

**Emotions and Food in Joanne Harris's *Chocolate* (2015) and
Laura
Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate* (1989): A Psychological
Study**

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This paper compares and contrasts the centrality of food to the human experience, as shown in the novels *Chocolate* (2015) by Joanne Harris and *Like Water for Chocolate* (2007) by Laura Esquivel from a psychological perspective (1989). This paper contains a synopsis of two fictional female protagonists, Vianne Rocher, and Tita. The first strong, independent heroine travels with her daughter to a quaint little town and opens a chocolate shop. While traveling, she uses her culinary and magical skills to improve the lives of the people she meets. Tita, our second heroine, is the youngest of her family and is, therefore, unable to marry her true love. She has no choice but to tend to Mama Elena until the end of her life. Pedro, her secret lover whom Tita's mother refused their marriage, decided to wed her sister Rosaura so that he can be near Tita. Most of the action occurs in the kitchen as the protagonist imagines preparing various dishes. Once again, the act of preparing food serves as a fundamental metaphor for the characters' inner states of mind. Both books belong to a literary genre known as "magical realism." This article uses this style to convey its central message: the protagonist's journey to serve others and delight their spirits via a combination of *Chocolate* and the supernatural powers of cocoa. The other work, "*Like Water for Chocolate*," depicts the goal through the female characters' stories, which were influenced by tales passed down from the protagonist's mother and other

women in her life, demonstrating how food is a symbolic depiction of emotions. A simple meal cooked and eaten presents layers of history, culture, and personal experience.

Keywords: freedom, magic, religion, tradition, travel, food, Chocolate, and magical realism.

الغذاء والمشاعر: منهج مقارنة من خلال من منظور نفسي لعمليين أديبين للكاتبه
"جوان هاريس" في روايه "شوكولاتة" (٢٠١٥) والكاتبه "لورا إسكوفيل" في
روايه " كالماء للشوكولاتة" (١٩٨٩)

تقارن هذه الرسالة وتناقض محورية الطعام مع التجربة الإنسانية كما هو موضح في روايات "شوكولاتة" (٢٠١٥) لجوان هاريس في روايه " كالماء للشوكولاتة" (١٩٨٩) لورا إسكوفيل من منظور نفسي. تحتوي هذه المقالة على ملخص لبطلتين خياليتين، فيان روشيه وتيتا. تسافر البطلة في الروايه الاولى وهي شخصيه قوية ومستقلة إلى بلدة صغيرة جذابة مع ابنتها وتفتح متجرًا للشوكولاتة. أثناء السفر، تستخدم مهاراتها السحرية في الطهي لتحسين حياة الأشخاص الذين تلقتي بهم. تيتا، بطلتنا الثانية، هي الأصغر في عائلتها، وبالتالي فهي غير قادرة على الزواج من حبها الحقيقي. ليس لديها خيار سوى رعاية ماما إيلينا حتى نهاية حياتها. حتى يكون بالقرب من تيتا، يتزوج بيدرو من أختها روزورا. تتم معظم الأحداث في المطبخ حيث يتخيل بطل الرواية مجموعة متنوعة من الأطباق التي يتم إعدادها. مرة أخرى، يعد تحضير الطعام بمثابة استعارة أساسية للحالات الذهنية الداخلية للشخصيات. ينتمي كلا الكتابين إلى نوع أدبي يُعرف باسم "الواقعية السحرية"، وتستخدم هذه المقالة هذا الأسلوب لإيصال رسالتها المركزية: رحلة البطل لخدمة الآخرين وإسعاد أرواحهم من خلال استخدام مزيج من الشوكولاتة والقوى الخارقة للطبيعة. من الكاكاو. تم تصوير الهدف في العمل الآخر من خلال قصص الشخصيات النسائية، والتي تأثرت بالحكايات المتوارثة من والده البطل ونساء أخريات في حياتها، مما يدل على أن الطعام هو تصوير رمزي للعواطف. تقدم الوجبة البسيطة التي يتم طهيها وتناولها طبقات من التاريخ والثقافة والتجارب الشخصية.

مفاتيح الكلام: الحرية، والسحر، والدين، والتقاليد، والسفر، والطعام، والشوكولاتة، والواقعية السحرية

Objectives:

This research paper analyzes the representation of food as a source of communication, transformation, women empowerment, and healing agent in the novels *Chocolate* by Joanne Harris and *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel. While there have been numerous research papers on these novels, few have explored the significance of food beyond its role in satisfying physical hunger. Through an analysis of these novels, this paper demonstrates how food functions as an effective communicator, transformer, and healer.

The paper draws on theoretical discussions by scholars such as Roland Barthes, Evinid Jacobsen, and Levi- Strauss to highlight the connection between food and communication. Barthes, for instance, applies semiotics to explain the significance of food in society, arguing that eating is a universal language. In these novels, food is used as a metaphor for emotional expression, cultural identity, and personal transformation. Through the analysis of these novels, this paper illuminates the ways in which food can function as a means of communication and empowerment, particularly for women.

In conclusion, this research paper contributes to the academic discussion on the significance of food in human life and its connection to communication, transformation, and healing. By focusing on the novels *Chocolate* and *Like Water for Chocolate*, this paper highlights how food can be used to convey complex emotions and ideas and empower individuals to transform their lives.

Food has a central place in human life. It is not just necessary for the body, however. It also has a tremendous impact, both directly and indirectly, on emotional and intellectual well-being (Somer 5). Food can be a tangible symbol of love and concern for others. It is the oldest and best form of medicine known to mankind (Geary 3). There is a two-way relationship between

food and emotion. One's emotions can affect what and how much one eats and can affect the way one feels (Eldershaw 13). Bernard Shaw has very rightly said that "there is no love sincerer than the love of food." Food has remained an essential element for ages. It can establish a culture and it can be seen as an effective communicator.

