

## A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF CULINARY MAGIC IN LAURA ESQUIVEL'S *LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE*"

<sup>1</sup> Dr. N.Jayanthi, <sup>2</sup> Dr. Deepa.C, <sup>3</sup> Mr. Naresh Kumar. A.

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of English, Marudhar Kesari Jain College for Women (Autonomous), Vaniyambadi., Tamilnadu, India

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor of English, Islamiah Women's Arts & Science College, Vaniyambadi, Tamilnadu, India

<sup>3</sup> Asst. Professor in English,, C. Abdul Hakeem College (Autonomous) , Melvisharam, Tamilnadu, India

### Abstract

This article illustrates how Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate* depicts a nuanced and multifaceted link between food, emotions, and cultural identity by fusing magical realism with culinary themes. The book functions as a kind of cookery demonstration and offers a symbolic structure for the characters' emotional journeys. Also, it elaborates a synthesis of historical events, cultural norms, and personal relationships, producing a poignant analysis of identity in a changing world. *Like Water for Chocolate* is a distinctive storytelling method that combines non-linear structure, culinary symbolism, and magical realism.

**Key Words:** Culinary symbolism, Magical realism, Cultural identity, Emotional values, Culinary magic.

### Introduction

Laura Beatriz Esquivel Valdés is a Mexican novelist, screenwriter and politician, serving in the LXIII Legislature of the Mexican Congress in the Chamber of Deputies for the Morena Party from 2015 to 2018. *Like Water for Chocolate* is divided into 12 chapters, one for each month of the year, and each chapter comes with a Mexican recipe that correlates to a specific event in the protagonist's life. The novel follows the story of a young woman named Tita, who longs for her beloved, Pedro, but can never have him because of her mother's upholding of the family tradition: the youngest daughter cannot marry, but instead must take care of her mother until she dies. Tita is only able to express herself when she cooks.

### Discussion

The life of Tita De La Garza is the central theme of Laura Esquivel's moving and enchanted story, *Like Water for Chocolate*, which is set in early 20th-century Mexico. Esquivel explores deeper layers of emotion and cultural identification in her novel's narrative by symbolizing and delving into the preparation and eating of food as well as supernatural elements. A rich and engrossing storytelling experience is produced when magical realism enhances the theme investigation and food takes on a symbolic language of its own.

Cooking becomes a dynamic storytelling device that allows characters—especially Tita—to use food preparation as a way to express and work through their emotions. Esquivel combines mystical elements with a deft use of magical realism, such as Tita's capacity to integrate her sentiments into the food that she prepares. This blending of the magical and the real heightens the narrative's complexity and creates new emotional terrain that can be explored beyond the confines of conventional storytelling.

Tita finds that using her cooking endeavors as a therapeutic tool that helps her to communicate and process challenging emotions. With each meal Tita prepares, she forges a deep emotional bond between the readers and the protagonists. Traditional Mexican meals act as cultural markers, illuminating the past of the characters and offering a context for examining cultural identity. Characters establish rituals around preparing and consuming particular foods, which help them connect to their heritage and provide a richer understanding of cultural customs. Food appears as a metaphor for connections with others, empowerment, and self-discovery.

Tita's cooking creations are a symbol of the voyage of metamorphosis that represents her changing emotional state and goes beyond the kitchen. The combination of magical realism and gourmet narrative elevates the work above the ordinary love story and offers a unique view on human experiences. The strength of this storytelling technique lies in its ability to stir up deep emotions in readers while raising more general queries on tradition, identity, and the interplay between the magical and the everyday.

The story jumps around in time and develops in a non-linear manner. The author can investigate the relationships between the characters' lives and the ways in which the past influences the present by utilizing this framework. Symbolism has a major role in storytelling, especially when it comes to food. Food preparations become to symbolize emotions, social relationships, and cultural identity. Each dish has a deeper symbolic meaning that adds to the story's overall relevance. Strong emotions are evident in the way the characters connect with one another and in the culinary creations made throughout the narrative. Emotional resonance is increased by the employment of vivid descriptions and mystical components. The narrative's allusions to Mexican folklore and customs place the event within a cultural context.

The lives of the characters are intertwined with customs and beliefs, which gives the narrative a genuine sense of place. To stimulate the reader's senses, Esquivel offers vivid descriptions of the flavors, scents, and sensations associated with the culinary experiences. The use of several senses improves emotional connection and immersion.

In Mexican culture, the term "Like Water for Chocolate" is frequently used to convey a strong emotional state. In light of the Mexican location of the book, this cultural connection strengthens the title's validity. As a kind of foreshadowing, the title gets everyone ready for the intense story that follows. The irony is in how serene water seems in contrast to the strong feelings the statement expresses. Examining how food affects emotional and cultural identity may lead to a better understanding of social dynamics and human behavior. Study on reader response could look at how various audiences understand the novel's themes and whether or not these perceptions

are influenced by cultural backgrounds. Its relevance may be seen by looking at the novel's long-lasting cultural influence and how it influenced other works.

### Conclusion

The narrator of the story is Esperanza's daughter, nicknamed Tita after her great-aunt. She describes how, after the fire, the only thing that survived under the smoldering rubble of the ranch was Tita's cookbook, which contained all the recipes described in the preceding chapters.

### Works cited

#### Primary Source:

Esquivel, Laura. *Like Water for Chocolate*. Black Swan, 1998.

#### Secondary Sources:

"Analysis of Laura Esquivel's 'Like Water for Chocolate'." *Literariness*, 1 Aug. 2023, [literariness.org/2023/08/01/analysis-of-laura-esquivels-like-water-for-chocolate/amp/](https://literariness.org/2023/08/01/analysis-of-laura-esquivels-like-water-for-chocolate/amp/).

Bowers, Maggie Ann. *Magical Realism*. Routledge, 2005

Christie, María Elisa. "Naturaleza Y Sociedad Desde La Perspectiva De La Cocina Tradicional Mexicana: Género, Adaptación Y Resistencia." *Journal of Latin American Geography*, vol. 1, no. 1, Jan. 2002, pp. 21–54.

Esquivel, Laura. *Like Water for Chocolate*. Doubleday, 1989.

Hamburg, Myrte E., et al. "Food for Love: the Role of Food Offering in Empathic Emotion Regulation." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 5, 2014, doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00032.

Le Count, Lisa J. "Like Water for Chocolate: Feasting and Political Ritual Among the Late Classic Maya at Xunantunich, Belize." *American Anthropologist* vol. 103, no. 4, Dec. 2001, pp. 935- 53.

Miller, Alice. *The Untouched Key: Tracing Childhood Trauma in Creativity and Destructiveness*. Anchor Books, 1998.

Schroeder, Shannin. *Rediscovering Magical Realism in the Americas*. Praeger Publishers, 2004

Tiwari, Mahesh Chandra. "Magic Realism in the Works of Isabel Allende and Gabriel García and Laura Esquivel." *The Creative Launcher*, vol. 6, no. 5, Dec. 2021, pp. 30–37.

Tyrer, Pat. "Food and Fantasy as Reflection of Female Repression in *Like Water for Chocolate*." *Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 3, no. 2, Oct. 2011, pp.

Van Esterik, Penny. "Gender and Sustainable Food Systems: A Feminist Critique." *International Development Research Centre*, 2007.

[journal.org/index.php/sll/article/download/j.sll.1923156320110302.040/1992](https://journal.org/index.php/sll/article/download/j.sll.1923156320110302.040/1992).

<https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2001.103.4.935>

<https://doi.org/10.1353/lag.2007.0019>.

<https://doi.org/10.53032/tcl.2021.6.5.04>.