EL AMOR A TRAVÉS DE LA COCINA: EXPLORING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN FOOD AND LOVE IN 20TH CENTURY LATIN-AMERICAN LITERATURE

by
ELLA GUTIERREZ-GARNER

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El Amor A Través De La Cocina: Exploring the Connection Between Food and Love in 20th Century Latin-American Literature

Approved: *Jesús Sepúlveda Ph.D.*
Primary Thesis Advisor

Themes of food and love are strongly intertwined throughout Spanish language literature. The connection is especially apparent during and in the wake of the Latin American Boom of the mid-to-late 20th century. This thesis offers a study of this phenomenon using five diverse texts that display such a theme in rich decorum. Organized in chapters centering on each piece of literature, numerous examples of the bond between food and love are closely examined. In some instances, food serves as an aphrodisiac, in others, cooking is an act of love and food a symbol of it. At times, foods are used as metaphors for genitalia, sex is symbolized using language around eating, and sensuality is best described in the intricacies of nature's finest edible creations. The bond between food and love is shown in a harmonious variety throughout the region's poetry, song, and literature.

Using close-reading and textual analysis, five texts have been selected which effectively include or are based upon this idea of a food-love connection. To keep the source and form of the literary works diverse, they consist of two novels, one ode, one free verse poem, and one sonnet. The authors are also intentionally chosen for their distinct backgrounds in writing, nationality, cultural experience, and gender which include Laura Esquivel of Mexico, Gabriel García Márquez of Colombia, Pablo Neruda of Chile, and Gioconda Belli of Nicaragua. The first two texts in this investigation are "Amor de frutas" (1991) by Gioconda Belli and "Oda a la ciruela" (1954) by Pablo Neruda, selected for the unique way that the authors admire the physical shape and qualities of fruits and liken them to the natural properties of human sex. Next is Neruda's "Soneto XI" (1959), where the author's desire for his lover is metaphorized to an inconsolable animalistic hunger. In this poem, he wishes to go beyond touch and kiss her; he needs to taste her, swallow her, and consume her. Following the poetry is, *Cien años de soledad* (1967) by Gabriel García Márquez, which demonstrates complex romances involving obsessive love or *mania* expressed through binge eating. This eating disorder is first introduced through Rebeca and her inexplicable hunger for earth and is later reiterated during the eating contest between Aureliano Segundo and *La Elefante* where her sheer skill for consumption attracts his gluttony and desire. The final text, *Como agua para chocolate* by Laura Esquivel (1989), is the raison d'être of this thesis. Here, Esquivel creates a narrative wherein food is a symbol and mechanism of love. Tita's recipes prove potent transmitters of emotion, through which she ultimately creates iconic aphrodisiacs.

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To my Antonia… It is easy to write about love when you feel it everyday. This is what you have given to me.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Before my great grandmother passed away (who we affectionately called 'Little Nana'), it was customary to spend several lots of time with her on our visits to Phoenix. Her home was old, dried by the beating sun, painted the shade of juicy bubblegum. We rode as one–my brother, mother, Big Nana, and I–all the way to her enduring one-story house on 1512 East Edgemont. Upon arrival we were greeted with hugs, kisses, and a firm reminder not to take our shoes off. Then, it was time to eat. Enormous handmade tortillas, albondigas, Mexican rice, refried beans, menudo blanco, sopitas, red or green tamales, and gorditas were just a few of the many dishes she would often prepare for us. As we ate, we shared with her the excitement of our new life in Oregon, engaged in an unhealthy amount of gossip, and laughed to no end. It was impossible to eat at her table without feeling even the slightest sense of happiness or tranquility. That was a special experience.

After her death, there were some parts of our family that were due for a natural change. Big Nana lost the need for her prefix in her mother's absence and the pink house was painted gray and sold to a new family. As a result, the house and our family with it, had lost a quality of charm only she possessed. Nevertheless, Little Nana's recipes lived on in the kitchens of her children and grandchildren. As the years go by, and the delicate topic of her passing hardens, my mother and grandmother refine their recreations of Little Nana's recipes. At times, it seems they have perfected a batch of albondigas, or a Christmas day pot of tamales. But it is never a guarantee. In other instances, I see the frustration in my mother's eyes at the dinner table as she accepts that she has once again failed to perfectly match the flavor of her grandmother's

Mexican rice. When it comes to the tortillas, my mother even jokes that Little Nana withheld a secret ingredient or step just to ensure that hers always came out even more fluffy and delicious. Maybe, these two women fall short of perfection because their matriarch was, in fact, concealing a culinary secret to each of her staple dishes. Or maybe, the missing element of their homemade meals all along has simply been her company.

My mother and grandmother are not close. By age 15, she had already moved in full-time with Little Nana due to differences at home. As our family's matriarch, Little Nana was always the one person who could connect them. Even to this day, when Nana visits, most of their conversations take place over a pot of beans. Despite their tumultuous past, they have found a consistent form of bonding in cooking Little Nana's dishes. Honoring her life is a daily routine which my mother and grandmother have committed themselves to. By remembering her as often as they can through her recipes, they revive her in a way. Just as my Little Nana did all her life, her daughter and granddaughter transmit their memories and adoration for her through their cooking so that each component of every dish inspires the same feeling: Love.

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My story is not unique. In fact, it is shared by many. It is within this commonplace lore that the inspiration for this very project was born. Food and love are two recurring themes woven throughout the history of Spanish language literature. This analysis takes place upon the bridge between these themes. What connection do food and love share? Under what circumstances does this bond arise, and between whom? At the root of this partnership, there is a deeply founded web of similarities arriving from various cultural outlets. A synthesis

between food and love can be observed in music, visual art, literature, and linguistics of Latin America. In these cultural contexts, cooking is shown as an act of true care or at times a metaphor for intercourse, eating can be likened to the mouth experiences of a sexual encounter, food can serve as a symbol for not only love itself, but also on a more physical representation, genitalia, and of course, the aphrodisiacal qualities of particular foods are underlined for their sexual powers. Sex and sensuality, however, are broad ideas. Both are more easily understood when looking at pleasure.

A. *What is pleasure?*

Humans are nourished by food in the same way we can be with love. Love consumes the human heart and mind. At times, it can feel as though love is eating up at the core of one's sanity. We crave one another with incessant passion in the same way we crave a favorite food, so much so in fact that the tie between love and food is embedded within our human psychology. According to John Allen of the Brain and Creativity Institute at the University of Southern California, "the dopamine system [the brain's pleasure center] becomes active in people when they look at someone they love or a favorite food" (Hamilton). In other words, to crave a person or food is enough to emit feelings of pleasure. It makes sense then, that ideas of food and love are so often intertwined.

B. *What is love?*

According to the Ancient Greeks, there are eight forms of love which change the shape and dynamic of a relationship: *philia*, *pragma*, *storge*, *eros*, *ludus*, *mania*, *philautia*, and *agape*. These variations help sort feelings of affection and honor the very real love one feels for a

partner and a distinct, equally genuine regard in which one holds their family. Most relevant to the core literature of this thesis is *philia* (affectionate love), *storge* (familiar love), *eros* (romantic love), *ludus* (playful love), *mania* (obsessive love), and *agape* (selfless love).

