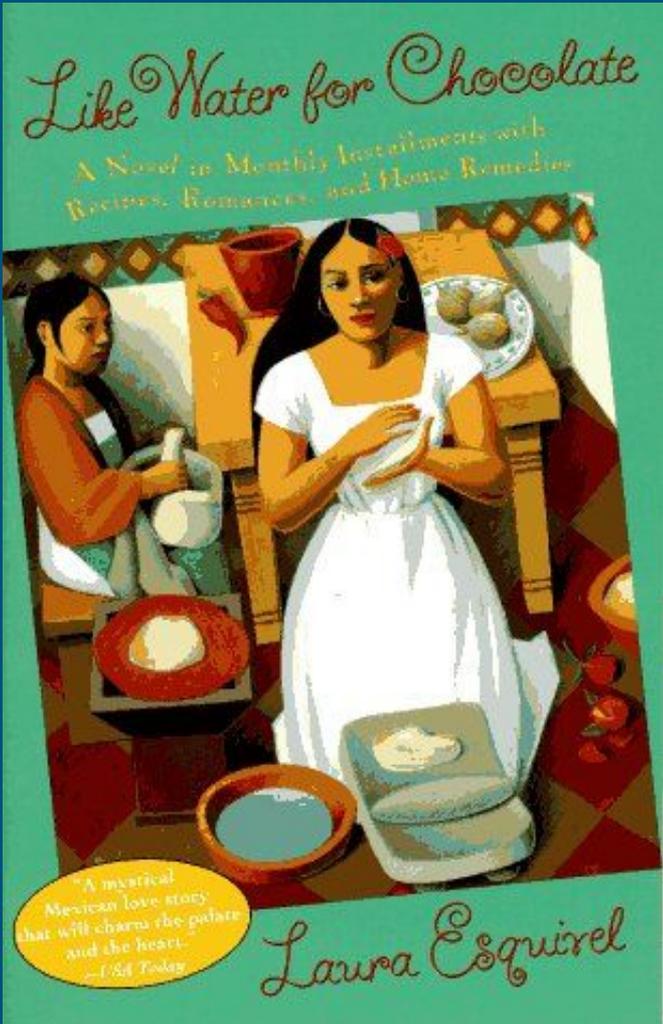




Maternal Politics and Jouissance in Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*

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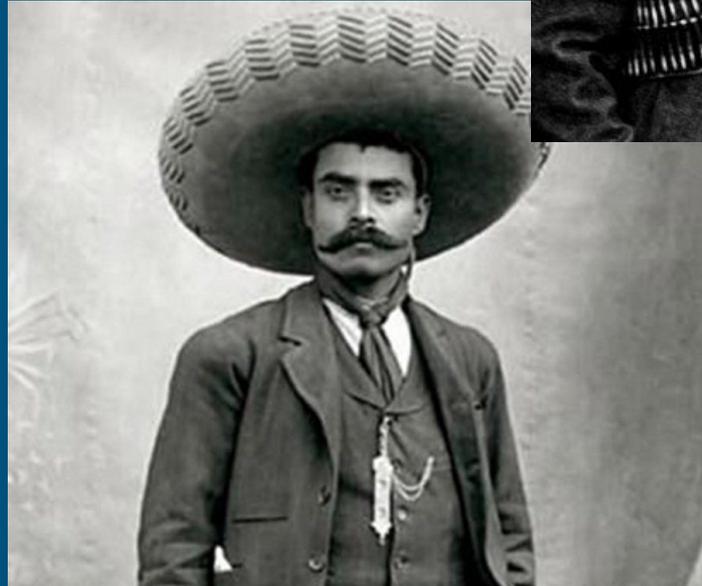


Text

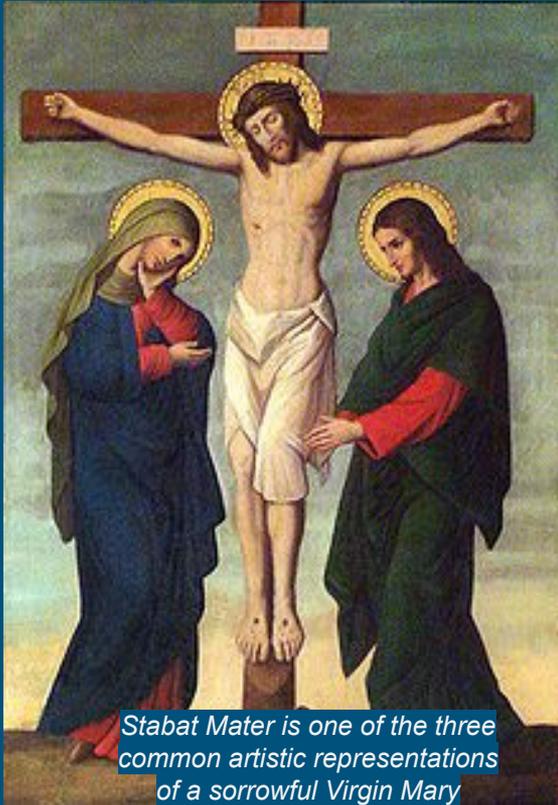
- Published: 1989
- Author: Laura Esquivel
- Genre: Romance, Magical Realism, Tragedy
- Setting: Mexico 1910, During the Mexican revolution
- Was made into a film in 1992

