a compelling medical narrative, Extreme Measures enlarges the national conversation as it thoughtfully and compassionately examines an experience that defines being human.

An award-winning writer explores the patchwork American cultural history of grieving the departed. One family inters their matriarch's ashes on the floor of the ocean. Another honors her mother 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 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 where her daughter was killed. Or she might bury her daughter in a vault 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 landscape of the past and present 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 history of the past and present who are personally involved with death: obit writers in the desert, an Atlantic funeral voyage, a fourth-generation funeral director?even a midwestern museum that shows the lives of Victorian progenitors. Each story illuminates details in another, revealing a landscape that feels at once strange and familiar, one that's by turns odd, tragic, poignant, and sometimes beautiful.

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 Extreme Measures*
Grave Matters

Encounters in the Customs of Mourning

Caring for the Dead

Poison Penmanship

The American Way of Birth

The American Way of Death

In the “hush harbors” of the slave quarters, African Americans first used funerals to bury their dead and to plan a path to freedom. Similarly, throughout the long struggle for racial equality in the 20th century, funeral directors aided the cause by honoring the dead while supporting the living. Here is their story.

In the tradition of Mary Roach’s bestselling *Stiff* and Jessica Mitford’s classic exposé *The American Way of Death* comes this meticulously researched, refreshingly irreverent, and lavishly illustrated look at death from acclaimed author Harold Schechter. With his trademark fearlessness and bracing sense of humor, Schechter digs deep into a wealth of sources to unearth a treasure trove of surprising facts, amusing anecdotes, practical information, and timeless wisdom about that undiscovered country to which we will all one day travel. Topics include

- Death anxiety – is your fear of death normal or off the scale?
- You can’t take it with you . . . or can you? Wacky wills and bizarre bequests
- The hospice experience – going out in comfort and style
- Deathbed and funeral etiquette – how to help the dying and mourn the dead with dignity
- Death on demand – why the right-to-die movement may be the next big thing
- “Good-bye everybody” – famous last words
- The embalmer’s art – all dressed up and nowhere to go
- Behind the scenes at your local funeral home
- Alternative burial choices – from coral reefs to outer space

From the cold, hard facts of death to lessons in the art of dying well, from what happens in the body’s last living moments to what transpires in the ground or in the furnace, *The Whole Death Catalog* leaves no gravestone unturned.

The blogger behind *Confessions of a Funeral Director*—what *Time* magazine called a “must read”—reflects on mortality and the powerful lessons death holds for every one of us in this compassionate and thoughtful spiritual memoir that combines the humor and insight of *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes* with the poignancy and brevity of *When Breath Becomes Air*. We are a people who deeply fear death. While humans are biologically wired to evade death for as long as possible, we have become too adept at hiding from it, vilifying it, and—when it can be avoided no longer—letting the professionals take over. Sixth-generation funeral director Caleb Wilde understands this reticence and fear. He had planned to get as far away from the family business as possible. He wanted to make a difference in the world, and how could he do that if all the people he worked with were . . . dead? Slowly, he discovered that caring for the deceased and their loved ones was making a difference—in other people’s lives to be sure, but it also seemed to be saving his own. A spirituality of death began to emerge as he observed: The family who lovingly dressed their deceased father for his burial The act of embalming a little girl that offered a gift back to her grieving family The nursing home that honored a woman’s life by standing in procession as her body was taken away The funeral that united a conflicted community Through stories like these, told with equal parts humor and poignancy, Wilde offers an intimate look into the business and a new perspective on living and dying

A candid examination of American prison practices based on the author’s extensive research and workshop experiences as an inmate.

The Letters of Jessica Mitford

The Loved One

Rest in Peace

A Lively Guide to the Bitter End

From Here to Eternity

Handbook of Death and Dying

An Anglo-American Tragedy

In *Remember Me*, *Time* writer Lisa Takeuchi Cullen has created a humorous and poignant chronicle of her travels around the country to discover how Americans are reinventing the rites of dying. What she learned is that people no longer want to take death lying down; instead, they’re taking their demise into their own hands and planning the afterparty. Cullen hears stories of modern-day funerals: lobster-shaped caskets and other unconventional containers for corpses; cremated remains turned into diamonds; and even mishaps like dove releases gone horribly wrong. Eye-opening, funny, and unforgettable, *Remember Me* gives an account of the ways in which Americans are designing new occasions to mark death—by celebrating life.

“... A primary goal of this study is to shed some light on how changing attitudes toward death and the dead in the previous century have led to present-day perspectives and practices.”--Page 1.

