

**Richard E. Meyer, ed. *Cemeteries and Gravemarkers: Voices of American Culture*. American Material Culture and Folklife Series. (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International Research Press) xv, 347 pp., \$39.95.**

The twelve individual essays contained in this volume were originally presented as papers in the Cemeteries and Gravestones Section at a conference of the American Culture Association. A short foreword by James Deetz, an early leader in the anthropological study of New England cemeteries from the colonial period, provides some instructive initial insights into the wealth of cultural information which can be derived from the study of mortuary behavior in the United States. Meyer's thoughtful introduction and his topical bibliography, though not exhaustive, will be of considerable utility for those wishing to pursue the research topic further. An index along with numerous photographs and other illustrative material additionally enhance this volume.

Since these essays represent an interdisciplinary approach to the subject matter, this book should appeal to many members of the multifaceted National Association for Ethnic Studies. Authors come to the topic with perspectives from the fields of American Studies, anthropology, art history, cultural geography, folklore, and history. The essays are grouped into four sections entitled "Icon and Epitaph," "Origins and Influences," "Ethnicity and Regionalism," and "Business and Pleasure." For those who find the general subject matter morbid, we should note that the "pleasure" dimension involves the use of cemeteries by the living as parks for leisure activities and tourist attractions.

Each of the essays presents worthwhile material and viewpoints to those, such as the reviewer, who are conducting specific studies of cemeteries and gravestones. All readers of this journal, however, would have general interests in three particular chapters which focus on ethnicity. The chapter by Ann and Dickran Tashjian deals with "The Afro-American Section of Newport, Rhode Island's Common Burial Ground." Here the graves of Newport's black free and slave inhabitants were marked by tablet-shaped monuments decorated with winged skulls, cherubs, and angels which are familiar eighteenth century forms throughout New England. In many cases, the blacks can only be identified by archival records. In other instances, the epitaphs include references to "faithful" or "beloved" *servants* — a term which the authors note probably functions as a euphemism for slave. In this graveyard section there is no evidence of African survivals as documented in cemeteries on islands along the Atlantic coast of Georgia. Rather the Newport cemetery is, for the most part, a reflection of the values and material forms of the dominant white society.

On the other hand, ethnicity is strongly manifested in San Antonio, Texas, as discussed by Lynn Gosnell and Suzanne Gott in their chapter entitled "San Fernando County Decorations of Love and Loss in a

Mexican-American Community.” In this cemetery, gravestones are elaborately decorated not only with bunches of flowers, but with mylar balloons, coronas, banners, pumpkins, Christmas trees, Valentine’s day cards, and letters by which the living greet the deceased on birthdays, religious and secular holidays. Gosnell and Gott view “gravesite decoration as a highly symbolic visual process through which families continue to experience a sense of ongoing relationship with departed relatives.” This point is well demonstrated. Further enhancement of the case regarding ethnicity could be made by an analysis of the Spanish epitaphs which are indicated in the photographs accompanying their article. Ethnic variations in burial styles are also interestingly presented in Keith Cunningham’s chapter, “Navajo, Mormon, Zuni Graves: Navajo, Mormon, Zuni Ways.” At Ramah, New Mexico, two cemeteries reveal three distinctive eschatologies or doctrines of death and immortality. Traditional as well as acculturative practices are also exhibited by the Native American graves.

In sum, there is much of value in these collected readings. Perhaps members of the NAES will be encouraged to at least observe if not study ethnic cemetery variations within the communities in which they live. The data base is useful not only in evolving a better understanding of ethnicity but in introducing the subject to students in the classroom.

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**Aurora Levins Morales and Rosario Morales. *Getting Home Alive*. (New York: Firebrand Books, 1986) 213 pp., \$8.95 paper.**

How does one get home when being home is not safe? Or how does one get home alive when the spirit can be killed in the journey there? Getting home alive means searching for the sacred place from which all life emanates. This search is an all consuming passion for both Aurora Levins Morales and Rosario Morales.

The text is divided into eight sections beginning with a poem and closing with a poem. In between there are journal entries, letters, prose renderings and more poems. All sections, with the exception of “Flowering in the Dust of the Road” which is written entirely by Rosario Morales, are dialogues between mother and daughter.

The writing for both connects the magic of the island of Puerto Rico with the reality of the outside world which can trivialize human beings and undervalue its beauty. The mixture of prose, poetry, journal entries and essays present women as active participants in their own creation