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Autore	Hammond Jeffrey <1950->
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Sommario/riassunto

Jeffrey Hammond's study takes an anthropological approach to the most popular form of poetry in early New England - the funeral elegy. Hammond reconstructs the historical, theological and cultural contexts of these poems to demonstrate how they responded to a specific process of mourning defined by Puritan views on death and grief. The elegies emerge, he argues not as 'poems' to be read and appreciated in a post-romantic sense, but as performative scripts that consoled readers by shaping their experience of loss in accordance with theological expectation. Read in the framework of their own time and place, the elegies shed light on the emotional dimension of Puritanism and the important role of ritual in Puritan culture. Hammond's book reassesses a body of poems whose importance on their own time has been obscured by almost total neglect in ours. It represents the first full-length study of its kind in English.