Food and love also share many linguistic usages. In the English language, there are a bounty of terms, both colloquial and advanced, which intrinsically relate these two themes. For example, terms of endearment like 'honey', 'sweetie pie', and 'sugar' are often used in the context of familial or romantic love. In other contexts, more informal terms like referring to someone as a 'snack' or reifying virginity with the word 'cherry' are used almost exclusively in sexual applications. Diction of this nature has an even greater presence in the Spanish language. Verbs such as *comer* [to eat, to make out], *probar* [to taste, to try someone], and *disfrutar* [to enjoy] are used in the context of food and sex in colloquial and more profound linguistic settings. There are also terms of endearment in Spanish such as *bombón* [bonbon, truffle], *media naranja* [other half], and *corazón de melon* [heart of melon] which are used in relation to a romantic partner or loved one. With these varied disciplinary backgrounds providing a useful basis, this thesis serves to explore how the theme of food and love functions in 20th century Latin American literature. This theme is present in literature throughout the world but is especially essential for the use of this study, in Latin American and Spanish-language literature.

The relationship between food and love has a deep history and has become iconized through various literary works overtime. Tracing back to even the earliest periods of renowned Spanish literature, the resemblance between food and love has been noted. Baltasar del Alcázar

(1525-1606) was a beloved author belonging to 16th Century Spain's *Siglo de Oro* [Golden Age]. In his poetry, del Alcázar often made one with food and love, establishing their metaphoric partnership, most notably in his 36-verse poem "Tres cosas me tienen preso" ["Three Things Have Me Prisoner"]. Organized in rounds, as is common for poetry conceived in the Siglo de Oro, del Alcázar equalizes the love he feels for his Inés with the ham and eggplants with cheese that she prepares for him. Throughout the poem, he struggles to decide which of the three ingredients of his desire leave him most satisfied, until eventually he settles that he simply cannot choose.

Fue de Inés la primer palma; pero ya júzgase mal entre todos ellos cuál tiene más parte en mi alma. En gusto, medida y peso no le hallo distinción: ya quiero Inés, ya jamón, ya berenjenas con queso.	Twas Inés who first made me whole, but now I can't even decide, for they have all equally vied, and none has won over my soul. In flavor, measure, and weight these I cannot differentiate, I love Inés and ham—but wait— I also love eggplants with cheese.[1]

Here, one can see a man deeply confused by his feelings towards Inés. Is his passion for her determined or simply supported by the delicious plate she produces for him? He even struggles to realize the answer to this query. In the following stanza, del Alcázar makes his association between food and love even more apparent when he adds, "Y está tan en fiel el

[1] Unless specified otherwise in footnotes, all translations in this thesis are by Ella Gutierrez-Garner.

peso, que, juzgado sin pasión, todo es uno, Inés, jamón y berenjenas con queso [And everyone who judges sees that my passions are all the same, as one in my heart they became: Inés, ham, and eggplants with cheese" (del Alcázar). The author makes one of these two standalone ideas of Inés and his favorite dish. As a result of their merging, he no longer sees them apart. Rather, he feels one powerful adoration for the two as a conjoined concept in his mind. Throughout the rounds, he struggles to decide which of the three ingredients of his desire leave him most satisfied, until eventually he settles that he simply cannot choose. It is all three things, the smoked ham, the eggplants with cheese, and Inés, their maker, who have him bound in a state of ecstasy (del Alcázar).

Finally, the author sacrifices the idea of the two, joining them into one simultaneous love—the ham and eggplants with cheese made possible through Inés' skilled cooking; meanwhile his love for Inés deepens through the taste of the dishes she creates. Del Alcázar's "Tres Cosas" brings up questions within the reader regarding the depth or legitimacy of his love. One may contemplate whether his feelings for Inés are genuine or possibly clouded by his affinity for traditional Spanish cuisine. Is this a poem about food or a lover? Del Alcázar's authorial skill leaves the reader to ponder where the thematic intersections behind and end. From the sixteenth century to modern times, the aims of his work echo towards a cannon of food-love literature.

Y está tan en fiel el peso, que, juzgado sin pasión, todo es uno, Inés, jamón y berenjenas con queso.	And everyone who judges sees that my passions are all the same, as one in my heart they became: Inés, ham, and cheese.

500 years later, this theme is still being explored by 21st century poets and writers who seek to address the power of sexual desire using the sheer delight brought on by food. For example, Natalia Toledo, a Mexican poet, illustrates a food-sex connection in her piece titled "Chile chocolate." Through her poetry, Toledo has made major contributions to the visibility and experience of the modern Mexican woman. In a written critique of her work, Maya Beckman Sommer of Bard College gives context on how in Toledo's book *The Black Flower*:

> "One of the sections... is titled "A hand in the bush makes for sweet work in the kitchen" ("En la cocina, el que juega su sexo tiene buen sazón"), a Juchitecan saying that refers to masturbation. This chapter is packed with rich images of sensuality and food. "According to Toledo...cooking is one of the ways of expressing love" (Kozlowska-Day 144)" (Sommer 69).

For Natalia Toledo, part of understanding love is realizing its relationship to food. In the poem "Chile chocolate", she describes the initial stages of a very passionate sex scene between a man and a woman. Speaking in the second person, she explains the interaction unfolding as if something to be followed to recreate, like a recipe. The sexual events are coded with diction relating to traditional Mexican culinary processes or foods and flow as follows:

"El totomostle abre luminoso amarillo y verde. Tú descubres de par en par tus piernas cuando te sientas en la hamaca para que en tu jícara entre el chile-chocolate de tu hombre y así batir el cacao que doraste sobre el comal de tu deseo.	The totomostle opens bright yellow and green. You reveal your legs wide open when you sit in the hammock so that it enters your gourd your man's chili-chocolate and thus beat the cocoa that you browned on the comal of your desire.

The use of the words *totomostle,* a Mexican artisanal creation made of colorful corn husks*, jícara*, an organic bowl made of a hollowed fruit*, chile-chocolate,* traditional chocolate mixed with the heat of chiles*, batir* [to beat, in baking]*, cocoa, dorar* [to brown], and *comal,* a traditional griddle, are crucial to the mechanism of the food-love connection within this poem. These words provide the reader with setting as well as tone. They also provide imagery which functions subliminally to communicate broader ideas of sex within the scope of Mexican indigeneity. It is a powerful piece, and one which is one of the most recent additions to literature connecting ideas of food and love.

Between the five centuries which separate de Alcázar and Toledo, there is an especially inspiring era in which the themes of love, sex, cooking, and food take place—the mid-20th century. This era of Latin American literature is especially known as *El Boom* [The Boom] in which prolific writers such as Julio Cortázar, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Gabriel García Márquez grew to international fame, and notably, the crafting and dissemination of

magical realism. In fact, magical realism as a genre has contributed to the promotion of a food-love connection in large part for its ability to relate freely and literally the two without concern for the rigid borders of reality.

This thesis centers on five works of literature from the minds of four Latin-American writers. The first work is *Como agua para* chocolate by Laura Esquivel. This novel tells the tale of Tita, a young woman whose family custom forbade her from marrying her true love. The story skillfully blends magical realism with vivid culinary imagery to depict Tita's existence, her forbidden love, and the intense emotions associated with the food she cooks. The second novel explored in this thesis is Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* which depicts the rise and fall of the Buendía family as they negotiate the intricacies of life, love, and the passage of time in a bizarre and captivating universe unbound by the rules of reality. The poetry in this project begins with "Oda a la ciruela [Ode to the Plum]" by Pablo Neruda. This poem is a romantic dedication to the simple fruit that is the plum. Neruda likens the plum to femininity and creates a sexual atmosphere when describing the process of eating a plum. The text which follows is Nicaraguan poet and writer Gioconda Belli's open-form poem "Amor de frutas." In her work, Belli describes her lover's body with a variety of fruits which achieve an organic and erotic verse of affection. She gives life to the inanimate fruits by explaining how they can be squeezed, pressed upon, or flexed to create an uncontrollable flow of sweet juices, illuminating the similarities between human sex organs and plants when applied the same sensations. The final poem is "Soneto XI" from Pablo Neruda's classic *Cien sonetos de amor*. In this piece, Neruda's longing for his beloved is compared to an insatiable, primal craving. He

yearns not just to embrace or kiss her but to deeply experience her, to devour her essence, and become one with her through tasting and consuming. In studying five of the most significant examples of this genre, I will be able to demonstrate that the relationship between love and food is diverse, recurring, and abundant all throughout 20th century Latin American literature.