NEW YORK TIMES EDITORS’ CHOICE • A deeply reported, searingly honest portrait of the death penalty in Texas—and what it tells us about crime and punishment in America “If you’re one of those people who despair that nothing changes, and dream that something can, this is a story of how it does.”—Anand Giridharadas, *The New York Times* Book Review **WINNER OF THE J. ANTHONY LUKAS AWARD** In 1972, the United States Supreme Court made a surprising ruling: the country’s death penalty system violated the Constitution. The backlash was swift, especially in Texas, where executions were considered part of the cultural fabric, and a dark history of lynching was masked by gauzy visions of a tough-on-crime frontier. When executions resumed, Texas quickly became the nationwide leader in carrying out the punishment. Then, amid a larger wave of criminal justice reform, came the death penalty’s decline, a trend so durable that even in Texas the punishment appears again close to extinction. In *Let the Lord Sort Them*, Maurice Chammah charts the rise and fall of capital punishment through the eyes of those it touched. We meet Elsa Alcalá, the orphaned daughter of a Mexican American family who found her calling as a prosecutor in the nation’s death penalty capital, before becoming a judge on the state’s highest court. We meet Danalynn Recer, a lawyer who became obsessively devoted to unearthing the life stories of men who committed terrible crimes, and fought for mercy in courtrooms across the state. We meet death row prisoners—many of them once-famous figures like Henry Lee Lucas, Gary Graham, and Karla Faye Tucker—along with their families and the

families of their victims. And we meet the executioners, who struggle openly with what society has asked them to do. In tracing these interconnected lives against the rise of mass incarceration in Texas and the country as a whole, Chamamah explores what the persistence of the death penalty tells us about forgiveness and retribution, fairness and justice, history and myth. Written with intimacy and grace, *Let the Lord Sort Them* is the definitive portrait of a particularly American institution.

Assesses the impact of the enormous carnage of the Civil War on every aspect of American life from a material, political, intellectual, cultural, social, and spiritual perspective.

Restoring the American Funeral Business to Its True Calling

How the Business of Death Saved My Life

The American Way of Death Revisited

The Life of Sarah Bernhardt

Reinventing Death in the Twenty-First Century

Confessions of a Funeral Director

On title page: The history and folklore of customs and superstitions of early medicine, funerals, burials, and mourning.

This book is a study in religion, culture, and social change. Taking the position that death is a cultural event, James J. Farrell examines the historical roots of contemporary American attitudes toward and practices concerning death. Middle-class Victorians tried to assuage their fear by making death appear natural, painless, predictable, beautiful, and ultimately inconspicuous. Scientific naturalism was a crucial catalyst of this transformation. Naturalists redefined death, the medical profession called for the establishment of rural cemeteries, and the sanitary science movement influenced embalming methods and funeral practices. The main part of this work describes and analyzes the convergence of the intellectual and social trends that changed American beliefs and behavior concerning death. The penultimate chapter focuses on Vermilion County, and the development of funeral practices in that specific place. The author uses local sources to add an empirical dimension to the intellectual history that characterizes the rest of the book. -- From publisher's description.

As a practising mortician, Caitlin Doughty has long been fascinated by our pervasive terror of dead bodies. In *From Here to Eternity* she sets out in search of cultures unburdened by such fears. With curiosity and morbid humour, Doughty introduces us to inspiring death-care innovators, participates in powerful death practices almost entirely unknown in the West and explores new spaces for mourning - including a futuristic glowing-Buddha columbarium in Japan, a candlelit Mexican cemetery, and America's only open-air pyre. In doing so she expands our sense of what it means to treat the dead with 'dignity' and reveals unexpected possibilities for our own death rituals.

A mesmerizing trip across America to investigate the changing face of death in contemporary life Death in the United States is undergoing a quiet revolution. You can have your body frozen, dissected, composted, dissolved, or tanned. Your family can incorporate your remains into jewelry, shotgun shells, paperweights, and artwork. Cremations have more than doubled, and DIY home funerals and green burials are on the rise. *American Afterlives* is Shannon Lee Dawdy's lyrical and compassionate account of changing death practices in America as people face their own mortality and search for a different kind of afterlife. As an anthropologist and archaeologist, Dawdy knows that how a society treats its dead yields powerful clues about its beliefs and values. As someone who has experienced loss herself, she knows there is no way to tell this story without also reexamining her own views about death and dying. In this meditative and gently humorous book, Dawdy embarks on a transformative journey across the United States, talking to funeral directors, death-care entrepreneurs, designers, cemetery owners, death doulas, and ordinary people from all walks of life. What she discovers is that, by reinventing death, Americans are reworking their ideas about personhood, ritual, and connection across generations. She also confronts the seeming contradiction that American death is becoming at the same time more materialistic and more spiritual. Written in conjunction with a documentary film project, *American Afterlives* features images by cinematographer Daniel Zox that provide their own testament to our rapidly changing attitudes toward death and the afterlife.

