

HEB

Feminist Assertion through Magical Realism in Esquivel's

CASS

Like Water for Chocolate

U. Anto Maria Eusobia

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Sacred Heart College, Shift II, Tirupattur, Vellore District, 635601

*Address for Correspondence: editojohp@gmail.com***INTRODUCTION**

Literature is panacea which heals the wounds in the society. The following are treated as wounds in a society- gender discernment, patriarchy and repressive culture. The writers, especially the feminists in specific, nait literature as pertinent device to enunciate the female folk voice. Laura Esquivel is one of the doctors whose medication through the work *Like Water for Chocolate: A Novel in Monthly Instalments, with Recipes, Romances and Home Remedies* has done the curing process. The researcher tries to bring out the bond between food and women. Through the hot spice of Magical Realism, the virtue and power of women, the extraordinary taste and aroma of food would be brought out. This paper is an attempt to explore the magical and feminist aspects in *Like Water for Chocolate*

Latin American Literature: A Snap Shot

It's the nationwidewritings of the Spanish – speaking republics of the Western realm. Latin American Literature has established a gorgeous and multifacetedrange of themes, customsand inventivedialects. It is gifted with the genesis of the term 'Magical Realism'. It has labelled with the celebrated writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Jorge Luis Borges. Latin American Literature was predominantly written by men in the past. It has become more diverse with the voices of women, homosexuals and Jews. One such voice is Laura Esquivel.

Literary Voyage of Laura Esquivel

She was born on 30th September, 1950. She worked as a teacher for eight years, later she held the pen and steered herself towardskids'playhouse. *Like Water for Chocolate* was available in the hands in the year 1989 to the various tongues. Her literary journey was started as a novelist, essayist and screenwriter. As a Mexican writer her unique work is *Like Water for Chocolate*(1989). Her other fruits of her intellectual are *Between Two Fires* (2000), *Swift as Desire* (2001) and *Malinche* (2006) etc.

Feminism and Magical Realism: A Knot

There is a close relationship between feminism and magical realism. A woman becomes a feminist when she asserts her identity. As stated in *Feminist Literary Criticism: The Ground Work*, “Feminist's quest is for self-knowledge and self- realization which can in turn lead to relationship based on mutual understanding and respect, Individual change

and social change, both are desired goals”(33).In one of her interviews with “New Republic”, Esquivel says, “In all of my books there is an internal struggle and an internal transformation that is reflected in all of us. In *Like Water for*

Access this Article Online<http://heb-nic.in/cass-studies>

Quick Response Code:

Received on 20/02/2019
Accepted on 25/02/2019 © HEB All rights reserved



Chocolate it was very obvious, where there is a woman within the confines of a kitchen, who discovers that, with that intimate space she can communicate with others and create a genuine revolution” (24).

According to Isabel Allende, Magical Realism is a tactic of keen-sighted life, including the emotional and spiritual aspects. Feminism is an apt instrument to voice out women's rights. Miguel Angel Asturias explained that Magical Realism is a natural power moving from below to above. Through feminism, feminists elevated the position of women. So both the terms expresses the same notion.

Yoke between Food and Feminine

Food is at the epicenter of natural life and our daily survival. Its intake is as regular as our breath and clothing. In “Food, Gender and Representation” Jankauskaite states, “Food is life and death, profanity and sacredness, an intoxicating aphrodisiac and an addiction, abjection. Food refers to material and spiritual experience, embodies the most covert fantasies, fears and passions” (Jankauskaite 73). In this scenario, the significance of culinary is in upbeat. Sarah explores that one could notice a distinctive bond sandwiched between women and food. As she argues, “women eat as well as cook, starve as well as serve, and contemporary fiction is as much concerned with women's appetites as their nurturing capacities” (Sceats 2). The intellectual sculptors opine that in the banquet of literary feast there could be an amalgamation of ingredients such as food, women, womeness, food preparation and feasting and feminity, that are interrelated. Rapport between womenfolk and food proves subversive to the principal power structure. To the extent kitchen seems to be the ultimate site where women launch the feminist paradise to contest their dominant powers.

Food and Magic: An Invisible Bond

Food usually creates a kind of mystic magic in the mind of the people who consume it. In this novel Tita, the youngest daughter proves to be a cook who has a good command over the ingredients and through food she reigns the dominations and suppressions that she receives through Mama. Food doesn't seem to be a wall. It rather plays the role of a bridge, which binds together, both the cooks and the consumers. According to the researcher, food is an apt and ideal choice because of its universality, where music, art, sports and painting apply only to some of the people, but food plays a universally significant role.

Women in *Like Water for Chocolate*

Women are precious with their unique beauty of goodness. Many writers have treated women in their own intellectual styles. Laura in this novel tenanted a group of women where, each showcases a different kind of feministic strand. In “New Republic” Laura opines her ideology that, “I chose the mother to represent this hierarchy that you speak. As the head of the family, she transmits the tradition, because I find it extremely important that the mother is the one who transmits traditions and values to the children” (24). Laura is very clever in handling the crew of women and makes the readers to comprehend and categorize the docile as well as vibrant revolutionary characters. Mama, the autocratic, authoritarian, middleclass matron is blessed with three descendants Rosaura, Gertrudis and Tita.