This thesis maps how 20th Century Latin-American literature is centered upon the intersection between food and love, which is the crux of culture, tradition, and identity of the continent.

I. Literature Review

This thesis fits well into an existing family of scholarship regarding the connection between food and love in the context of Latin American literature. There is a rich body of literature on the subject which speaks from several perspectives, be it anthropological, literary, historical, psychological, or gastronomical. I am not the first to recognize the power between food, love, and sensuality. In fact, a piece which largely encouraged the creation of this study is Isabel Allende's *Afrodita* [*Aphrodite*] (1999). In *Afrodita*, Allende delves into sensuality, love, and the world of cuisine. Through a mixture of narratives, culinary instructions, and contemplations, the work exults in the interplay of food and passion, providing a distinctive fusion of literature and the art of cooking for its readers. She breaks her sentiments into various chapters regarding "The Food of the Gods," "How to Be Sensual," "Aphrodisiacs," "The Divine Secrets of the Kitchen," "The Sweetest Poison," "The Marquise's Panties," "The Tenth Muse,"

and "Aphrodisiacs for Future Lovers." Each of these themes explores, to varying degrees, the presence of love in gastronomic interactions and the metaphors of food intertwined with intimate relationships.

Years later, Gala del Castillo Cerdá contributes a significant comparative and analytical chapter titled "De los filtros de amor a las recetas afrodisíacas. Presencia y evolución en *Afrodita* y *Como agua para chocolate*" [Of the filters of love and the aphrodisiac recipes. Presence and evolution in Aphrodite and Like Water for Chocolate] where she builds off the concepts first established in Allende's book, furthering the discourse on food and love in Latin American culture and literature and using this work in relation to the iconic novel by Laura Esquivel. Jenison Alisson dos Santos and Ana Cristina Marinho Lúcio similarly studied the process of aphrodisiacal food as a leading theme in *Como agua para chocolate* in her essay "Flavors and Loves in Laura Esquivel's Kitchen: Foods and Affections in Laura Esquivel's Kitchen." Dos Santos affirms the ideas presented in del Castillo Cerdá's chapter and engages in a meaningful dialogue with other scholars of literature focusing on this food-love connection in Esquivel's 1990s novel.

Both Katherine Louise Dell's dissertation and Susan Lucas Dobrian's article contribute to the conversation on the food-love connection in Laura Esquivel's novel in a way which majorly supports this thesis. Dobrian speaks to the ways in which *Como agua para chocolate* is, at its core, a feminist text based on the reclamation of the kitchen and the act of cooking as predominantly female space and practice. Dell opens up a new interpretation of food as a means of empowerment in this text where both cooking and eating lead to scenes of rich

growth and independence for the female characters. Like Dobrian, Dell discusses the ways in which the novel is a parody on traditional romances, especially of its time and geographic setting. Both agree that the novel is enriched by this deeper analysis, easy to overlook if the reader is not aware of it.

"La alimentación como un proceso comunicativo y significativo en la novela *Como agua para chocolate* [Eating as a Communicative and Significant Process in *Como agua para chocolate*]" by Katherine Hernández Tusarma also plays an important role in the production of scholarship on the topic of the food-love connection in Esquivel's novel. She identifies the importance of eating, more than merely the symbol of food and the act of cooking, as a driving force of action as well as emotional transmission. Hernández Tusarma speaks to the fact that without this feature of food, be it as an aphrodisiac, motion of sadness, or anger, the novel would take a much different shape.

The base of reference for the study of food and love in Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* [*One Hundred Years of Solitude*] is "Food Fights: The Intertextuality of Food in *Cien años de soledad* [*One Hundred Years of Solitude*] and Gabriela, *Cravo e canela* [*Clove and Cinnamon*]," by Chris T. Schulenburg. Schulenburg's piece provides a meticulous examination of Gabriel García Márquez's novel, focusing on the role of food. Schulenburg explores how these two Latin American novels employ food as a literary device to convey cultural, social, and historical themes, highlighting the rich symbolism and societal context surrounding food in these iconic works.

Sonia Vilma Migliore de Helfer's "La sensualidad de la mujer y el alimento: Una dialéctica feminista de perquisión [The sensuality of the woman and food: A feminist dialect of perquision]" also studies the connection between food and love in Latin American literature included in her dissertation. She established a relationship between female sensuality and food from a feminist perspective, delving into the intricate interplay between gender, sexuality, and culinary culture, offering a feminist critique of societal norms and expectations regarding women's sensuality through the lens of food.

Finally, Y. Giraldo Buitrago's "The reflection of a revolutionary and erotic creative body in the eye of Gioconda Belli's woman" looks specifically into Gioconda Belli's body of work, including "Amor de frutas" and examines the eroticism she creates using food. Belli's capacity to illustrate sex and pleasure using objects of consumption echoes patterns present in Neruda's "Soneto XI," as well as *Como agua para chocolate*, though she accomplishes her effects in such a unique way. Giraldo Buitrago examines Belli's gift for imagery and makes meaningful connections to the larger culture within which Belli is a part.

This thesis intervenes in the existing literature by broadening the scope and refining the aim. While previous authors have acknowledged the food-love connection within their respective works, few have explored it as a widespread regional phenomenon, nor have they assessed its broader cultural implications. This is what I aim to do.

II. Methods

Given the wide range of literature that lies at the heart of this project, the methodologies used to develop my argument are textual analysis and close reading. To do this, I first conducted a close read of the five literary works of study in this project: *Como agua para chocolate* by Laura Esquivel, *Cien años de soledad* by Gabriel García Márquez, "Oda a la ciruela" by Pablo Neruda, "Amor de frutas" by Gioconda Belli, and "Soneto XI" by Pablo Neruda. A close read involves first the comprehension of the text that goes one step further and becomes the basis for an interpretation of the text on a more profound level. Conducting a close read of the five core texts was a crucial step in my analysis of each, because it encourages a two-pronged perspective of the literature: (1) what does the text say, and (2) how does it say it? From close reading, one gains valuable insight into diction, metaphors, imagery, personification, etc. These literary devices provide meaningful context to any written work and cannot be overlooked in a project of this character.

After the close read, I began my textual analysis. This involved identifying themes, underlying messages, and how certain scenes and dialogues speak to my argument about the connection between food and love. Textual analysis often serves the purpose of connecting a written work to a larger context, be it social, cultural, historical, etc. With that in mind, I conducted a textual analysis for the five core works to identify aspects of each which speak to the broader cultural implications of my thesis. At times, a whole text works in the broader context of my thesis, like Laura Esquivel's *Como agua para chocolate* or "Amor de frutas" by

Gioconda Belli, for example. In other cases, sections of a larger text speak to the project's overarching theme rather than a whole work. Such is the case in *Cien años de soledad* or "Oda a la ciruela."

After the analysis of the central body of literature, I began my study of secondary academic sources. These are sources that I feel support my understanding of their respective texts and which enabled me to refine my argument. I aimed to use three secondary academic sources per primary literary work. In this process, I read a host of academic articles, journals, essays, and chapters within theses or dissertations all aimed either at the subject of food and love in Latin American literature, or directly analyzing one of the central works. Part of my written analysis involves a response to selected quotes from both primary and secondary sources. Given that all the primary and many of the secondary sources are originally Spanish-language texts, there is also a concern for authenticity in this quotation process. To maintain the written integrity of the texts, I have included all selected quotations in their original Spanish with translations to English immediately following, either from myself or as provided by supporting scholarly texts such as the official English versions. I have done this with the intention to broaden the accessibility of my thesis for all readers, regardless of language or background.

