Fantasy and Reality as Reflection of Tita's Suppression in Like Water for Chocolate

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Abstract
This paper centers on a tale of a female suppression due to cultural and familial pressure throughout the stereotypical women’s sphere of fantasy and reality. It presents the youngest daughter of the De la Garza family whose family tradition destines her to remain at home, unmarried, and in charge of the life-long care of her tyrannical mother. Tita marks her real world in the images of food to reflect her inner conflicts which she cannot reveal in reality. She tries to create a landscape that mingles the dreams with reality. Along the novel Tita learns gradually how to get her way towards freedom, and rebel replacing her silence by a new language. Her rebellion destroys not only the family old tradition, but also the whole ranch as well, fulfilling her dream.

Keywords: Fantasy, Reality, female suppression, dreams.
Magical realism is defined as a literary genre in which fantastical things are treated not just as possible but also as realistic. It combines between two juxtaposition "magic" and "real". Magic is the power of clearly influencing events by using mysterious or up normal forces. While realism is the faithful depiction of real events. In fact magic in magical realism is the opposite, it is a reflection of real events in the ordinary life. It enables the human to see the real world in a new picture.

Critic have different views in in defining magical realism and its origins. Roh claims that magic realism is a product of blending impressionism and expressionism blending. Roh states the impressionism gives the object its natural form, while expressionism dresses it with spiritual cloth. He describes the world of fantasy as vanished and changed it with real world. Roh believes magic realism is different from surrealism.

Roh considered magic realism to be related to, but distinctive from, surrealism due to magic realism's focus on the material object and the actual existence of things in world, as opposed to the more cerebral and psychological reality explored by the surrealists.

Both magical realism and surrealism focus to reveal what is hidden. Surrealism aims to discover the hidden aspect of human psyche, while magical realism reveals the other deep faces of reality.

In his book Faris (one of the critic) illustrates magical realism with fives elements; First, its narrative text has irreducible elements. Second, it is an international phenomenon. Third, it contains two different contradictory: real and magic. Fourth, the literary magical realism text mingles different types of realism. Finally, magical realism deals with aspects of space, time, and place. While Bakhtin focuses on carnivalesque because its postmodernism technique to mix between different elements. It can be concluded that most critics and scholars depend on the features of the magical realism that can be stated as; the irreducible elements, carnivalesque, and hybridity.

The irreducible elements include fantastic, supernatural, and folklore. Canady explains that the educated author can differentiate between natural and the supernatural. He tries to imply that the magical realism text includes rational and irrational elements. The reader's task is to discover them according to his perspective.

Carnival is another element of magical realism characteristics, showing the other hidden faces of things. For Bakhtin Carnivalesque uses in literary text as a rebellious against the authority by the social order. Carnivalesque is a bizarre phenomenon exists in folk culture "carnival". It is the liberation inside human being to break all the boundaries of law to bring out the true self of human through mocking and doing violence to the extent of dissolution. Carnival means feast, where people gather to eat and make fun of merry making, joking and humor. The idea of carnival is also associated with clowns and fools. In fact, the fools access a deeper and higher type of truth.

Hybridity means mixing among different things for example different cultures, different identities or different types. Most of critic believe, that magical realism can be described as a hydride due to its mingling among various elements. In magical realism, there is a fusion between two worlds; real and magic, two identities colonized and the colonizer, which produce two different cultures central and margined, and this leads to reflect two traditions; native and western. The fusion between any two form be called a hybrid thing.
In fact there are many magical realist feminist, who concentrate on women's experience and women's problems. One of the most known authors in this field is Laura Esquivel.

Laura Esquivel (1950) is a Mexican author who used magical realism to depict a realistic yet fantastical world. Set in Mexico at the turn of the 20th century, Esquivel’s contemporary novel, Like Water for Chocolate (1992) is a novel which depict a woman journey to get her voice and freedom from a suppressing mother and family rules. Tita the youngest daughter of "De La Garza" family is dismissed from her lover Pedro under the family tradition, which prevents her to marry him in order to serve her mother until her death. Tita is the youngest of three daughters born to the De la Garza family, who is the one forced by familial tradition to remain at home as an unmarried woman to serve her mother. She is a victim of a harsh tradition. Tita appears as the main narrator, who produces her story as twelve months recipes. These recipes are not just for food, every recipe symbolizes Tita's state of mind in which Tita increases the question of "ontology". She narrates not only her life, but also the story of the world she lives in.