Too many research papers were written on the works of Joanne Harris and Laura Esquivel but none of these papers have dealt with the notion of this research paper which is the analyses and representation of food as a source of communication, transformation, women empowerment, and healing agent concerning the characters in the two novels *Chocolate* and *Like Water for Chocolate*.

This paper tries to analyze these aspects with the help of two novels. Food and its connection with the world have not been given much importance academically, no doubt theorists such as Ronald Barthes, Jaobsen, and Levi Strauss have elaborated on these aspects. Traditionally food has always had an intimate association with women and their lives. These aspects will be very much evident in all the novels that I have looked upon. The main objective of these novels is to analyze the significance of food not merely as an element for satisfying physical hunger but rather as an effective communicator, transformer, and healer. To prove these points, I have taken the help of two contemporary best-seller novels. Food functions as the main imagery in all these novels and they have an indirect connection in governing our lives.

It is common knowledge that communication is crucial; it is how we learn about and connect with others. Nevertheless, food can be viewed as non-verbal communication because language is not limited to words. It's been claimed that a meal may convey a lot more than words can alone. Food and communication have

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been the subject of numerous theoretical discussions among academics, including the works of Levi- Strauss, Roland Barthes, and Evinid Jacobsen. Barthes applies semiotics to explain the significance of food in society. To him, eating is a universal language (Barthes).

The author of *Toward a Psychosociology of Modern Food Consumption* writes that eating should not be taken lightly. Psychosociology, he argues, is already paying attention to eating behaviors, but not nearly enough (Barthes 22-24). He argues that food has a voice and explores the reciprocal influences between food and culture. According to Levi in *The Strauss's Raw and the Cooked*, food is a code that conveys information about social dynamics. Notwithstanding this, Jacobsen makes a powerful argument in "The Rhetoric of Food," arguing that, as with anything else, the word one employs brings forth an entire range of meanings, histories, acts, and problems that a different definition may preclude. How we use food as a metaphor or a noun in a sentence is important. We need to be unsettled by these food-related notions or frames of mind to be more self-aware in our eating habits. These previous aspects are used in the study of the two intended novels in the analysis to draw some conclusions.

Based on the information provided, the paragraph effectively summarizes the ideas presented by Barthes, Levi-Strauss, and Jacobsen and establishes the significance of food in the field of psychosociology.

In the field of psychosociology, food has emerged as a significant object of study. According to Barthes, food has a voice and can convey important cultural and social messages (22-24). Levi-Strauss argues that food is a code that conveys information about social dynamics, while Jacobsen emphasizes the importance of the language we use to describe food and its related concepts (Jacobsen). By analyzing how food is used as a

metaphor or noun in our language and culture, we can gain a better understanding of our eating habits and the cultural and social values that shape them. These theoretical frameworks provide a foundation for the analysis of the two novels, demonstrating the significance of food in shaping human experience and identity.

Literature Review:

Dr. P. Mohana uses food as an example of Individuality in *Chocolate*, by Joanne Harris, to discuss this intriguing topic from a different angle than other scholars who have written on the same topic. A scene from the British comedy *The Country Wife* (1701) by William Wycherley exemplifies how food may function on numerous levels of meaning to expose social and sexual tensions in a literary text, which is another part of the role of food in gendered implications in literary texts. And then there is the literary significance of food and dining. In the literary canons of Britain and North America, the lady who serves others at mealtime is often depicted as the most admirable example of femininity and the most morally dependable protagonist. Like other antisocial and non-gender-normative actions, a female character's refusal to prepare and serve food to others is often accompanied by other problematic traits. *The Shipping News* (1993) can represent every type of woman. Other researchers focused on eating, food refusal, and sex differences in controlling one's impulses. Because of this evocative analogy, a character whose bodily autonomy has been overtly violated, such as through rape or kidnapping, may find that refusing food is an exceptionally symbolic action. In such situations, a character's final act of defiance is often to refuse food. Clarissa Harlowe, the protagonist of Samuel Richardson's eighteenth-century epistolary novel *Clarissa*, is perhaps the most famous character of this type (177-8). Clarissa's self-starvation is how she overcomes the

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patriarchal power structure that holds her down, and her self-denial is portrayed as an act of agency. Clarissa, who has been raped by her former admirer Robert Lovelace, who has kidnapped and sedated her with a cup of tainted tea, figuratively seals the frontiers of her body by refusing to let any nutrition enter past the limit of her lips. Her father, brother, uncles, and Lovelace have all exerted violent and tyrannical dominion over her body; she starves herself to death to escape their control. At the end of the book, she is described as a "beautiful skeleton" (123), and Richardson suggests a connection between her frail and delicate physical appearance and the strength and conviction with which she approaches her religious and spiritual beliefs.

Furthermore, there is the idea of male restraint and active political participation. Even among male characters, the ability to exercise self-control in the kitchen is linked to a sense of physical freedom. In several works, the ability to regulate one's appetite is a prerequisite for males to exercise their legal and political rights. For instance, in Henry David Thoreau's collection of autobiographical essays titled *On Walden Pond* (1854), Thoreau equates personal sovereignty with the ability to determine what he eats by describing in great detail how he cultivates, harvests, and processes a crop of beans that he will use as currency. Thoreau associates his job in the field with "the liberty of Massachusetts and our fatherland" (205) since he can hear military exercises in the distance. Beans provide Thoreau with the ability to control his food supply and ensure that his body's most fundamental nutritional demands are met, even though he does not eat them. Thoreau connects the desire for intellectual and political independence, which led him to Walden Pond, to the maintenance of his physical integrity, the ability to exchange his labor for the food he needs to live. Compared to "my contemporaries committed to the fine arts in Boston or Rome,"

he values the physical independence he achieves by exchanging labor for food more highly (207).

