TRANSCULTURAL CONFLICTS IN THE FICTION OF NASH CANDELARIA

Abstract

The United States of America is a pluralist nation where people of diverse ethnicity and language coexist. The major ethnic minority social groups are American Indians, Asian Americans, Hispanics, Latinos and Chicanos. Each group has its unique culture, tradition and language. Naturally, they try to uphold their own tradition, culture and language and establish their identity in the multicultural atmosphere. The Chicanos are the descendants of Mexico which had been a Spanish colony for nearly three hundred years. These Spanish speaking Mexicans became American citizens when the U.S.A. annexed the Mexican Provinces of Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas and Utah in 1848.

Apparently, identity crisis is the main concern of the Chicanos. They search for their identity and cultural roots in the history of Spain and Mexico. Consequently, these ideals have become the themes for the Chicano writers. In this context, Nash Candelaria, the socially committed Chicano novelist, discusses at length in his writings the perennial search for roots and the strenuous efforts to forge a distinct identity. Thus inevitably, Candelaria narrates the history of the Spanish Mexicans and that of Mexican Americans which have been neglected by the Eurocentric versions of the American history, in his novels Memories of the Alhambra, Not by the Sword, Inheritance of Strangers, Leonor Park and A Daughter’s a Daughter.

Candelaria probes the Mexican history and illustrates in his novels, the clashes between Spaniards and native Indians, Mexicans and native Indians and Mexicans and Americans at different periods of history. He presents the history of Spanish colonizers and that of Indian tribes while focusing on the clashes between both groups. Similarly, he describes the history of Mexican American war and simultaneously depicts the clashes between Mexicans and Americans. Candelaria, obviously in his novels explores the history of different cultures and sheds light on the clashes between them and reveals the consequences. In a nutshell, apart from being fictional narratives, Candelaria’s writings serve as palimpsest to preserve Mexican culture and social life for posterity.

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