Esquivel uses extraordinary things to describe Tita's personality. The image of Tita entering into the world in a flood of tears anticipates the sadness and longing that will diffuse her life. Tita was born on the kitchen table, when Mama Elena was chopping onions. As it is described in the book: “Tita was literally pushed to this world by an impressive flood of tears overflowing over the table and the kitchen floor” 9p.(4). Esquivel depicts Tita's sensitivity to onion as extraordinary feature. She is crying in a loud voice that even the half–deaf Indian servant Nancha can hear her. It can be noticed that Tita's birth is like the birth of the revolution full of tears and agonies.

Tita was so sensitive to onions, any time they were being chopped, they say she would just cry and cry, when she was still in any great grandmother's belly her sobs were so loud that even Nancha, the cook, who was half-deaf, could hear them easily. Once her wailing got so violent that it brought on an early labor. (p.1)

Another extraordinary event, when Tita can feed her sister's child. It is up normal that unmarried woman feeds a new-born baby; nevertheless Pedro accept this matter with astonishment:

She began to suspect that something extraordinary had happened. Was it possible that she feeding the baby? She removed the boy from her breast: a thin stream of milk sprayed out. Tita could not understand it. It wasn't possible for unmarried woman to have milk, short of a supernatural act, unheard of in these time. (p.32).

Sometimes the extraordinary turns from incredible magic into utter impossibility. By the time Tita boils in silence, and finally explodes to get her freedom. In fact she cannot do anything without food, which is her language to connect with life and her weapon to survive and free. Tita bakes many king cakes that helps her to remember her sweet memory about the past childhood celebration in king day with her sisters. Traditionally she wishes to be a lucky person, thus before putting the doll in the bread, she finds it easy to wish as a child. In addition she wishes many things:

She wished she had never grown up, never known Pedro, never had to flee from him. She wished her mother would stop tormenting her, jumping out at her from every corner and crying contempt for her behavior. She wished Esperanza could marry, without Rosaura being able to stop her, so she would never know this pain and suffering! She wished that the child would have the strength Gertrudis had shown and run away from home, if necessary! (p.81).
Later on, some of her wishes become true. Tita tries to achieve her wishes through her prowess in the kitchen. She is capable of “cooking up” more than delightful concoctions; her recipes possess elements of the fantastic. These recipes and their fantastic results especially when she cooks for Pedro (her beloved) a dish of roses to express her love. The rose sauce has a great effect not on Pedro only but on Captain Juan who is fighting far away.

In fact Tita uses the food as a technique to express her inner feeling and to protect her family recipes besides her memories. Moreover, she considers food as transmitter especially when she measures her body’s temperature with food in order to express her body’s heat at the first meeting between her and Pedro, she says: "how dough must feel when plunged into boiling water". Tita also expresses her coolness as a sight of disappointment towards Pedro: "one last Chile in walnut sauce left on the serving platter after banquet could not feel any worse than she did".

Tita uses food to fulfill her desire towards Pedro because she cannot express her feeling in the presence of Mama Elena’s gazing eyes. Food often has the power of changing characters, emotions and distribution of their behaviors. Tita often conveys her powerful emotions to others through her cooking. Tita's food takes the role of feasts in each party. She expresses happy and sad emotions into her food. In the first wedding Tita is so sad, because she loses her beloved, moreover he will marry her sister Rosaura and her mother orders her to bake the wedding cake without blaming as a punishment for her protest. It is at this point, at the height of her anger that Tita is described as being literally, “like water for chocolate" or at her emotional boiling point.

Tita’s boiling passion is two-fold. First she is consumed by her passionate love for Pedro and second by her abhorrence of the family tradition which Rosaura seems intent upon fostering on her own daughter, Esperanza. As a result she bumps in tears while she is making the cake, a tear of sorrow falls down in the souce without her intention:

Tita didn’t explain the reason for those new tears, but now they had been shed, and they had changed the consistency of meringue.