Another notion is the African-American male protagonists in Gloria Naylor's novels struggle with the immense societal demands under which they function in the public realm. Food plays a significant role in these novels. If Naylor's men wanted to break into the almost entirely white business world in the 20th century, they would have to exert tremendous mental and physical discipline. Maxwell Smyth, an African-American corporate executive in *Linden Hills* (1985), discovers that his race disappears from the perspective of others when he is "always clean and controlled" (103). Through "a careful selection of solids and liquids, he managed not just the moment but the exact nature of the substance that had to bring him daily to that blue and white tiled chamber," he eliminates the need to defecate altogether (105). Like Thoreau, Naylor depicts moderate drinking as an essential component of the male role model acts that contribute to society and the workplace. However, for the men in Naylor's novels, the effort needed to make the black male body look normative is a difficult and potentially self-destructive endeavor that, as in *Clarissa*, can lead to the body's complete dissolution.

Refusing to follow the norms of the social system in which one is embedded, such as using the appropriate utensils and serving ware for one's gender when preparing food, indicates social discontent. Petal Bear, the depraved wife of Quoyle in *The Shipping News* (1993), whose gender nonconformity is expressed in part through her refusal to cook for her family, is unethical and is punished accordingly by a violent death, is an example of a literary work that takes a conservative approach to the relationship between gender, food, and ethics because the offending man or woman is punished (24). In his

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short fiction *What You Pawn I Will Redeem* (2003), Sherman Alexie subverts the assumption that men who eat and drink to the point of nausea are unworthy of political citizenship and property ownership because of their lack of self-control with their nutrition. We follow Jackson Jackson, a homeless man in Spokane who calls himself "an alcoholic Indian with a shattered gut" (178). Jackson has between lunches to save up the \$999 to purchase back his grandmother's powwow regalia from a Seattle pawnshop. Instead, Jackson buys booze and McDonald's hamburgers, which he later throws up. Alexie's persona challenges the connection between moderate eating, appropriate gender performance, and social inclusion by drinking excessively, gaining stuff for nothing, interrupting traffic, and dancing in women's clothing. In this story, the author refuses to portray as natural the symbolic connection between men's gustatory self-control and their personal and political freedom and instead rewards the protagonist for engaging in behavior that should be abhorrent, antisocial, and punishable: the protagonist, Alexie, is returned his grandmother's rain dance costume. The fact that this story relies in part on magical realism – the pawnshop is never in the same place twice – underscores how unusual its depiction is of a world where the good guys can eat and drink until they vomit without giving up their status as ethical agents.

The framework of this paper is organized around four main themes:

1. Women and food:

- Women are portrayed as dynamic protagonists but face cultural norms that limit their agency (Like Water for Chocolate).

- The bond between women and food provides a platform for emotional expression (both *Chocolate* and *Like Water for Chocolate*).

2. The role of food in character development:

- Food serves as a powerful metaphor for transformation and personal growth.

- The preparation and consumption of food often symbolize a character's emotional state and journey.

3. Resistance to change:

- Characters struggle with the tension between tradition and innovation, often relying on religion or familiarity to cope with change.

4. The curative power of food:

- Food is used as a means of healing and bringing people together.

- The symbolic and emotional significance of food is explored as a form of therapy.

The Central Theme :

This research paper explores the role of communication and emotional expression, particularly through the use of food and cooking, in empowering women and promoting their well-being. The central focus of this study is the novel *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel, which employs magical realism and culinary invention to highlight how characters use the kitchen as a platform for emotional expression and communication. Through an analysis of this novel, this paper illuminates the significance of communication and emotional expression in the face of oppressive cultural norms and

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demonstrates how food and cooking can serve as powerful tools for empowering women and promoting their agency.

When one cannot openly voice their opinions, their experiences tend to show themselves in roundabout ways. The human psyche's honesty often emerges in the most indirect of forms. Alice Miller, a renowned psychologist who studies the long-term repercussions of early trauma, has written extensively on how an artist's true self emerges through his or her creations. The truth they were often unable to speak finds its way into their works of art in indelible ways. Miller, however, argues that if the truth about a person does not make it to their conscious mind for integration, it will often manifest in the form of bodily diseases or even seemingly external situations. Miller wrote an entire book about the latter topic, titled *The Body Never Lies*, in which he analyzed the effects of people's histories on their bodies, both renowned and ordinary. According to Miller, "the original unpleasant feeling is a crucial signal emitted by the body," proving that the physical form stores the full spectrum of human emotion. The body will send out other messages if the recipient does not respond to the first signal. (Miller 162)

Notes on the Authors:

1. Laura Esquivel (born in 1950) is a Mexican author best known for her novel *Like Water for Chocolate* (1989), which has become a worldwide bestseller and was adapted into a popular film in 1994. Her works often incorporate elements of magical realism and explore innovative storytelling techniques, featuring pictures, cooking recipes, and a music CD. She has received numerous accolades for her writing, including the Ariel Award for Excellence in Fiction in 1985.

2. Joanne Harris (born 3 July 1964) is an English-French author who has written fourteen novels spanning various genres, including magical realism, suspense, historical fiction,

mythology, and fantasy. Her most famous work, *Chocolat* (1999), was adapted into a film in 2000. Harris's writing often explores themes of identity, belonging, and the power of storytelling and even into the realm of fantasy, just like *peanut butter and jelly*.

Like Water For Chocolate

Tita De La Garza and her powerful mother, Mama Elena, provide the novel's backbone. The narrative revolves around the course of their conflict with one another. Tita is the heroine, and her primary nemesis is Mama Elena, who stands in the way of her pursuit of love, independence, and uniqueness. When Tita is born prematurely after her father's death, her mother immediately faces the challenge of raising her alone. As Tita's mother, Mama Elena is the antithesis of nurturing.

