



# Living Death: Loss, Mourning, and Ethnic Renewal in Contemporary American Fiction

*Christa Baiada*

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Revision with unchanged content. In *Love and Death in the American Novel*, Leslie Fiedler argued that an obsession with death in the American novel results from the failure of love and sexuality in our culture. Based on all-white, predominantly male authors, his 1960 thesis provides little that helps us to think about the common presence of death in the growing body of ethnic literatures of the United States at the end of the 20th century. Death is recurring feature in contemporary ethnic American fiction, often serving as an impetus to the narrative. This book examines the function of death in four novels of immigrant families in America: Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*, Oscar Hijuelos's *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*, Chang Rae Lee's *Native Speaker*, and Carole Maso's *Ghost Dance*. This study examines the connection between the physical death of a beloved family member and the metaphorical forms of death in life, social and spiritual, that arise from the accumulated losses and traumas associated with immigration and social marginalization or exclusion and must be mourned along with the departed loved one. It will be of interest to scholars of ethnic American literatures or representations of death in American literature.

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