Virtual Cemeteries. A New Way of Processing Grief?

Abstract:

This paper will present a brief online ethnography, aimed at explaining the phenomenon of online cemeteries in Italy and the United States of America, where these kinds of websites originated. It also outlines two different methods in which the websites are used, one where the web represents an extension of the actual burial site and another where the web is the place of remembrance unbound by physical space, where one is capable of expressing and sharing one's pain for the dearly departed with other users. Hosting the commemoration of one's dearly departed on the internet marks a clear break with tradition, which sees the burial site with its precise space/time coordinates as the only place of external reference reserved for the remembrance of the departed. Their memorial is collocated in a completely new kind of space, changing the relationship between collective and individual memory, between the individual and the group. In this way, the web is fertile ground for the experimentation and analyzes of the possible effectiveness of new forms of rituality and the sharing of the mourning event.

Keywords: *virtual cemeteries, grief processing, memorial, virtual burial.*