Chapter 1: Forbidden Fruits in Gioconda Belli's "Amor de frutas" (1991)

1.1 Introduction

The first dose of food and love comes out of the cultural landscape of Nicaragua. Poet, Gioconda Belli, was born in the capital city Managua in 1948 to a family of means. The literary career of Belli has equally as much to do with her education and her distaste for it too. As a young girl, she was educated at the School of Asunción in Managua, a local Catholic primary school, and later Catholic secondary school at the Royal School of Santa Isabel in Madrid, Spain (Belli s/n). Her education, however, was not limited to the classroom. Belli began her English language acquisition from a young age through her recurrent summers in England. Discouraged to pursue medicine and rather look to advertising, a more "feminine" profession by the belief of her father, Gioconda was accepted to the Charles Morris Price School in Philadelphia, refining her studies of advertising and journalism in 1965. She returned to Nicaragua at the age of 17 and quickly became the first female advertising account executive in the country. This professional experience invited a newfound passion to write. Belli

continued her education of advertising management at Instituto Centroamericano de Administración de Empresas (INCAE), and later shifted her focus to philosophy and literature at Georgetown University.

Belli's initial poetry was published in the cultural newspaper *La Prensa* of Managua in 1970. Characterized by sensuality and abundant erotic allusions to the female form, the works stirred significant controversy, cited by one writer in *The Guardian* as "bold pornography" (Belli s/n). Since her beginning in poetic compositions, Belli has had a skill to create a robust and palpable feeling with each work. Belli performs a unique alchemy as an author: her work compels the reader to simultaneously want to hide the pages against their chest as strangers pass by, and yet she also foments the desire to quietly pull those same pages aside so that all may share in the spectacle.

Since 1970, Gioconda Belli has published four novels, six books of poetry, a memoir, and a children's book, alongside countless essays and political commentary informed by her time as a rebel in the Sandinista National Liberation Front (SNLF). Each is unique in focus and intention, while there are a few in particular which stand out for their quality of intimacy and eroticism which she was once so criticized for. It is important to acknowledge that Belli's work, though part of an investigation of 20th century Latin-American literature, is quite split between the turn of the 21st century. However, keeping in the scope of this project, the selected poetry was published in 1991.

Belli writes unapologetically, explaining love in honest terms, sex in realism, and the iconizing metaphors we draw up in life to make sense of it all. Specifically, *Línea de fuego* [*Line of Fire*] (1978), *Amor insurrecto* [*Love Insurgent*] (1984), *El ojo de la mujer* [*The Eye of the Woman*] (1991), and finally, *El país bajo mi piel* [*The Country Under My Skin*] (2001) are strong demonstrations of her skill and approach to various writing styles. For this investigation, *El ojo de la mujer* will be central to painting the themes of food and love.

This collection of poetry remains a contemporary masterpiece, offering profound insights accessible to diverse readers. Belli explores the essence of womanhood, the significance of being a mother, the sanctity of nature, the dynamics of revolution, and the role of man within societal constructs. She employs a familiar language without the need for scholarly pretensions, and her poetic structure serves as reflections of a reality characterized by clarity and an open-mind (Ramirez s/n). *El ojo de la mujer* is full of open-form poetry discussing all types of sensuality. Most critical to this study, however, is "Amor de frutas", a six-stanza poem which describes a passage of intercourse between the speaker and her lover in a sympathy between human sex organs and fruits.

1.2 Observation

Belli's "Amor de frutas" most effectively represents *eros*, or sexual passion and romantic love. It makes sense, then, that Belli uses fruits in place of genitalia to describe the passionate scene between the two partners, as this gastronomic category has a long history of sexual

innuendo. Possibly humanity's most iconic demonstration of the connection between fruit and sex is present in the story of Genesis II in the Holy Bible. In the Garden of Eden, nature maintained a peaceful and paradisiacal role– a reflection of God's perfect hand. Yet, when charmed by the serpent, Adam disregarded God in his wish against their consuming fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Victim to temptation, Adam ate the fruit and forevermore left a stain on humanity which would need to be repented as the original sin. Punished for their disobedience and disregard of His garden, God exiled Adam and Eve, never to return to their paradise.

Genesis II is a cautionary tale about greed and desire. Like many passages of the Bible, it is also gracefully implicative of a temptation embodied but not literalized by the forbidden fruit. Many theological theorists believe the forbidden fruit to be a figure for sex. Others, however, find the forbidden fruit to identify more simply with anything coveted yet ethically or morally forbidden. Regardless of interpretation, sex beyond the means of procreation and towards the ends of pleasure is described in the context of Adam and Eve as unnecessary, given that Adam and Eve received all they needed by eating from the Tree of Eternal Life, leaving them no reason to procreate through sex in order to replace themselves. Maybe then, what the forbidden fruit ultimately embodies is desire and sin indulgence.

Since Adam and Eve, the sexuality of the fruit has been ratified throughout the world in art and literature, creating a canonical metaphor. Chilean writer, Isabel Allende, proficiently encapsulates the notion of the sexualized fruit in her experimental cultural

memoir, *Afrodita*. *Afrodita* is an homage to food and sex, offering recipes, poetry, and a cultural analysis of the importance of the theme in Allende's Latin- American life. The author defines the theme and plants its relevance in Latin America as a product of the cultural values of food, family, and romance, as well as a willing inclination towards the aims of Catholicism. With this in mind, Belli, with her early Catholic education and experience as a Nicaraguan woman in a time in which Catholicism defined her country and culture, would grow as an artist, projecting these symbols between food and love. Like Belli, Allende feels such conviction about the relationship between fruit and sex specifically, she prepares an entire chapter for it titled "Forbidden Fruits". This chapter outlines the encyclopedia of fruits associated with sex, desire, and otherwise aphrodisiacal powers. She explains that oral sex is sometimes referred to as 'forbidden fruits', but also acknowledges the fact that many fruits, either due to shape, size, or texture, have adopted a personified sensuality (Allende 28, 1996). Allende ranges her study from almonds, bananas, and beyond, giving special attention to both their history and modern associations.

Of the many fruits discussed, there are several which are particularly relevant to Belli's "Amor de frutas". Featured in the poem, the cherry has a connotation of virginity. Colloquially, to "pop one's cherry" is to break their hymen and otherwise mark the end of their virginity (Allende 153, 1996). Also featured in the poem is the grape. According to Allende, the grape is the fruit associated with "pleasure, fertility, Dionysus, Priapus, Bacchus, and merry gods in all traditions, because wine is made from the grape, and without wine, any attempt at an orgy

turns into collective boredom" (153, 1996). Neither can one forget Belli's inclusion of the peach, an iconic sexualized fruit which Allende describes as "possibly the most sensual of all fruits, for their delectable perfume, soft and juicy texture, and flesh color, an eloquent representation of the female private parts" (155, 1996). Besides its physical qualities, the peach made an early appearance as an element of sex in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where it was consumed by fairies as an aphrodisiac. Then, the strawberry makes its mark on Belli's poetic sex. Isabel Allende has fun with this little red fruit, otherwise known to the Chilean as "delicate fruit nipples that in the code of eroticism, invite love" (155, 1996). Perhaps the firmness and color of this berry call to a vision of the nipple, if not its pointed shape. Last of Allende's mentions, the pomegranate too is included in Belli's "Amor de frutas". In its study, the pomegranate has been prominent in many Eastern erotic texts for reasons associated with the aphrodisiac and ceremonies of fertility (Allende 155, 1996).