Tita learns to use food as a source of comfort and an outlet for her feelings. The novel's title, *Like Water for Chocolate*, alludes to food. It plays a crucial role in everything that occurs in the book. It functions as a framework for the entire piece, as well as a metaphor and a central visual motif. *Like Water for Chocolate* is slang for being "agitated, restless, perplexed, and disturbed" in Mexican. It can describe a highly passionate person, experience, or connection. One may think of water on the verge of boiling as a result. The novel's title is the only other place where food is symbolic. It is evocative of water coming to a boil, representing the protagonist's emotional state, Tita, a woman whose pent-up wrath and bewilderment are poised to explode. In other words, "Tita was on the point of boiling over" (Esquivel 151).

The references to food may be found in the novel's title, subtitle (A Novel in Monthly Installments, with Recipes, Romances, and Home Remedies), and epigraph, "To the table or bed / You must come when you are bid. The novel has twelve

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parts, each corresponding to one of the twelve months in a year. Each chapter is titled after a dish and the month it is featured in; for example, "Chapter Three — March: Quail in Rose Petal Sauce" (Esquivel 45). Of all, the recipes are not only anecdotes; they are genuine accounts passed down from generation to generation. These dishes contain elements that can be seen and touched and feelings such as love, sadness, joy, patience, hatred for all, etc. There is abundant evidence of this throughout the book. For example, when she cooks, she will sometimes include rose petals in the meal. She loves Pedro very much because she puts her heart and soul into making this dish for him. The chapter's structure and narrative material are determined by the steps involved in making the food referenced in the chapter's title. The novel's pivotal events occur during or immediately after food preparation or consumption. The plot progresses as a result of and within the context of these actions. Tita's struggles to achieve true love and independence from her domineering mother are conveyed to the reader via the lens of food. The recipes that play an important role in the novel's framework also serve as a sort of Greek chorus, offering commentary on the novel's characters and events.

Since the author is Mexican, the work naturally features characteristics of Mexican culture, particularly concerning food. Several of the culinary customs that Mexicans hold dear are reflected in the novel. Besides, according to Barthes, each nation's cuisine and preparation methods shape its distinctive culture. He claims that what we eat can express our values and beliefs. Women in Mexico have a crucial role in the home. Thus being able to cook is an essential skill (Lomnitz & Perez-Lizaur 187). *Like Water for Chocolate's* structure and the simple incorporation of recipes and cures into the narrative highlights the novel's rich potential for feminist interpretation.

The information provided in this paragraph relates directly to two of the four main themes of your research paper:

1. Women and food:

- Tita uses food as a source of emotional expression and communication in the face of her mother's oppressive behavior.
- The incorporation of recipes and cures into the narrative highlights the significance of food in Mexican culture, particularly about women's roles in the home.

2. The role of food in character development:

- Tita's use of food reflects her emotional state and journey, serving as a powerful metaphor for personal growth and transformation.
- The incorporation of food into the novel's structure and narrative highlights its significance as a central motif and driver of the plot.

By highlighting how food is used as a form of communication and emotional expression throughout the novel, this paragraph helps to reinforce the central themes of your research paper and provides additional context for the analysis of the novels. Additionally, the discussion of food as a significant aspect of Mexican culture and its connection to women's roles in the home supports the broader themes of the significance of cultural context and the role of tradition in shaping human experience and identity.

Role of Food in the characters' development

As indicated, the narrative covers her relationship with food from the moment of her birth onward. It further emphasizes how food serves a crucial role in Tita's emotional expression and liberation within the constraints of her abusive relationship with her mother. The kitchen, where Tita is raised by chef Nacha, becomes a refuge for her, a space where she can express herself

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and have some control over her life. Tita's emotional expressions are best conveyed through the food she prepares and serves.

This part resonates with the main themes of the research paper, particularly the theme of the curative power of food and the role of food in character development. Tita's relationship with food serves as a metaphor for her struggle to achieve agency and independence in the face of her mother's strict rules, and the kitchen becomes a space where she can express herself freely. The passage from Barthes reinforces the idea that food is a powerful form of communication, conveying complex meanings and emotions through taste, scent, and texture.

Only in the kitchen, away from Mama Elena's brutality, does Tita feel like she has any control over her own life. Tita is raised by Nacha, the chef, in the kitchen where she was born. Alternatively, she is content to have her own space, where "flavors, odors, textures, and the consequences they may have were outside Mama Elena's iron command." Food, the reader learns, provided Tita with a little reprieve from her mother, Mama Elena's strict rule. Tita finds it easiest to express her emotions through the cuisine she prepares and serves (Dobrian 163). As Barthes writes, "What is food? It is a true sign, possibly the functional unit of communication, that one bite of food can sum up and send an entire communication system, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and conduct."

Relationship between food and mood

Relationships of all kinds are built and sustained with the help of food in the novel. The narrative opens with a cooking instructor listing a dish's components and outlining its preparation technique. After the characters' relationships with food become central to the plot, the narrative moves to a third-person perspective. The next month's meal is introduced when one chapter ends, such as "Next month's recipe: Chabela

Wedding Cake" (Esquivel 20). Over everything else, Tita considers Nacha to be her "true mother." Tita can express all of the feelings she is obligated to suppress through her magical cuisine, which has far-reaching effects on others around her. According to Surapeepan Chataraporn's essay, the novel has gastronomic metaphors, including the title. Tita, for another, shows her anguish for Pedro at the wedding by letting her tears fall into the cake mix. Everyone at the wedding ends up weeping over broken hearts and throwing up on the dance floor. Tita does not set out to disrupt Rosaura's wedding, but her unhappiness "poisons" the happy couple and anybody who shares responsibility for her misfortune.

