

Tribhuvan University

Celebration of Femininity in Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*

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By

Rita Gurung

Central Department of English

Tribhuvan University

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

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Tribhuvan University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Science
Central Department of English

Letter of Recommendation

This thesis, entitled on “Celebration of Femininity in Laura Esquivel’s *Like Water for Chocolate*,” has been prepared by Rita Gurung under my supervision. She carried out her research from July 2012 to August 2013. I hereby recommend this thesis be submitted for viva voce.

Supervisor

Saroj Sharma Ghimire

Date: -----

Tribhuvan University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Central Department of English

Letter of Approval

This thesis, entitled on “Celebration of Femininity in Laura Esquivel’s *Like Water for Chocolate*,” submitted to the Central Department of English, T.U, by Rita Gurung, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee:

Internal Examiner

External

Examiner

Head

Central Department of English

Tribhuvan University

Date:

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Abstract

Like Water for Chocolate, through the protagonist Tita, celebrates aspects of femininity such as cooking, nursing, and other manners of the kitchen and the table while weaving them in the Mexican cultural patterns. According to the Mexican tradition, the youngest daughter is forbidden to marry and is expected to take care of her mother and the kitchen until she dies. Food and its preparation as well as the kitchen as woman's space play a prominent role in the novel. Along with the recipes that are presented in each of the twelve chapters, the story of Tita and other members of the family is told by an omniscient narrative voice. The female characters are attached to stereotypical gender roles. They are engaged in the kitchen, and other feminine acts such as babysitting, mothering and nursing. Nonetheless, they are stronger than their counterparts as the latter are weak, timid and indecisive. Esquivel effectively rejects the traditional romance novel hierarchy by empowering her female characters with intelligence and strength or traits typically associated with male characters. Tita represents the break with the traditional stereotype of femininity that prescribes and limits women to the private sphere. Thus, through the depiction of women who are feminine but also appear more powerful than their male counterparts, Esquivel not only questions the traditional gender roles prescribed by patriarchy but also takes femininity as power.

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