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978-0-521-44261-9 - Fictional Death and the Modernist Enterprise

Alan Warren Friedman

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Cultures reveal themselves in how they react to death: how they ritualize it, tell its story, heal themselves. Before the modern period, death and dying seemed definitive, public, and appropriate. The industrial revolution, the Great War, and the radical reenvisioning of inner and outer reality after Marx, Darwin, Nietzsche, Einstein, van Gennep, and Freud, destabilized cultural norms and transformed the protocols of death and dying. In *Fictional death and the modernist enterprise* Alan Friedman traces the semiotics of death and dying in twentieth-century fiction, history, and culture. He describes how modernist writers either, like Forster and Woolf, elided rituals of dying and death; or, rediscovering the body as Lawrence and Hemingway did, transformed Victorian “aesthetic death” into modern “dirty death.” And he goes on to show how, through postmodern fiction and AIDS narratives, death has once again become cultural currency.

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# FICTIONAL DEATH AND THE MODERNIST ENTERPRISE

ALAN WARREN FRIEDMAN

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*For Liz and Daniel  
with Love*

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“So here it is at last, the distinguished thing.”

Henry James, on his deathbed

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