Another situation is when Tita begins to perceive her cooking as expressing her love for Pedro because Mama Elena prevents them from speaking to one another or being alone in their home. Tita prepares tasty meals for Pedro with his happiness in mind, and Pedro expresses his appreciation for Tita's efforts in the kitchen by praising them. Thanks to her kitchen, Tita has a platform from which to test the limits of her imagination and directly affect the lives of those around her. Although Tita seems to be doing what Mama Elena has told her and fitting into the gender norm, she is rebelling and coming into her own.

Tita's dictatorial mother, Mama Elena, prevents her from expressing her affection directly or indirectly. Thus food becomes a means of communication between her and the reader. Cooking is a natural outlet for her, and the food she makes always seems to reflect her inner state. Her food can both cheer and depress its diners.

This paragraph provides additional insight into how food serves as a means of communication and emotional expression in the novel *Like Water for Chocolate*. Relationships of all kinds are built and sustained through the sharing of food, which is central

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to the plot and character development. Tita's relationship with Nacha, her mentor in the kitchen, becomes a central aspect of her emotional development and a source of comfort and support. Tita's use of food to express her feelings and rebelling against her mother's oppressive rule reinforces the themes of women and food and the role of food in character development.

The paragraph also touches on the theme of the power of food to affect people's emotions and behavior. Tita's tears on the wedding cake symbolize the emotional turmoil she and the other characters experience throughout the novel. Despite her mother's attempts to keep them apart, Tita's cooking becomes a means of expressing her love for Pedro. Through her cooking, Tita can rebel against her mother's dictates and assert her agency.

Overall, this paragraph reinforces the central themes of the research paper and provides additional evidence to support the significance of food and cooking as a means of communication and emotional expression. The use of food as a metaphor for emotional turmoil and personal growth highlights the novel's contribution to the broader discourse on the curative power of food and the importance of emotional expression for human well-being.

A Curative Agent

The Oxtail soup that Chenchu makes is a remedy for Tita's use of food to treat Pedro's burns, and this is only one example of how food is used as a curative agent in this culture. Tita also comes up with solutions to combat foul breath, which played a role in her recovery from the breakdown. A direct correlation exists between what we eat and how we feel (Dinesen). Making delicious foods offers these ladies the agency they were denied. Tita was unloved by her mother and through a difficult upbringing; furthermore, she was not allowed the freedom to make choices on her own. Cooking, on the other hand, allowed her to express herself freely. She could only use whatever she

liked as an additive while cooking to engage her intellect and senses fully. "Guests at her Chapel nuptials who sampled the cake report feeling queasy and an overpowering longing for lost lovers."

The curative power of food in the novel is significant in this part. The use of oxtail soup as a remedy for Pedro's burns and Tita's solutions for bad breath highlights how food is used as a form of medicine in Mexican culture. The direct correlation between food and emotions is also emphasized, supporting the theme of the curative power of food in the research paper. The paragraph also emphasizes the role of cooking as a means of empowerment for women, particularly for Tita, who was denied agency and freedom in other aspects of her life. Cooking allows Tita to express herself freely and engage her intellect and senses fully through the use of additives and flavors. The use of the wedding cake as a metaphor for lost lovers reinforces the novel's broader themes of the significance of food as a form of emotional expression and communication.

The use of Magical Realism

The term "magical realism" is derived from the juxtaposition of two words: "magic" and "real." The former refers to using supernatural or unexplained forces, while the latter refers to accurately portraying actual situations. As a result, magical realism is based on everyday experiences that give readers a fresh perspective on the world around them.

There is a lot of disagreement among critics over where magical realism first appeared. As an example, Roh argues that the fusion of impressionism and expressionism is responsible for the emergence of magic realism. The former represents the natural form, while the latter represents the spiritual form. The origins of his theory lie in the surrealist movement, he says.

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Since magic realism emphasizes the material object and the actual existence of objects in the world, as opposed to the more cerebral and psychological reality explored by the surrealists, Roh saw it as related to but separate from surrealism. Unlike magical realism, which explores the other sides of reality, surrealism focuses on the hidden aspects of human behavior.

One of the critics, Faris, lists five characteristics of realism in his work; the first is that the narrative text has features that cannot be reduced. The second one has gained widespread attention around the world. The third category includes both magical and paradoxical varieties. The fourth one is about time, location, and space. The fifth mashes up many genres to create a magical realist effect. Nonetheless, reviewers and critics have universally praised three characteristics: **the Carnavalesque, the hybridity, and the irreducible parts.**

Fantastic, supernatural, and folkloric components cannot be reduced to their parts. According to Canady, a well-educated writer can distinguish between the natural and the supernatural. Canady says that both logical and illogical components can be found in works of magical realism (Wendy B. 6)

As one of magical realism's hallmarks, carnival reveals the many facets of reality that are often concealed. As for Bakhtin, the **Carnavalesque** represents a rejection of authority in society. He considers the carnivalesque to be a strange cultural phenomenon that arises in a people's society in which all social norms and regulations are openly ridiculed and disregarded. At the Carnival celebration, people come together to eat, drink and have a good time. Clowns and fools are sometimes used as symbols of a more profound reality, so they are frequently featured in plays and literature. Cultures and identities are hybridized when they are combined. One form of **hybridity** is found in works of magical realism, which combine elements of the actual and fantastical worlds. As the western and the native

worlds collide, the identities of the colonizers and colonized shift.

The paragraph defines magical realism as the use of supernatural or unexplained forces within the context of everyday experiences, providing readers with a fresh perspective on the world around them.

The paragraph also highlights the various theories and characteristics of magical realism, including the emphasis on the material object and the irreducible parts, as well as the use of carnival and hybridity to explore different facets of reality. These characteristics are important for understanding the use of magical realism in *Like Water for Chocolate*, which combines elements of the actual and fantastical worlds to create a unique narrative style that emphasizes the curative power of food and the role of women in Mexican culture.

By providing this background information on magical realism, the paragraph helps to situate the novel within a broader literary tradition and emphasizes the significance of the novel's narrative style for understanding its central themes and messages.

