

# Massacre of the dreamers



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Ana Castillo, the author of "Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma" explores the 500-year old roots of Chicano feminism in America. Her collection of short essays dedicated to the issues of Xicanisma is aimed to denounce discrimination, the stereotypes and exploitation of Chicanos in the U. S. She begins her collection of essays by the phrase "I am a brown woman, from the Mexican side of town" and continues the confession with the astonishing confession, - "At an early age we learn that our race is undesirable" (Castillo, 1994). Chicanos "have been marginalized in every sense of the word by U. S. society" (Castillo, 1994). Probably, it seems too terrible to be true, but this is what Ana Castillo asserts.

The writer imitates no standard and generally accepted literary style of those times. The essays have no lack in tension, strength and dynamics. Ana Castillo doesn't deviate from the theme, despite being limited by gender bounds. This woman wrote the book in the course of important cultural and social changes; therefore Massacre of the Dreamers deserves detailed exploration. It is apparent, that Mexican-American literature cannot but place emphasis on social, feminist and racial issues. In this regard Castillo's collection of essays can be called a perfect example of the literature of 'resistance'. Ana Castillo tells not only about the loss of culture and land, but also the role offered to Mexicans. The 'promised paradise' turned into the land of changes and struggle for national identity.

Ana Castillo evidently created her unique literary work at the intersection of numerous factors of social, political and cultural life at that time. The 'historical chronicle' brings the reader closer to the understanding of deep philosophical, social and political conflicts, patriarchal prejudices, gender

stereotypes, nationalism, racism, the interests of influential academic structures of American society and mass media. Massacre of the Dreamers is notably complex, contradictory and ambiguous; it reflects the change in stereotypes, transformation of cultural and social space in U. S.

The success of Castillo's book can be explained not only by the ability of the author to tell the stories of Chicano movement, but, above all, by the ideological pathos of her essays. Ann Castillo tells the stories of discrimination and racism. She reminds that changes in social status and structure of people of Mexican origin created social and political prerequisites for mass movement of protest - Chicanos.

The Chicanos movement was shaped in the image and likeness of any other movements; the ideology was based on the fact that Mexican Americans were people deprived of right for their territory. These people were treated like the objects of political and economic exploitation, and the second-rate nation. The writer dwells on inequality in economic, social, political and cultural life of America, on long-standing discrimination in sphere of employment, focusing attention on high unemployment and crime rates, to mention a few.

Ann Castillo dwells on the issues of language discrimination. Although Mexican Americans spoke Mexican language, in contrast to other ethnic groups, the system of education refused to take into account the peculiarities of "Spanglish" nation. The vast majority of Chicanos had to leave schools with no education necessary to get a qualified job. The language barrier was the main obstacle on their way.

Ann Castillo brings the understanding that Chicanos accepted no 'melting pot' theory, according to which Mexican Americans had to refuse from their culture, language and traditions. The writer presents a proof of revolutionary consciousness and testimony, signaling real hope and inevitable changes. She even criticizes a 'white feminism', traces ancient Mediterranean roots for machismo, explores the moral dualism, repression of sexuality, and fear of death.

Ann Castillo demands justice, writing that "When we profess a vision of a world where a woman is not raped somewhere in the United States every three minutes, where one of every three female children does not experience sexual molestation, where the Mexican female is not the lowest paid worker in the United States--we are not male-bashing or hating whites because overall they live a healthier life than we do, we are trying to change the facts of our condition" (Castillo, 1994).

Massacre of the Dreamers can be compared with an 'alternative' letter, which is set off against patriarchal culture of that time. Ann Castillo's literary style is a multilevel and dynamic system. The basis of her writing is feminist social and even literary movement, as well as radical changes in social conscience, attempt to overcome 'masculine' diktat, racism, the feeling of inferiority, gender stereotypes and clichés. It seems that the writer's main idea is to offer the alternative - not a mere equality, but creative cooperation and complementarity of cultures.

Ann Castillo treads on forbidden ground. She dwells on problematic relationships between Chicanos and Americans, the issues of power and superiority of nations. She tells on correlation between racism both in

literature and real life. The writer criticizes patriarchal culture with its racist's values, and places emphasis on the necessity of self-realization through creative work. She strives for language expressiveness and makes an effort to create the independent Mexican American character.

Massacre of the Dreamers sends a challenge to traditions, rules and stereotypes. Probably, she is not the first writer, who tries to express the history of Mexican Americans in U. S. but she is the first feminine writer, presenting a collection of the most acute and detailed literary confessions.

Ann Castillo created the most brilliant and sometimes ironical essays. Although she writes from a palette consisting almost exclusively of grey and mud brown gloomy tones, she is extremely frank describing all nuances of Chicanos and their movement, their desires, fears, emotional experiences and doubts.

#### References

Castillo, A. (1994). *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.