Around the world, fruits are grown, consumed, and looked upon as cultural artifacts, part of the national landscape. There is something undeniably pleasure-inducing about the fruit. Perhaps it is for its beauty which is naturally occurring and unedited. Or possible too, is the thought that the fruit, a product of the Earth just like human beings, portrays many visual similarities. It could be its splendid and refreshing taste, impossible to artificially perfect. So too could it be the sweetness it allows one to feel between the teeth and tongue. Whatever the reason, the fruit is a cherished food in human literature and culture, and in that realm, has adapted a particular sexuality.

In the case of "Amor de frutas", Belli employs the mango, *fresa* [strawberry], *mandarina* [mandarine], *uvas* [grapes], *naranjas* [oranges], *promegranate/granada* [pomegranate, Nicaragua], *limones* [lemons], *duraznos/melocotones* [peaches], *bananos* [bananas, Central America], and *cerezas* [cherries]. Adding to the magic of the food-love theme, there is no direct mention or inclusion of sex or genitalia. Rather, Belli charges an immeasurable quality of eroticism into the consumption of the ten fruits so that the reader is left without question of what events are taking place between the man and woman featured.

1.3 Analysis

In her poem "Amor de frutas" [Fruit Love], Gioconda Belli likens the sex of the speaker's beloved to the qualities and senses of various fruits which she feels represent her lover. She begins in the first stanza by saying: "Déjame que esparza manzanas en tu sexo" [Let me scatter apples in your genitals] (Belli 1-2, 1991). In these lines, she is pleading with her subject to allow her to make a metaphor between his sexuality with the characteristics of the first fruit– the most common and Edenic fruit– the apple. She continues with "Nectares de mango, carne de fresas" [juices of the mango, flesh of the strawberry] creating a man made in fruit (Belli 3-4, 1991). As a result of her dissemination of the fruit metaphor, she finishes the first phrase with the statement, "Tu cuerpo son todas las frutas." [Your body is all of the fruits] (Belli 5, 1991).

In the third stanza, Belli creates a beautiful atmosphere of sex illustrated through the natural tensions of several fruits: the running juice of mandarins, grapes, oranges, and the seeds of the pomegranate.

Te abrazo y corren las mandarinas; Te beso y todas las uvas sueltan el vino oculto de su corazón Sobre mi boca. Mi lengua siente en tus brazos El zumo dulce de las naranjas Y en tus piernas el pomegranate Esconde sus semillas incitantes.	I hug you and the tangerines flow; I kiss you and the grapes release the hidden wine of your heart Over my mouth. My tongue feels in your arms the sweet juice of the oranges And in your legs the pomegranate Hides its inciting seeds.

The tension present in her physical touch with the man she writes about is similar to the pressure that exists beneath the skin of the fruit. The only force keeping the liquid inside of the tangerine or the grape is the tension maintained by the peace at the surface. Disturbing that peace, as she does by embracing her love, kissing him, licking him, forces that tension to release and from there, the juices begin to flow. Be it his sweat or his semen as is indicated by the seeds of the pomegranate, she is causing the man to enter a state of deep pleasure and openness (Belli 12-13, 1991). Belli implies a vulnerability of her man through the phrase "El vino oculto de su corazón sobre mi boca" [the hidden wine of your heart over my mouth] (8, 1991). She consumes a part of him which he conceals, speaking to the true intimacy of their interaction.

Déjame que coseche los frutos de agua Que sudan en tus poros: Mi hombre de limones y duraznos, Dame a beber fuentes de melocotones y bananos Racimos de cerezas.	Let me harvest the fruits of water that sweat in your pores: My man of lemons and peaches, Give me to drink fountains of peaches and bananas Bunches of cherries.

In this stanza, she pleads "Déjame que coseche los frutos de agua que sudan en tus poros:" [Let me harvest the fruits of water that sweat in your pores] (Belli 14-15, 1991). When she implants *coseche* [harvest], she is wishing to both build-up and enjoy a sweat out of her lover. This desire is made clear in the following line, "Dame a beber fuentes de melocotones y bananos" [Give me to drink fountains of peaches and bananas] (Belli 17-18, 1991). In this statement, she is communicating that she not only wants to bring him to a sweat, but that she wishes to drink from him what he emits as if it were a fountain.

In the final stanza, Belli brings back the Edenic symbolism first inspired by the apple.

Tu cuerpo es el paraíso perdido Del que nunca jamás ningún Dios Podrá expulsarme.	Your body is the lost paradise From which never ever any God Will be able to expel me.

She compares his body to a sort of Garden of Eden in which she wishes to remain forever. She rejects any entity or God that could deny her this sacred place where she feels she has found true paradise. Her argument remains that there are some fruits that are meant to be enjoyed– some pleasures which need to be felt.

1.4 Conclusion

What is a fruit? How does it feel to eat one? What does it remind one of? Do we shy away when the juice of the peach runs down the chin? Do we eat the banana with a back turned to our peers? What does it feel like to split an orange down the seam? What image calls out to us when faced with the halves of a papaya, melon, plum? This is food and love at work in our lives. Gioconda Belli does not have to exert great effort to create a passionate scene of intercourse using nothing more than the image of ripe fruits. In “Amor de frutas”, the intertwining of sensuality and natural imagery creates a captivating exploration of love and intimacy. Through the metaphorical language of fruits, Belli crafts a vivid portrayal of the speaker's beloved, likening his essence to the qualities and sensations evoked by various fruits. From the familiar allure of the tantalizing mango and *fresa*, each fruit becomes a symbol of desire and passion.

As the poem unfolds, Belli delves deeper into the physical and emotional connection between the speaker and her lover, drawing parallels between their intimacy and the natural tensions found within fruits. The imagery of running juices and hidden seeds reflects the vulnerability and pleasure inherent in their embrace, highlighting the profound intimacy of their interaction. Moreover, Belli's depiction of the lover's body as a Garden of Eden underscores the sacredness and bliss of their union, defying any external forces that might seek to deny them this pleasure. Through her impassioned plea, Belli asserts the importance of indulging in the pleasures of love, celebrating the profound connection that transcends

boundaries and invites fulfillment. “Amor de frutas” stands as a testament to the power of love and desire, weaving together elements of nature and sensuality to create a timeless ode to intimacy and connection. Belli's evocative imagery and lyrical language invite readers to savor the richness of love's embrace, reminding us of the profound beauty found in the union of hearts and bodies.

Her work is a product of her experience as a Latina. The fruits she chooses, the story she tells, and the connection she brands between fruit and sex is informed by her memory and reason. Her poem is exquisitely Latin-American and irrefutably contributes to the food-and-love literary canon. Gioconda Belli's “Amor de frutas” is a captivating exploration of love and sexuality that transcends linguistic boundaries, offering a rich tapestry of passion and intimacy essential for anyone, regardless of Spanish proficiency or culture, seeking to celebrate love and sex in their lives.

Chapter 2: Hunger and Sensation in "Oda a la ciruela" (1954) and "Soneto XI" (1959) by Pablo Neruda

2.1 Introduction

5,582 kilometers to the South, Twentieth Century Chilean poet, Pablo Neruda, born Neftalí Ricardo Reyes Basoalto, came into the world with a gift to write. Author to over 3,500 poems, short stories, and anthologies, Neruda has become an icon of Latin-American and world literature. His body of work has its home in the 20th century, inspired by the likes of Federico Garcia Lorca, Walt Whitman, and Alexander Pushkin. His own artistry went on to influence later poets and authors such as Julio Cortázar, Isabel Allende, Dane Zajc, Richard Aitson, and others. Neruda was a versatile writer, founded by his background in politics, the global community of contemporary poets from which he grew, and his influential extended experiences abroad. Mastering forms such as the sonnet, the ode, as well as free-form, Neruda is considered one of, if not the most important Latin American poet of the 20th century.