The Place of Women in Society

As a subgenre of magical realism, feminism often has writers who focus on female protagonists and issues unique to women. One of the most popular authors in this genre is Laura Esquivel. The religious-mythic motifs of magic realism are brought into the mundane world of a female-dominated family by Esquivel in *Like Water for Chocolate*. This story is not about battles, great characters, or moral dilemmas often associated with the epic form. However, Esquivel gives this story about women, and one lady in particular, epic proportions instead. Using this tactic, one can better appreciate *Like Water for Chocolate's* feminist

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qualities, which are visible in Tita's battle for autonomy and self-discovery and in the fact that it is shown at all. While Esquivel's world features a predominantly female cast of characters, misogyny and women's traditional role as homemakers are still prevalent in her imagined society. Esquivel does not present her readers with a picture of a perfect sisterhood but rather examines how women are limited by norms of social propriety that other women uphold.

Growing up was the worst possible experience for Tita. She has learned to repress her feelings for Pedro and the knowledge that her mother does not approve of her. She is not unlike the many other women who are weak and powerless and have their own identities taken away from them in this way. Yet when she starts feeding the family alone, she gradually gains more responsibility. She finds an outlet for her pent-up feelings and inventive ideas through cooking. Her transformation into a creative force is remarkable. She grows up and stops being the helpless, unwanted child of a controlling mother. Through the food she prepares, she can convey her innermost thoughts and desires to those around her, enhancing her societal position. Eventually, Tita can break away from her mother's cold dominance and fight for what is rightfully hers as a woman. She chooses her path and asserts her right to say what she thinks. She musters the nerve to confront her mother and insist on being allowed to make her own choices in life.

Whom am I kidding? A person who is perfectly entitled to do as she pleases with her life. Please, for the love of God, just leave me alone; I refuse to put up with you (mother) anymore! If you are reading this, I have always despised you, and I still do (Esquivel 199)

Tita becomes the ruler of her own life, heart, and soul at the sound of these magic words, and the ghost of Mama Elena vanishes into thin air. Yet Tita's biggest triumph was breaking the

taboo on marriage and love so that she could live openly with Pedro.

They consider Tita more than just an aunt to Roberto and Esperanza. She is their mother, as she provides food and cares for them. Tita's niece and nephew regard her as their mother due to the care and attention she lavishes on them. From her birth, Esperanza seemed destined to follow in her aunt Tita's footsteps. She is the youngest of the daughters and hence cannot marry. Instead, her duty will be to care for her mother until the end of her life. Tita, however, cannot bear to witness her niece experience the same injustice that was done to her. To protect her niece's autonomy, Tita discovers her voice. In other words, she will not stand for her name being given to the baby. She disagrees with Rosaura, Esperanza's mother, about how the child is being raised and the long-standing family tradition forbidding the youngest daughter to marry. A tremendous triumph for Tita over the tyranny of cruel, mindless custom is achieved when Esperanza marries Alex.

Tita is respected and admired because of her culinary expertise. Those who partake in her cuisine may experience either happiness or sadness. Guests at her chapel nuptials, for instance, who partake of the wedding cake report feeling queasy and a deep longing for lost love. One who partakes of her fowl in rose petal sauce will be overcome with a fervent yearning to possess her. Her chiles in the walnut sauce are sexual arousal, while her turkey mole with almonds and sesame seeds will leave you feeling happy and fulfilled. Tita also prepares recipes that cure Pedro's burns and improve Rosaura's digestion and breath. Tita is no longer the helpless "nobody" she was as a kid once she realizes her culinary potential. Throughout the narrative, everyone begins to rely on her. Tita is the one who ultimately holds sway over others around her.

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All the novel's major events take place in the kitchen. At first, it represents Tita's imprisonment and the limitations placed on her. It symbolizes the insult to her personhood that she is being denied. Within the confines of her kitchen, Tita's entire world collapses. A person is emotionally and physically confined in the kitchen. Tita's job as a cook requires her to put aside her feelings of love and want for the sake of her patrons. Wives, daughters, mothers, servants, and enslaved people customarily occupied the kitchen. Many feminists have seen the kitchen as a metaphor for women's subordinate position for a long time. It is a boring, mundane workplace. Indeed, in *A Room of One's Own* by Virginia Woolf, the kitchen was not viewed as an important space where women could display their abilities and express themselves as individuals. Feminists often believe that a kitchen is an oppressive place where women cannot pursue their interests, develop their identities, or realize their potential.

Tita, however, disproves this notion with her mystical affinity for cooking and love of food. With her culinary skills, she can reclaim the kitchen as a sacred place to share her feelings, desires, and unwavering devotion to Pedro with him. Tita's kitchen is where she is most at home and where she can express her imagination. Tita's kitchen takes on a life of its own and becomes an ally in her quest for self-determination. Because of this, Esquivel takes a less conventional approach to the kitchen than some other female authors in *Like Water for Chocolate*. She places this chamber in the novel's center to emphasize its significance as the setting where the protagonist's female protagonist can exercise leadership. The author reclaims the kitchen as the only realm of women by demonstrating via Tita the parallels between cooking and alchemy and by elucidating the relationship between food, cooking, and the human soul. Rather than removing her female characters from home, Esquivel elevates the kitchen to a sacred space where the cook becomes

one with her guests. The meal profoundly affects everyone's emotions and actions.

This paragraph explores the feminist qualities of *Like Water for Chocolate* and how the novel challenges traditional gender roles and expectations. It highlights the character of Tita and her struggle for autonomy and self-discovery, which is a central theme of the novel. Through her culinary skills, Tita can reclaim the kitchen as a space of creative expression and personal empowerment, challenging the notion that a kitchen is an oppressive place for women.