In the wedding party people come to celebrate the new life of two lovers which blending them with holy tension. Actually Rosaura and Pedro are not in love, therefore this leads the wedding to chaos. This chaos begins, when the guests eat the cake, all the people press in tears and begin to vomit. In fact the party reflects Tita’s hidden feeling for losing her beloved:

The moment they took their first bite of the cake, everyone was flooded with great wave of longing. Even Pedro, usually so proper, was having trouble holding back in tears. ……..everyone there, every last person, fell under this spell, and not very many of them made it to the bathrooms in time those who didn’t join the collective vomiting that was going on all over the patio. Only one person escaped: the cake had no effect on Tita. (p. 16)

Thus, Rosaura's fine white dress is polluted with guests vomits, as a fairy tale Tita must be shining as the contrary of her enemy. Rosaura is Tita's enemy because she shares her mother crime in preventing Pedro and Tita from being together. Rosaura has known that Pedro and Tita in love, but she agrees to marry her sister's boyfriend. Rosaura's act of vomiting is described as a volcano, which is compared with the revolution against her.

Rosaura, retching, abandoned her place of honor. She struggled to control her nausea, but it was too much for her! her only concern was to keep her wedding dress from being fouled by the degradation of her relatives and friends; but as she crossed the patio, she slipped and every inch of her dress ended up coated with vomit. (p. 16)

Another incident can be noticed which underlines the enmity between Tita and Rosaura and creates the protesting angry thoughts in Tita's brain is the war words which
make anger travel from Tita to the turtles’ remains. As Tita throws these remains to the chickens, they fight with each other with their beaks. Then they changes into windmill and ends with hurricane, which pushes Tita down:

Soon the chickens were inescapably trapped by the force they themselves were generating in their mad chase; they couldn't break loose from that whirl of feathers, blood, and dust that spun faster and faster, gathering force at every turn until it changed into a mighty tornado, destroying everything in its path, starting with the things that were closest in this case. . . . Tita stayed flat on the ground, terrified. She couldn't move. (p. 102)

On the contrary in Esperanza's wedding party (Tita's niece), Tita prepares the cake with grateful love, that makes everyone who eats from it feels happy and romantic.

What a difference between this wedding and the unfortunate day when Pedro and Rosaura got married, when all the guests had been overcome by food poisoning. Today, instead of feeling a terrible longing and frustration, they felt quite different; tasting these chiles in walnut sauce, they all experienced a sensation like the one Gertrudis had when she ate the quails in rose sauce. (p. 115)

Tita tries to destroy the restricted oppressing rules of her family. She can free the families youngest daughter (Esperanza) from the family's tradition colonization.

Actually Tita does not consider the kitchen as a place for food cooking only, but it collects fun and innovation, and joy and sorrow. Her meals blend Tita's joy and sorrow emotions, her childhood and youth to produce a fantastic and various tastes as Pedro describe it: “it is a dish for God” (p. 20)

In Antonio Marquet points of view about Tita is a modern Cinderella who turns out to be a maid in her own house and spend most of her times between dishes and food without having the right to comment or object on anything. Marquet also claims that the Indian servant Nancha is the fairy good mother, who appears alongside Cinderella. On the contrary, other critics see Mama Elena represents the evil or the witch who appears in Cinderella or other fairy tales. She is the witch, who curses people and causes problems by putting obstacles between Tita and Pedro. While Tita tries to light a candles in order to make every image in her life appears the moment she meets Pedro.14

Instead of ending their relationship upon the wedding of Pedro and Rosaura, Tita and Pedro continue their love affair of stolen caresses out of the sight of the condemning eyes of Mama Elena and the trusting eyes of Rosaura. Each recipe from Tita’s imagination considers as an expression of her passion. Pedro's words that he whispers in her eyes brings her to life again. To the extent that her gloomy face becomes bright as the light moon. He tells her that he marries Rosaura just to be near her:

Pedro, holding her much closer than convention allowed, took advantage of this unique opportunity to whisper in Tita's ears: I am sure I will be, since through this marriage I have gained what I really wanted: the chance to be near you, the woman I really love. (p. 150)

On a dancing party Pedro drinks a lot, makes him upset mind and crazy, so he behaves spontaneously and reveals his inner emotion of Tita's deep love in front of all people even his wife Rosaura. Especially when he asks Tita to stay with him instead of his wife Rosaura.