Neruda, an unusually insightful young boy, began creating poetry at age 10. However, he was strongly discouraged by his father, who till his death never supported his son's writing (Duran s/n). Born and raised in the south of Chile, Neruda received his primary and secondary

education from the Temuco Boys School by 1920. While in school, he learned a true love for books, heavily encouraged to continue his passion for literature by none other than Gabriela Mistral, principal of the Temuco Girls School next door (Duran s/n).

Still an adolescent, Neruda published his first poems in local newspapers which eventually made their way to the capital. In 1921, as a 17-year-old, he moved to Santiago to continue his studies. His transition to the city was not easy. He experienced loneliness and many symptoms of poverty. Yet, despite the challenges presented by his new life, he made significant strides in his career as a writer. While in Santiago, he published his first and second book, *Crepusculario* [*Crepuscular*] (1923) and later *Veinte poemas de amor y una cancion de desesperada* [*Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair*] (1924) (Duran s/n). Traditional symbolist and romantic poetry, respectively, these early works of Neruda fortified his name in the field as a point of reference within the region. In fact, *Veinte poemas de amor y una cancion de desesperada* is the first in a long and iconic line of the love poetry with which the author is so strongly associated. Since 1924, he has been author to over 39 books of poetry, including most notably, *Canto general* [*General Song*] (1950), *Residencia en la tierra* [Residence on Earth] (1933), *Los versos del capitán* [*The Captain's Verses*] (1952), and *España en el corazon* [*Spain in the Heart*] (1937).

2.2 “Oda a la ciruela” (1954) by Pablo Neruda

2.2.1 Observation

Neruda’s tradition of romantic poetry can be found in many of his books, despite the general focus of the collection. *Las Odas Elementales* [*Elemental Odes*] (1954), for example, is an essential collection of Neruda’s ode-form poems. While this book has no particular theme apart from poetic form, there are several romantic, even sensual pieces which stand out. The odes, all 225 of them, range significantly in topic and focus. “Oda a la edad” [“Ode to Age”], “Oda al aire” [“Ode to Air”], and “Oda al otoño” [“Ode to Autumn”], for example, demonstrate the sheer diversity of themes falling under the first letter of the alphabet. The collection continues in this way, until the very last poem, “Oda a tus manos” [“Ode to Your Hands”]. Most intriguing for the purposes of this study, however, are all of the odes dedicated to food. Of course, Neruda upholds a certain level of love and care for each ingredient he gives light to. However, there are certain poems in which his description is undeniably romantic or sexually charged. See “Oda al caldillo de congrio” [“Ode to the Conger Chowder”], as an illustration of cooking as an act of love and sensuality in itself. Here, Neruda sexualizes aspects of this classic Chilean dish, such as the eel and its preparation, urging the reader to “acaricia primero ese marfil precioso [first, caress that precious ivory]” (Neruda 28-30, 1954). Then, the connection between food and love becomes instinctively clear in works such as “Oda a la alcachofa” [“Ode to the Artichoke”], “Oda al pan” [“Ode to Bread”], and most notably, “Oda a la ciruela” [“Ode to the Plum”].

2.2.2 Analysis

"Oda a la ciruela" is a story of the plum– how it is grown, how it is designed, and how it is eaten. The plum, like many of the foods given an ode to by Neruda, is a local favorite of Chile. Of course, the plum is not solely relevant to Neruda for its devotion to his homeland if not also for its inherent sexuality which he so openly honors. The poet is not the first nor the last to make connections between food and love using the object of the plum. American poets, James Tipton and Helen Chasin, and Chilean writer Isabel Allende, for example, celebrate the feminine and sensual qualities embodied by the plum (Allende 53, 1991). In *Afrodita*, Allende writes that "like the peach, [the plum is] used in Chinese art as a symbol for a woman's intimate parts" (Allende 155, 1996). Tipton contributes to Allende's study of the plum as she references his haiku:

Even though I have forgotten her

I continue to eat

Plum after plum…

(Tipton 14, 2008)

Like fruits observed in the work of Belli, the plum is quite human-like in its simple design. A thick skin, only penetrable by the sharpness of teeth which reveals a tough and wet flesh, all protecting the simplest and most secret seed held deep within. Therefore, for the purposes of allusion, metaphor, or basic politenesses, the plum has transformed itself in poetry and culture from a raw treat to a woman, or further, a vagina. Certainly, there are likenesses

between oral sex and the ritual of eating the plum. In his "Oda a la ciruela", Neruda makes sure of this parallel, leaving the reader unsure if the poem is more about the spectacularity of the plum or the sexual feeling it evokes. What makes this ode most relevant to the study is the fact that Neruda makes one of food and love using the Chilean plum, particularly reaffirming an essential Latin American quality to the work.

"Oda a la ciruela" is more than a devotional message to the plum. It is a living example of the food-love connection and invites the reader to see the act of eating this fruit and the qualities of its physique as something beyond sustenance. Neruda introduces the special characteristics of the plum and the way it is consumed using personification. In the first stanza, he writes "la verde, la morada población de las frutas traslucía sus ágatas opales, sus crecientes pezones. [the green, the purple population of fruits projected its oval agates, its ripening nipples.][2]" (Neruda, 9-14, 1954). The first sign, here, not only personifies the plum– it feminizes it. Neurda is bonded to the plum, associating it with a specific time in his life, "Yo, pequeño poeta, con los primeros ojos de la vida… balanceado bajo la arboladura de ciruelos [I, a young poet, using the early eyes of life… balancing under a canopy of plum trees.][3]" (25-34, 1954). Its smell, its shape, its constant presence in his formative years of youth all create an innocence or naivete to the plum, much like a virginity which is quickly taken in the following stanzas.

[2] Trans. by Ilan Stavans
[3] Trans. by Ilan Stavans

61	Oh beso de la boca en la ciruela, dientes y labios llenos del ámbar oloroso, ¡de la líquida luz de la ciruela!	Oh kiss of the lips on the plum, teeth and lips full of the fragrant amber of the liquid light of the plum![4]

At this mark of the fourth stanza, the reader is lifted to the poem's climax. Suddenly, eating the plum is something more. Rather than a bite, chew, and swallow, Neruda lingers in the sensation of consuming the fruit as it becomes a kiss. The plum transcends the object and becomes irresistibly feminine in this moment, with her mouth, lips, teeth, and all. For the first time in the ode, Neruda garnishes his line with the exclamation points, insisting on a level of excitement over "¡la líquida luz de la ciruela! [the liquid light of the plum!] (68-69, 1954). After the peak, Neruda returns to an admiration of the structure of the plum's nest as "ramaje de altos árboles severos y sombríos [branches of soaring trees, severe and somber]" (70-73, 1954). He is undeniably connected to the plum, not only for its fruit but also for its magnificent form. It brings the aging man back to his roots in the South of Chile.

98	Pero, otra vez, otra vez vuelvo a ser aquel niño silvestre cuando en la mano levanto	But, again, and again, I return to be that wild boy when in the hand I lift

[4] Trans. by Ilan Stavans

105	una ciruela: con su luz me parece que levanto la luz del primer día de la tierra, el crecimiento del fruto y del amor en su delicia.	a plum: with its light it looks like I lift the light of the first day of the Earth, the growth of fruit and love in its delight.[5]

"Pero, otra vez, otra vez vuelvo a ser aquel niño silvestre [But, again, and again, I return to be that wild boy]", he writes, sharing the transportative power of the simple fruit (Neruda 99-103, 1954). Finally, Neruda transforms the message to something more biblical. Like "Amor de frutas'' by Gioconda Belli, Neruda's work implies an Edenic quality "una ciruela: con su luz me parece que levanto la luz del primer día de la tierra [a plum: with its light it looks like I lift the light of the first day of the Earth]" (Neruda 105-110, 1954). He ends this peaceful phrase with the lines "el crecimineto del fruto y del amor en su delicia [the growth of fruit and love in its delight]", defining the connection between food and love in his own terms (Neruda 111-113, 1954).