Springs of Female Suppression

Mama Elena has ordered her children to call her as Mommy not as Mama, since the latter appeared to be disrespectful. According to the Mexican custom, the youngest daughter of the family must remain spinster and take care of her mother until her demise. As a taboo of Tita's birth order, she has spelled out to be a butt of the kitchen as well as Mama's unbaptized handmaid. The abandoned and ignored voice of Tita is expressed and spelled through the food that she prepares. Since she has an intense space in the kitchen from her genesis, she has used it as Mehta states, “Female power in the kitchen lies in its invisibility, that is, in its ability to transform an unfavorable situation to the advantage of women through their strategies of subversive affirmation that guarantees the inclusiveness of a variety of experiences” (161). Being the champion of culinary and homely deeds Tita fell in love with Pedro but Mama has made the arrangements for his marriage with her sibling Rosaura. She is the chef of the wedding feast. The suppressive felling in Tita is expressed

well “not that she made any complaints- under her mother's watchful eye she didn't dare- but when Mama Elena left the kitchen to go to bed, Tita let out a long sigh” (34).

Feminist Assertion through Magical Realism in *Like Water for Chocolate*

Through the presence of food magical realism is expounded in order to express the voice and to assert Tita's identity in this work of art. It subverts the dominative suppression. Starting from the birth of Tita the magical power has started its reign. In the outset pages of the book the narrator has spread an aroma of onions through Tita, “When she was still in my grandmother's belly her sobs were so loud that even Nacha, the cook, who was half-deaf, could hear her easily”(1). Tita was born in kitchen. There was a conjoint relation between Tita and the food started which echoes throughout the novel along with the glittering light of Magical Realism. From the birth cry of Tita, Nancha stockpiled ten pound sack of salt. The majestic genesis of Tita to this world amidst the aromas in the kitchen makes an ecclesiastic bond with Kitchen and herself. Thus “For Tita the joy of living was wrapped up in the delights of food” (2).

As mentioned earlier when Tita prepares the banquet for her sister, she has shed the bereavement tears of her love in the cake. When the guests have tasted a particle of the cake each one was in their own lost love: “the moment they took their first bite of the cake, everyone was flooded with a great wave of longing” (11). In Tita's menu for March, “quail in rose petal sauce” (18), when she rinses the ingredients accidentally few lovely but longed droplets of plasma mixed with the food. That majestic garnished item made its attempt into Gertrudis's mouth have done the magical thing where, “With that meal it seemed they had discovered a new system of communication in which Tita was the transmitter, Pedro the receiver, and poor Gertrudis the medium” (21).

When Tita is reproached for mourning Roberto she lashes out at Mama. It's the first assertion of her identity. She has started attaining her individuality especially when she resides in the villa of Dr. Brown, she has impressed by the sensual inner container of matches:

As you see, within our bodies each of us has the elements needed to produce phosphorus...Oxygen would come from the breath of the person you love; the candle could be any kind of food, music... that engenders the explosion that lights one of the matches. Each person has to discover what will set off those explosions in order to live...that occurs when one of them is ignited is what nourishes the soul. That fire, in short, is food. (52)

Later on Tita comprehends the present status of her sail in this world and determined to be an assertive woman. She named Rosaura's second child, 'Esperanza' which means 'Hope'. The homecoming of her another sibling Gertrudis motivates Tita to be a self-assertive person, as she blessed with the magical power of her cooking again she exemplifies her reign over others. When the spirit of Mama Elena haunts Tita, she elegantly but bravely along with power of assertiveness she exclaimed that “See what you've done now? Go where you can't do any harm to anybody. The one who should be going is you. I'm tired of your tormenting me... “Shut your mouth! Who do you think you are? ... Once and for all, leave me alone” (94). Thus this brave step towards individuality and firmness enabled her to lead “a perfect right to live... as she pleases” (94). As soon as she ejects her mom's spirit, she recognizes the variation in her physique at last Tita starts her blissful life with her beloved by overwhelming the passion. This is the phase, where an ordinary woman becomes a feminist when she spells the words of individuality.

Conclusion

Thus this paper attempts to express that there is a special bond between cooking (food) and the feminine voice. Tita, the protagonist furnished her kitchen as an ideal site to explicit and establish the feminist arena and devastated the dominant power. It also drawn the relationship between magical realism and food. Food was considered to be the principle mode through which magical realism had taken place. Tita's inner strength and creativity made her the victorious over the dominance through magical cooking. Thus by viewing all the above stated points, in each suppression

of Tita, where a feminist assertion was blossomed through the use of magical realism. It was through magical realism self-assertion and self-expression had taken place. Thus this paper depicted feminist assertion by means of magical realism in *Like Water for Chocolate*.

References:

- Esquivel, Laura. *Like Water for Chocolate*. Translated by Carol Christenson and Thomas Christenson, Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1994.
- Jankauskaite, Margarita. "Food, Gender and Representation." *The Anthropology of East Europe Review: Central Europe, Eastern Europe and Eurasia*, vol.21, no.1, 2003, pp73-77.
- Kauffmann, Stanley. "Review of *Like Water for Chocolate*." *New Republic*, vol.208, no.9, 1993, pp.24-25.
- Kudchedhar, Shirin. "Feminist Literary Criticism: The Ground Work." *Journal of Literary Criticism*, vol.8, no. 1, 1996, pp33.
- Mehta, Brinda. "Indo –Trinidadian Fiction: Female Identity and Creative Cooking." *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 1999, pp. 151-184.
- Sceats, Sarah. *Food Consumption and the Body in Contemporary Women's Fiction*, Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Tyrer, Pat. "Food and Fantasy as Reflection of Female Repression in *Like Water for Chocolate*." *Studies in Literature and Language*, vol.2, no.2, 15 November 2014, pp. 1-5.
- <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/book-review--lovers-slowly-roasting-in-flames-of-passion>
- <http://www.languageresources.co.uk/Resources/SPANISH/Level/Literature/Como/agua/para/chocolate>
- http://www.researchgate.net/publication/274778370_IndoTrinidadian_Fiction_Female_Identity_and_Creative_Cooking