The Depositions: New and Selected Essays on Being and Ceasing to Be

The American Way of Eating

A Lively Tour of the American Way of Dea

The Whole Death Catalog

Sarah

American Afterlife

The Gentle Art of Muckraking

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • From an award-winning journalist at The Atlantic, these searing essays make a powerful case that “real hope lies not in a sunny nostalgia for American greatness but in seeing this history plain—in all of its brutality, unadorned by euphemism” (The New York Times). NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY NPR • “No writer

better demonstrates how American dreams are so often sabotaged by American history. Adam Serwer is essential.”—Ta-Nehisi Coates To many, our most shocking political crises appear unprecedented—un-American, even. But they are not, writes The Atlantic’s Adam Serwer in this prescient essay collection, which dissects the most devastating moments in recent memory to reveal deeply entrenched dynamics, patterns as old as the country itself. The January 6 insurrection, anti-immigrant sentiment, and American authoritarianism all have historic roots that explain their continued power with or without President Donald Trump—a fact borne out by what has happened since his departure from the White House. Serwer argues that Trump is not the cause, he is a symptom. Serwer’s phrase “the cruelty is the point” became among the most-used descriptions of Trump’s era, but as this book demonstrates, it resonates across centuries. The essays here combine revelatory reporting, searing analysis, and a clarity that’s bracing. In this new, expanded version of his bestselling debut, Serwer elegantly dissects white supremacy’s profound influence on our political system, looking at the persistence of the Lost Cause, the past and present of police unions, the mythology of migration, and the many faces of anti-Semitism. In so doing, he offers abundant proof that our past is present and demonstrates the devastating costs of continuing to pretend it’s not. *The Cruelty Is the Point* dares us, the reader, to not look away.

In modern society, we have professionalized our care for the dying and deceased in hospitals and hospices, churches and funeral homes, cemeteries and mausoleums to aid dazed and disoriented mourners. But these formal institutions can be alienating and cold, leaving people craving a more humane mourning and burial process. The burial treatment itself has come to be seen as wasteful and harmful—marked by chemicals, plush caskets, and manicured greens. Today’s bereaved are therefore increasingly turning away from the old ways of death and searching for a more personalized, environmentally responsible, and ethical means of grief. *Is the Cemetery Dead?* gets to the heart of the tragedy of death, chronicling how Americans are inventing new or adapting old traditions, burial places, and memorials. In illustrative prose, David Charles Sloane shows how people are taking control of their grief by bringing their relatives home to die, interring them in natural burial grounds, mourning them online, or memorializing them streetside with a shrine, ghost bike, or RIP mural. Today’s mourners are increasingly breaking free of conventions to better embrace the person they want to remember. As Sloane shows, these changes threaten the future of the cemetery, causing cemeteries to seek to become more responsive institutions. A trained historian, Sloane is also descendent from multiple generations of cemetery managers and he grew up in Syracuse’s Oakwood Cemetery. Enriched by these experiences, as well as his personal struggles with overwhelming grief, Sloane presents a remarkable and accessible tour of our new American way of death.

Review: "More than 100 scholars contributed to this carefully researched, well-organized, informative, and multi-disciplinary source on death studies. Volume 1, "The Presence of Death," examines the cultural, historical, and societal frameworks of death, such as the universal fear of death, spirituality and varioius religions, the legal definition of death, suicide, and capital punishment. Volume 2, "The Response to Death," covers such topics as rites and ceremonies, grief and bereavement, and legal matters after death."--"The Top 20 Reference Titles of the Year," American Libraries, May 2004.

The American Way of Death RevisitedKnopf

Finding a Better Path to the End of Life

Decca

The History and Folklore of Customs and Superstitions of Early Medicine, Funerals, Burials, and Mourning

Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830-1920

The Prison Business

Reclaiming the American Way of Death

Is the Cemetery Dead?

A New York Times Bestseller A Wall Street Journal Bestseller A New York Times Notable Book of 2020 A New York Times Book Review Editors’ Choice Shortlisted for the Financial Times and McKinsey Business Book of the Year A New Statesman Book to Read From economist Anne Case and Nobel Prize winner Angus Deaton, a groundbreaking account of how the flaws in capitalism are fatal for America’s working class Deaths of despair from suicide, drug overdose, and alcoholism are rising dramatically in the United States, claiming hundreds of thousands of American lives. Anne Case and Angus Deaton explain the overwhelming surge in these deaths and shed light on the social and economic forces that are making life harder for the working class. As the college educated become healthier and wealthier, adults without a degree are literally dying from pain and despair. Case and Deaton tie the crisis to the weakening position of labor, the growing power of corporations, and a rapacious health-care sector that redistributes working-class wages into the pockets of the wealthy. This critically important book paints a troubling portrait of the American dream in decline, and provides solutions that can rein in capitalism’s excesses and make it work for everyone.