For Neruda, the food (the plum) and love (embodied by memory, nostalgia, and sensuality) connect in a way which is unique to the other works explored in this project. To bite into the plum is to taste the past. The speaker not only devours his fruit, but relishes in its taste. Because of this, the plums' flavor is more significant to Neruda than just any fruit. It

[5] Trans. by Ilan Stavans

becomes special as a result of its roots in Chile and his great boyhood habit for the plum. This poem stands out as a model of the food-love connection in 20th Latin American literature from everything to Neruda's beautiful diction and true story-telling capacity to the very structure of the work. "Oda a la ciruela" follows a pattern similar to a sexual encounter with a gentle beginning with crescendos into the sensual climax visible in the fourth stanza. This intimate crux plateaus into a melancholic recounting of childhood and finishes with the biblical sentiment of the Garden of Eden, reminding us of the relevance of the forbidden fruit in Latin American culture.

2.3 "Soneto XI" (1959) by Pablo Neruda

2.3.1 Observation

Cien sonetos de amor [*One Hundred Love Sonnets*] (1959) is recognized as the paramount collection of romantic poetry dedicated to his mistress-to-wife, Matilde Urrutia. *Cien sonetos de amor* is chalked full of gorgeous intimacy, redefining what it means to love and feel loved in return. In their time spent together, Matilde had the power to touch Neruda to his very core, completely changing the way he viewed and experienced life. Had it not been for the inspiration of Matilde, Neruda would be without his muse and his readers, 100 love sonnets.

The collection spans all expressions of love, using metaphor, repetition, anafora, symbolism, and incredible diction. There is one sonnet in particular which seems to leap off

of the page and into the reader's abdomen for its sexuality and intrigue. Like Belli's "Amor de frutas", this poem too uses the themes of food and love, to make sense of Neruda's deep feelings for Matilde. "Soneto XI" describes an attraction that is more of a craving than a longing. This stunning piece compares desire to hunger, making Matilde's love as something which will sustain him in a way no food possibly could.

2.3.2 Analysis

"Soneto XI" exhibits a connection between food and love quite unique from the two previous works. Neruda doesn't simply use fruit as a conduit for sexual innuendo; instead, he intertwines the two themes by highlighting the parallels between appetite and lust. In his 11th sonnet, in order to make sense of his feelings for Matilde, Neruda transforms himself into the "puma de Quitratúe [puma from Quitratúe][6]" (14, 1959). Perhaps if not for the puma, his passionate sentiments would not produce as much effect on the reader. With the "puma de Quitratúe", Neruda guides the story in the pattern of a prowl or hunt, giving sense to his nonsensical love.

1 Tengo hambre de tu boca, de tu voz, de tu pelo y por las calles voy sin nutrirme, callado, no me sostiene el pan, el alba me desquicia, busco el sonido líquido de tus pies en el día.	I am hungry for your mouth, your voice, your hair. Silent and starving, I prowl through the streets. Bread does not nourish me, dawn disrupts me, all day

[6] Trans. by Stephen Tapscott

	I look for the liquid measure[7] of your steps.[8]

These first four lines are gorgeous, daring, and explicit. Immediately, Neruda defines the desire for his beloved as a craving such as one might have for food, "Tengo hambre de tu boca, de tu voz, de tu pelo [I am hungry for your mouth, your voice, your hair]" (1, 1959). Next, he writes "y por las calles voy sin nutrirme, callado [Silent and starving, I prowl through the streets]"-- giving the effect that the puma is hunting for her (Neruda 2, 1959). "No me sostiene el pan [Bread does not nourish me]", he explains, "busco el sonido líquido de tus pies en el dia [All day I look for the liquid measure of your steps]" as the lover draws on the footsteps of his prey– Matilde (Neruda 3-4, 1959). This stanza is of enormous importance in terms of establishing the metaphors for food and love. It becomes so clear, at the aid of Neruda's careful hand, that the sexual desire often felt for another takes on a similar shape and pattern to that of an animal seeking its next meal. In this stanza, he establishes a kind of diction which is maintained through the duration of the sonnet regarding hunger and desire with words such as *hambre* [hunger], *sin nutrirme* [starving], and *sostiene* [sustain].

5 Estoy hambriento de tu risa resbalada, de tus manos color de furioso granero, tengo hambre de la pálida piedra de tus uñas,	I hunger for your sleek laugh, your hands the color of a savage harvest[9], hunger for the pale stones of your fingernails, I want to eat your skin like a whole

[7] Trans. By Stephen Tapscott. While the translation of this poem is functional in conveying the original meaning of Neruda's work, I would instead use the word "sound".
[8] Trans. by Stephen Tapscott
[9] Trans. By Stephen Tapscott. While the translation of this poem is functional in conveying the original meaning of Neruda's work, I would exchange the words "savage harvest" for "wild silo".

quiero comer tu piel como una intacta almendra.	almond.[10]

In the following stanza, the speaker continues to describe the desire for his lover as a hunger. He writes, "estoy hambriento de tu risa resbalada, de tus manos… de la pálida piedra de tus uñas [I hunger for your sleek laugh, your hands, the pale stones of your fingernails]" (Neruda 5-7, 1959). Neruda finishes the stanza with the phrase, "quiero comer tu piel como una intacta almendra [I want to eat your skin like a whole almond[11]]" (Neruda 8, 1959). The diction pattern remains intact with words such as "hambriento [hungry]", "hambre [hunger]", "comer [to eat]", and "almendra [almond]". He hungers not only for her time and affection, but rather her physical qualities. The brutalist perspective of love maintained in the second stanza– one which is most physical– arrives to the reader with a certain objectification of Matilde.

Neruda has often been associated with these poetic tendencies towards women, especially those with whom he has shared romantic relationships. Gloria Cepeda Vargas is one of many scholars to explore Neruda's perception and portrayal of the feminine in his extensive body of work. In her essay "Pablo Neruda y la Mujer [Pablo Neruda and the Woman]", she explains that

[10] Trans. by Stephen Tapscott

[11] Trans. by Stephen Tapscott. While the translation of this poem is functional in conveying the original meaning of Neruda's work, I would instead say: "I want to eat your skin in one bite like an almond".

> "La mujer es para Neruda, a fuerza de complemento erótico, sensual, sexual o maternal, una extrapolación continua. El mundo entero lleno de bocas, de piernas, de sexos femeninos se le ofreció con largueza y él tomó lo que necesitaba en el momento en que lo necesitaba." [The woman is for Neruda, by force of erotic, sensual, sexual or maternal complement, a continuous extrapolation. The whole world full of mouths, legs, female sexes was offered to him with generosity and he took what he needed the moment he needed it] (Cepeda Vargas 335, 2005).

The truth is, Neruda's history as a womanizer, as outlined by Cepeda Vargas, spans all the way from "los días de adolescencia hasta los otoñales vividos al lado de Matilde Urrutia [the days of adolescence until the autumns lived by the side of Matilde Urrutia]" (334, 2005). Despite this patterned behavior, something about Matilde called onto Neruda a certain insatiability. As a result of her importance to him, the works created in her honor depict a different approach to the feminine– something much more careful. True, Neruda makes references almost exclusively to the shape and quality of Matilde's body. However, there is something so severely sincere to his words.