The Mexican Revolution

- began in 1910
- led by grassroots revolutionaries including Francisco Madero, Pascual Orozco, Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata
- Ended the Porfirio Díaz Mori dictatorship
 - Gave land to wealthy non-nationals
- The revolutionaries focused on major land reform.



Julia Kristeva's Stabat Mater



- The available discourses on maternity deny the semiotic or “infolding of otherness”
- Calls for “herethics”
- *In Stabat Mater* the experience and perception of the Virgin Mary is contrasted with Kristeva’s perception of the real life maternal experience
- The paternal name legitimizes the child and the mother in a societal context
- Taking the name of the father ‘guarantees and is founded on the the exchange and control of women and children’(Reading Kristeva)
- The mother is a threat to the symbolic order in two immediate ways. Her jouissance threatens to make her a subject rather than the other against which man becomes a subject.

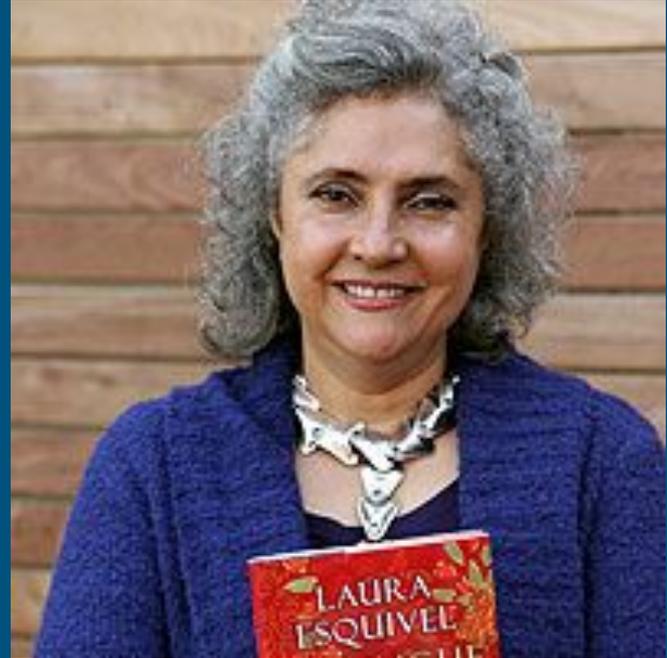
vocabulary

- Jouissance
 - physical or intellectual pleasure, delight, or ecstasy.
- Symbolic order
 - Social order, Societal norms
- Symbols
 - From a psychological standpoint symbols are “elements in the world that have come to hold specific, if repressed, sexual meaning for the human species.”



Laura Esquivel

- From Mexico City
- Author and Screenwriter
- often explores the relationship between men and women in Mexico in her writings



Like Water for Chocolate (1989)



- Mexico
- During Mexican revolution
- Conventional “mothers”
 - Mama Elena
 - Rosaura
- “Real Mothers”
 - Tita
 - Nacha
- Supports Kristeva’s request for “herethics” and a realistic symbol of the modern mother.

Spaces of a Maternal Politics in *Like water for Chocolate*

- “Esquivel’s kitchen-centered plot promotes a more accessible type of feminism in which cooking and use of the kitchen is not representative of passive femininity but a way to subvert female social norms.”
- Tita defies the social norms
 - Unwed mother, no paternal name
 - Imposes her suppressed feelings onto others through her food
 - Expresses feelings other than love, adoration and suffering.
 - Ex: Rage, sexual desire



Spaces of a Maternal Politics in *Like water for Chocolate*



- Tita feels frustration and desire
 - Makes dish with Pedro's roses
 - Gertrudis
 - Shower catches on fire
 - Prostitution
 - Revolutionary
- From a maternal space, the kitchen, Tita prepares food that impacts what happens on the battleground, a traditionally male space.

Conclusion

- In Laura Esquivel's *Como Agua para Chocolate* the women are more powerful than the men."They make important decisions and defy social norms.
- If maternity is defined as motherliness then *Like Water for Chocolate* is negating the premise that maternity is inherent to femininity by portraying Mama Elena who is a biological mother, as the antithesis of motherliness.
- After investigation we find that the motherly figures of the novels are not necessarily the biological mothers but characters that possess attributes that are defined as motherly according to social norms.

Sources

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