The paragraph also emphasizes the significance of food and cooking as a means of communication and emotional expression, reinforcing the broader theme of the curative power of food in the novel. Through her cooking, Tita can convey her innermost thoughts and desires, enhancing her societal position and ultimately asserting her right to make her own choices in life. The paragraph also touches on how Esquivel's imagined society still reflects traditional gender roles and misogyny, highlighting the limitations that women face in a patriarchal culture. However, the novel ultimately challenges these norms and celebrates the power of women to assert their autonomy and exercise leadership in their own lives.

Chocolat

Harris's *Chocolat* strongly emphasizes food, much to Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*. The major focus and most prominent visual motif in this work is, of course, food. The novel's title, *Chocolat*, alludes to scrumptious Chocolate, a gastronomic extravaganza, a love fest, and a celebration of life's little luxuries. The metaphorical meaning of Chocolate is that it is a sumptuous meal that nourishes the spirit and body. Other than that, the novel's title hints at the centrality of food throughout the

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story. Vianne's chocolate business became a destination for the locals seeking solace for their emotional wounds and guidance in matters of the heart. People are served as the store opens in a small community with a tight code of conduct governing circumstances like this (Harris 18).

Chocolate is a magical modern folk story that masterfully depicts magic realism and centers on Vianne Rocher, the proprietor of a chocolate business. A beautiful and intriguing woman, Vianne moves to a small French village with her daughter, age six, and takes over a former bakery, turning it into a chocolate business. "We rode the carnival's coattails to get here. This breeze is unusually warm for February, carrying the savory aromas of freshly cooked pancakes, sausages, and waffles from the roadside griddle" (Harris 11)

Her attachment to the "unsurpassed smell wafting from the chocolatier" draws customers in, and she views the chocolatier as her soul. She has a knack for making friends and learning about them- their lives, secrets, and personalities. "It is inexpensive, portable, will not melt in your pocket, and readily available" (Harris 67). She is so kind and patient that she does not get angry when others offend her; instead, she attempts to figure out why they are acting badly and how she may help them achieve inner peace via her chocolatier.

This paragraph focuses on the centrality of food in Harris's *Chocolate*, highlighting the role of chocolate in nourishing the spirit and body and serving as a metaphor for emotional healing and celebration. The paragraph also emphasizes the magical realism in the novel, with its focus on the character of Vianne Rocher and her chocolate business as a means of connecting with people and learning about their lives. It also highlights how food serves as a means of communication and emotional expression, reinforcing the broader theme of the curative power of food in the novel. Through her chocolate business, Vianne can connect

with the people of the small French village and provide them with solace and guidance in matters of the heart.

The paragraph also touches on the contrast between the tight code of conduct governing the small community and Vianne's more free-spirited approach to life, emphasizing the role of food and chocolate as a means of breaking down barriers and connecting people from different walks of life. As a whole, this part provides further evidence to support the central themes of the research paper and emphasizes the significance of food and cooking as a means of communication, emotional expression, and healing in literature.

Change Verses Familiarity

Harris's *Chocolat* is a novel that explores the curative power of food and its ability to facilitate emotional connection and healing, aligning with the broader framework of food and literature. The novel features a diverse cast of characters with unique perspectives and histories, recounting the story from both Vianne's and Reynaud's perspectives. Reynaud, a man of the Church, is depicted as obstructive and bitter, preventing the characters in the novel from progressing with the times. However, the novel is fascinating and original, transporting the reader to a quaint French village with its sights, sounds, and flavors.

As Vianne's narrative explores, food can enrich one's life and serve as a means of emotional expression and connection. The novel examines both the fleeting and permanent aspects of human existence, with the friction between Christianity and Paganism serving as just one of its thought-provoking themes. The novel also explores universal themes such as love and loss, with Ansen noting that it calls for passion and pleasure instead of repression and denial. According to Ansen, "the story makes a

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call for passion and pleasure as opposed to repression and denial" (Ansen 77). The novel's protagonist, chocolatier Vianne Rocher, represents the reader's opposition to the novel's antagonist, Francis Reynaud, a priest who tries to suppress human appetites and forces his parishioners to observe Lent (Harris 10).

The novel's use of magical realism is also notable, with Vianne's arrival in the town bringing back the festival of taste and giving the residents a new lease on life, aligning with the broader framework's emphasis on the transformative power of food. Food serves as a healing force in the lives of characters such as Josephine and Armande, highlighting its ability to facilitate emotional healing and connection. The cooking process itself is described as having a magical quality, with Harris noting that it has been passed down through centuries-old cookbooks and time-honored cooking implements.

On the whole, Harris's *Chocolat* explores themes related to identity, community, and emotional healing through the lens of food, aligning with the broader framework of food and literature. The novel's use of magical realism and exploration of universal themes underscore food's significance in the human experience. As Harris notes, "This is an art I can enjoy," highlighting the emotional and transformative power of cooking and its ability to facilitate connection and healing (Harris).

Food and Mood

As a sacramental act, cooking bonds the cook to Vianne's diners and can affect their state of mind and actions. Specifically, what they eat can affect the characters' moods and actions. Armande, the oldest resident of the Village, drinks a large mocha despite being a diabetic. Her sugar-sensitive daughter, Caroline, has begged her mom to give up chocolate shakes and other sweet treats. While Armande has always been passionate about food,

Vianne's store has recently become a bright spot in her life. She could forget her routine existence whenever she sat down with a hot chocolate mug.