Examines the embalming process and the impact the standard funeral has on the environment while also discussing alternative eco-friendly burials.

Jessica Mitford was a member of one of England’s most legendary families (among her sisters were the novelist Nancy Mitford and the current Duchess of Devonshire) and one of the great muckraking journalists of modern times. Leaving England for America, she pursued a career as an investigative reporter and unrepentant gadfly, publicizing not only the misdeeds of, most famously, the funeral business (*The American Way of Death*, a bestseller) and the prison business (*Kind and Usual Punishment*), but also of writing schools and weight-loss programs. Mitford’s diligence, unflinching skepticism, and acid pen made her one of the great chroniclers of the mischief people get up to in the pursuit of profit and the name of good. *Poison Penmanship* collects seventeen of Mitford’s finest pieces—about everything from crummy spas to network-TV censorship—and fills them out with the story of how she got the scoop and, no less fascinating, how the story developed after publication. The book is a delight to read: few journalists have ever been as funny as Mitford, or as gifted at getting around in those dark, cobwebbed corners where modern America fashions its shiny promises. It’s also an unequalled and necessary manual of the fine art of investigative reporting.

An award-winning journalist traces her 2009 immersion into the national food system to explore issues about how working-class Americans can afford to eat as they should, describing how she worked as a farm laborer, Wal-Mart grocery clerk and Applebee’s expediter while living within the means of each job. 25,000 first printing.

The Past, Present, and Future of Trump’s America

Travelling the World to Find the Good Death

The Cruelty Is the Point

Your Final Act of Love

The Paranoid Style in American Politics, and Other Essays

The Sacred Remains

American Afterlives

*“Decca” Mitford lived a larger-than-life life: born into the British aristocracy—one of the famous (and sometimes infamous) Mitford sisters—she ran away to Spain during the Spanish Civil War with her cousin Esmond Romilly, Winston Churchill’s nephew, then came to America, became a tireless political activist and a member of the Communist Party, and embarked on a brilliant career as a memoirist and muckraking journalist (her funeral-industry exposé, *The American Way of Death*, became an instant classic). She was a celebrated wit, a charmer, and throughout her life a prolific and passionate writer of letters—now gathered here. Decca’s correspondence crackles with irreverent humor and mischief, and with acute insight into human behavior (and misbehavior) that attests to her generous experience of the worlds of politics, the arts, journalism, publishing, and high and low society. Here is correspondence with everyone from Katharine Graham and George Jackson, Betty Friedan, Miss Manners, Julie Andrews, Maya Angelou, Harry Truman, and Hillary Rodham Clinton to Decca’s sisters the Duchess of Devonshire and the novelist Nancy Mitford, her parents, her husbands, her children, and her grandchildren. In a profile of J.K. Rowling, *The Daily Telegraph* (UK), said, “Her favorite drink is gin and tonic, her least favorite food, trip. Her heroine is Jessica Mitford.”*

*A wry and compassionate selection of essays reflecting on mortals and mortality, from the acclaimed author of *The Undertaking*. For nearly four decades, poet, essayist, and small-town funeral director Thomas Lynch has probed relations between the literary and mortuary arts. His life’s work with the dead and the bereaved has informed four previous collections of nonfiction, each exploring identity and humanity with Lynch’s signature blend of memoir, meditation, gallows humor, and poetic precision. *The Depositions* provides an essential selection from these masterful collections—essays on fatherhood, Irish heritage, funeral rites, and the perils of bodiless obsequies—as well as new essays in which the space between Lynch’s hyphenated identities—as an Irish American, undertaker-poet—is narrowed by the deaths of poets, the funerals of friends, the loss of neighbors, intimate estrangements, and the slow demise of a beloved dog. In “Gladstone,” from *The Undertaking*, Lynch reflects on his then twenty-five years as an undertaker at the Midwinter Conference for Michigan funeral directors, which incongruously takes place on an island in the Caribbean. With brutal, generous honesty, “The Way We Are,” from *Bodies in Motion and at Rest*, grapples with Lynch’s time as a single parent coming to terms with generations of his family inheritance of alcoholism and recovery. The press of the author’s own mortality animates the new essays, sharpening a curiosity about where we come from, where we go, and what it means. As Alan Ball writes in a penetrating foreword, Lynch’s work allows us “to see both the absurdity and the beauty of death, sometimes simultaneously.” With this landmark collection, he continues to illuminate not only how we die, but also how we live. James Van Der Zee was an African-American photographer who specialized in funerals. This book includes many of his photographs, with his comments. The text, by Camille Billops, is primarily an interview with the artist at the age of 91. Includes poetry, by Owen Dodson, inspired by some of the photos.*

Kind and Usual Punishment