After Pedro's death by a heart attack in the moment of ecstasy, Tita prisons herself with the pigeons. She feels that she loses all her lovers. She shuts herself from the world of living and sane, preferring to live the animals life, and giving up from everything that contacts her with human's life even her voice. Esquivel expresses the culture of her society through her characters' cultures especially when Dr. Brown prefers to use his grandmother's tales to heal Tita. When Tita is sitting in Dr. Brown laboratory, she sees an old woman. This woman
offers her a cup of tea and Tita accepts her offer. The author produces these events with no doubts as real. In fact this old woman is Dr. Brown's dead grandmother. Her appearance to Tita due to the interaction between Tita's living world and the world of the dead. This treatment bring her back to the world again, but with strong and new spirit. The nightly irradiated phosphorus is one among the methods that is used by Dr. Brown as thereby healing. The phosphorus divulges the first Tita's phrase, after six months of her silence13. This glimmering words declare first sign of Tita's liberation and freedom from the people's orders especially her family:

That night, when John Brown entered the laboratory, he was pleased to see the writing on the wall. In firm phosphorescent letters:" Because I don't want to . with those words, Tita had taken her first step toward freedom . And also a myth that sulfur candles glow in the inside of every human being to get the full habit.(p. 55)

She returns to life with unclears feeling that trembling between great respect and love towards John Brown. When Tita returns from Dr. Brown's house, she is strong. Her strength arises her mother's fears, whatever she cooks, is assayed bitter in Mama Elena's moth until her death. Tita decides to stay with Pedro forever, therefore she lights all the candles in her soul by matches and summoned Pedro. Tita produces their bodies as the feast of their wedding, when both of them burn with the whole ranch, the fire celebrate their marriage turning everything into ash, which later on gives the land super and rare fruits that are never tested in the land before. 15The room burns and Tita dies, Pedro's soul waits Tita and both of them leave together. They die but live with their eternal love forever:

She began to eat the candles out the box one by one. As she chewed each candle she pressed her eyes shut and tried to reproduce the most moving memories of her and Pedro. The first time she saw him, the first time their hands touched, the first bouquet of roses, the first kiss, the first cares, the first they made love.(p. 118)

She lives her dream by shining the entire candle in her soul to stay with Pedro forever:

in this, she was successful; when the candle she chewed made contact with the torrid images she evoked, the candle begin to burn. little by little, her vision begin to brighten until the tunnel again appeared before her eyes. There at entrance was the luminous figure of Pedro waiting for her. (p. 118)

Eventually Tita is united with Pedro in death, not through her own recipes, but through Dr. Brown’s creation of matches which Tita enthusiastically ingests following Pedro’s death, thereby freeing her to fully pursue her passionate love of Pedro as well as triumphantly releasing her from the familial restraints of her earthly existence. When the people have power to rise their voice and resist, they can destroy the chains of colonization. So Tita free at the end even by her dying. The soldier die at the revolution just only to prepare a fertile land to the new generation represented by Esperanza and every one comes after her. Finally Tita rebirth and live in the kitchen by her recipe book, which represents the only inherited sign from the family history16.

Conclusion

In sum, this research paper shows the success of Esquivel’s novel in expressing the patriarch suppression of the female voice and portraying her real world with all its facts in magical way. Her characters live in magical atmospheres and events within the house and the kitchen and among traditions. She intends to reveal the hidden emotions of woman's secret love in a suppressing society, through the effect of food on its tasters. Esquivel depicts these
facts through her major character Tita, who uses food, spoons, and dishes to depict her family's rules and instructions in fantastic style that is blending between her dreams, emotions, imaginations, and her real events to introduce a magic realist world. Esquivel uses many types of literary genres such as romance, fairytales, and fantasy to embody the mixture of Mexican folklore and traditions.
End notes

2 Lois Parkinson Zamora, The Visualizing Capacity of Magical Realism: Objects and Expression in the work of Luis Borges, University of Housten,ps.(21-23)
3 Christopher Warners, Magical Realism and postcolonial Novel(between faith and irreverence),(UK: Palgrave Macmillan,2009)p.24
5 Eve Aldea, Magical Realism and Deleuze,(Britain:Continuum,2011)p.6
6 Wendy B.Faris, Ordinary Enchantments(Magical Realism and Remystification of Narrative), (USA: Vanderbilt University press,2004)p.(7-8)
8 Anne C. Hegerfeldt, Lies that Tell The Truth,( Netherlands: Rodopi,2005)p. 69-70
9 All quotes of the novel will be taken from Laura Esquivel, Like Water for Chocolate, (London: Ibsen, 1993)p. 4
10 Anne C. Hegerfeldt.p.61
12 Jane Elizabeth Lavery, Angels Mastreta Textual Multiplicity, (Great Britain: Tamesis,2005)p.74
13Ibid p. 75
15 Kevin Paul Smith, the Postmodern Fairy Tale,(Palgrave: Macmillan,2007)p.92
16 Ibid.p.19
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