Aside from that, it is clear to the reader that Chocolate was a major factor in determining their actions; Josephine is the clearest case in point. The novel argues in favor of indulging in one's sensual desires as opposed to denying or stifling them (Ansen 77). Vianne's decadent Chocolate, according to Surapeepan Chartraporn's paper "Food, Emotion, and the Empowerment of Women in Modern Fiction by Women Writers," represents a confrontation between the powers of liberty and renewal and the forces of repression and inflexible tradition. Her aphrodisiac treats open people's eyes and minds to the joys of life. The story uses sweets as a metaphor for many themes, including community, morality, loneliness, belonging, tradition, and innovation. Food is a healing agent and the only way Vianne can reach the villagers' hearts in this tale. According to the essay by Surapeepan Chatraporn, the bond that Vianne forms with the locals is nothing short of amazing. Among the outcasts, she finds treasures. She risks slander because she breaks with convention and satisfies a hidden void in the lives of the people she meets. Her unique concoctions have a magical rejuvenating effect, satiating the spiritual hunger of those who take them. Vianne came to the forefront as a rescuer and a healer. The female cook's role is reversed, and she is given more responsibility.

Food and Empowerment

Chocolate is like water for Chocolate. Vianne Rocher represents a role reversal and the empowerment of the female cook in the film *Chocolat*. Atheist and a single parent, Vianne Rocher, is a loner. The implication is heavy that she may be a

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sorceress who inherited her mother's witchcraft. Vianne and her daughter Anouk are nomads who move from place to place following the whims of the wind and the flip of a card. She is an outsider at the beginning of the novel, a newcomer who opens a chocolate shop across the street from the Church at the beginning of Lent and tries to fit in with the conservative citizens of Lansquenet. Because Curé Fancis Reynaud perceives her as a destructive force and an agent of evil, he instantly dislikes her and starts spreading slanderous tales about her. He needs to remove the temptations that Vianne poses from his quiet town. It would appear that the arrival of a young, proud, and independently thinking woman who has become an object of hatred for many has thrown the town's simple way of life into disarray.

Most residents have accepted that they must stoically endure the remainder of their lives while bearing the weight of the profound losses they have suffered. They have long since given up hope for a better life—people like Josephine, who is stuck in an abusive marriage. People like Armande, who is cut off from her grandson Luc's life, people like the gypsy who needs a place to stay temporarily, and people like Reynaud, the priest who is paralyzed by his secret sin and the fear of not living up to his predecessor, are all present. Vianne's kindness and generosity transform the hopeless lives of the town's residents and soften the town's oppressive environment. Her chocolate shop, a bright spot in an otherwise dull town, becomes a place where problems are solved, wishes are made, and secrets are shared.

As the narrative progresses, Vianne's role is flipped. Her capacity to open the minds of the Village's stoic denizens to the joys and riches of life has allowed her to expand figuratively, just as she has brought light to Lansquenet. Her self-assurance comes from her positive outlook on life, her kindness, and the delicious treats she makes. A magical bond is formed between Vianne and

the locals. She associates with the social misfits. When she breaks with established norms and satisfies the hidden need of the individuals she meets, she risks being slandered. Her unique concoctions have healing magical properties since they simultaneously satisfy people's physical and spiritual needs. Vianne starts to gain prominence as a savior and healer. Opening her arms to anyone, no questions asked, reawakens and revitalizes the people around her. She is the kind of doctor that does not shy away from treating broken individuals. She also does not pass judgment or demand thanks from them. Vianne encourages introspective self-love by providing both external validation and an objective perspective. She facilitates self-awareness and the acceptance of humanity. Vianne seems to be showing people the loving side of God through her actions (Catholic New Times 18).

By giving and receiving chocolates, we communicate our love for one another and show that we care about each other on a deeper level (McNulty 45). This tale seems to conclude with the lesson that Christians should not define themselves by what they do not do, but by what they do and whom they welcome into their communities. Even more so, Vianne's cuisine, which stands for the material and sensual, is connected to and can facilitate the ethereal and transcendent.

Conclusion

Symbols have a vital role in catharsis and expression across all literary forms. The creative process of preparing and sharing food is often cited in culinary literature as a means of expressing one's feelings and, in some cases, healing from psychological trauma. Chocolat's protagonists and antagonists turn to food to heal their broken spirits and overcome their traumatic

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experiences. Everywhere food is mentioned in Joanne Harris's novel *Chocolate*, the characters' attitudes and emotional states change accordingly. A well-balanced life is something that Joanne Harris stresses as well. The novel's treatment of food serves as a metaphor for the importance of maintaining equilibrium in one's lifestyle and actions. The way we talk and how important it is as a concrete literary foundation are both radically altered by Esquivel.

In contrast, this research examines how the characters' strong feelings change as they become more independent in the actual world. Rejecting repression by outspoken speech is one way to refuse to live a suppressed life. Esquivel and Harris's research demonstrates that what we eat directly affects our life and can control how we feel and act. Tita, for instance, creates a powerful connection with food because her cooking can evoke both happy and bad feelings. Both Vianne and her Chocolate have the power to change people forever. She has successfully freed the locals from their humdrum routine by employing her culinary creations. Vianne's ability to connect with the people through the food she prepares and the stories she tells make her shop a place where secrets can be shared. It is believed that eating provides both physical and spiritual nourishment.

According to this study's findings, the novelist successfully conveyed the patriarch's silencing of women's voices. Tita is removed from the norms of society and lives in a magical setting. The reader feels compassion for Tita despite the tragedy that takes her life because of the beautiful way in which fantasy and reality combine in this object. The novelist incorporates a wide range of Mexican folklore and traditions. The focus of *Foods and Emotions* is on how and why food figures prominently in culinary literature and the emotional connections between different types of food. Works of subjective culinary literature center on the relationship between food and emotion. Analyzing

how one or more characters use food and its exquisite manufacture to deal with emotional pain is another possible application of the issue of food and emotion. Because of its fundamental importance to human existence and cultural practices, food and dining experiences have been extensively explored in literature. Food plenty is often employed as a metaphor for prosperity and celebration in English and French literature, while food shortage and hunger are frequently used to represent poverty and misery. Both reading and eating are among life's greatest joys, which is why depictions of food in literature work so well.

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