9 Quiero comer el rayo quemado en tu hermosura, la nariz soberana del arrogante rostro, quiero comer la sombra fugaz de tus pestañas	I want to eat the sunbeam flaring in your beauty the sovereign nose of your arrogant face, I want to eat the fleeting shade of your eyelashes,[12]

[12] Trans. by Stephen Tapscott

Neruda continues in the third stanza with a generous description of his lover's natural beauty, comparing it to "un rayo quemado [sunbeam]". And, the details of her face become more and more abstract– an attention to detail only attributable to the gaze of love. Now, less flesh than ever before, he writes "quiero comer el rayo quemado en tu hermosura, la nariz soberana del arrogante rostro, quiero comer la sombra fugaz de tus pestañas [I want to eat the sunbeam flaring in your beauty, the sovereign nose of your arrogant face, I want to eat the fleeting shade of your eyelashes]" (Neruda 9-11, 1959). The "sovereign nose" on the "arrogant face" and the "fleeting shade" of the "eyelashes" feels more glorifying of the mystique of a woman than the objectifying counter-thesis from Cepeda Vargas. Perhaps, Neruda as the puma really does wish to eat Matilde, right down to each and every eyelash. Or, Neruda as the lover simply seeks to give praise to all of the spectacular qualities of his partner, right down to each and every eyelash. Regardless, he creates an intoxicating description of his desire towards her in a way which is most-sincere and attentive. And, again, the reader is given diction in accordance with the theme of food and love such as "quiero comer… [I want to eat…]" (Neruda 12, 1959).

12 y hambriento vengo y voy olfateando el crepúsculo buscándote, buscando tu corazón caliente como un puma en la soledad de Quitratúe.	and I pace around hungry, sniffing the twilight, hunting for you, for your hot heart, like a puma in the barrens of Quitratue.[13]

[13] Trans. by Stephen Tapscott

Finally, the last stanza races towards the reader, inviting as much fear as lascivity. Neruda the puma returns for one ultimate prowl, "y hambriento vengo y voy olfateando el crepúsculo buscándote [and I pace around hungry, sniffling the twilight, hunting for you, for your hot heart]" (12-14, 1959). He searches for his Matilde in the night, looking to warm himself up with her "hot heart". We are provided more images here of virginity as Neruda the puma wishes to take her alive, with the heart still beating full of life. This self-identification with the puma is something typical of Neruda, described by Cepeda Vargas as the

> "Animal madrugador y nocturno olfatea en el viento el olor de la hembra. Habitado por apetitos carnales recurrentes, la reivindicación de sus a veces poco selectivas cacerías, reside en el lenguaje hechizante… circunstancias que lo convierten en el amante aceptado y celebrado mundialmente" [Early-riser and nocturnal animal smells in the wind the scent of the female. Inhabited by recurring fleshly appetites, the vindication of his sometimes unselective hunts resides in the enchanting language… circumstances that make him the lover accepted and celebrated worldwide] (Cepeda Vargas 335, 2005).

The sonnet is finished with diction such as "hambriento [hungrily]" and "olfateando [sniffing]", conveying a true sense of desire. It is more than an interest to search for someone, to seek them out, to hunt them down. Neruda goes to the extreme. He becomes the puma only in order to find the woman he loves and to make her a part of him.

2.4 Conclusion

There are so many parts to this poem which invite a sexual interpretation. Despite the overarching message of food and love, Neruda enables a sensuality throughout "Soneto XI" to keep his readers entranced. The poem is mature. More than mature, it is seductive. But why? This feeling, this carnivorous predicament in which the speaker is in, to become an animal for his beloved, is a feeling less extraordinary than it is unusual. It is something that can be felt if not understood by all people, poets or not. The curious sensation realized upon the first bite of the ripe plum, dares the mind not to go certain places. One need not be a great romantic nor an outstanding literary person to recall how it once felt to yearn for someone. These feelings are honest, private, and humbling.

How to make peace with oneself for developing such a craving for another in the same way one can't wait to taste their favorite dish? To sink your teeth into someone, to use the mouth to express the depth of obsession felt in one's heart, to wish to become part of another and make them part of you… to eat them? This is the tangle of food and love bursting from the heart, forcing your mouth and mind to do whatever possible to nourish its hunger for that one person. One cannot separate nor differentiate the two, for as it is sung by Isabel Allende, the need to nourish oneself through food and fornication are at the very basis of our human existence (Allende 27, 1991). Aware of this, Neruda plays on the theme of love and food to create some of his most sexual poetry.

Chapter 3: Binge-Eating and Mania in *Cien años de soledad* (1967) by Gabriel García Márquez

3.1 Introduction

Twentieth century Colombian literary master, Gabriel García Márquez, was made known around the world for his contributions of magical realism to the Latin American Boom. Of his countless texts, he is held in the highest regard for his novel *Cien años de soledad* [*One Hundred Years of Solitude*] written in 1967. While there is no doubt about the role of this novel in the modern literary canon, it is of greatest importance to uncover how this masterpiece came to be. García Márquez– intimately known as *Gabo*– was born in Aracataca, Colombia in 1927. He was raised in a non-conventional home under the care of his maternal grandparents until eight years old (Gabriel García Márquez – Biographical s/n). In this setting, he began absorbing the very early essence of creativity and literary technique. His grandfather notably shared tales about the origins of the local region and his grandmother gifted him ghost stories and other less likely fantasies ("Gabriel García Márquez." s/n). From that point on, Gabo had a very distinct understanding of his caretakers– one occupied the real while the other,

supernatural. Aracataca, it seems, granted the Nobel Laureate his first sights on the entanglement of fiction and fact.

After leaving Aracataca, García Márquez began a great migration around his home country. García Márquez spent very formative years of his life moving between Barranquilla, Bogotá, and Cartagena, all the while fortifying his craft for writing ("Gabriel García Márquez." s/n). Though educated in law, the young *Gabo* looked to journalism as a means for stability and a chance to write. Before the age of 30, he had already worked in the professional setting at newspapers such as *El Universal* of Cartagena, *El Heraldo* of Barranquilla, and El Espectador of Bogotá. In these cities he found community with other local artists and thinkers, strongly influenced at all times by modernist writers such as James Joyce, William Faulkner, Virginia Woolf, and Ernest Hemingway ("Gabriel García Márquez." s/n).

Cien años de soledad poses as much difficulty to read as it did to write. At only 23, García Márquez made his first attempt to write the story of the Buendia family. It wasn't until 17 years later that it was finally published ("Gabriel García Márquez." s/n). In fact, the Colombian spent over 15 years working on the story, each version maintaining its focus on the Buendias and the town of Macondo. Eventually, in 1965, he decided it was time to lock himself in and finish the novel. He was strongly empowered by his friends, family, and literary contemporaries who recognized the importance of the completion of such an epic.

While crafting *Cien años de soledad*, Gabo corresponded with friends and fellow writers across Latin America and Europe, sharing progress updates on the novel. He also read sections and chapters to his close circle of friends and visitors at home, seeking their feedback.

Worried about its market reception, he gauged interest by releasing excerpts from various chapters in magazines with readership based in countries around the world ("Gabriel García Márquez." s/n). In light of these efforts to create something worth reading, when the novel was published in May 1967, it garnered immediate international attention and praise. It is hard to say what the career and legacy of García Márquez would look like were he not so committed to bringing his dreams of Macondo to life. So too is it difficult to comprehend a body of international literature vacant of his genius piece.

Cien años de soledad tells the story of the Buendía family line and their collective existence in the fictitious rural town of Macondo. Iconically, the novel, family, and town all rise and fall as one, hardening their interconnection. The novel opens with Jose Arcadio Buendía and Úrsula, the patriarch and matriarch of the family which subsequently bear seven more generations. In the beginning, Macondo remained isolated from the modernizing world around it, all apart from occasional visits of traveling gypsies. Early on, José Arcadio Buendía, is characterized by his impulsive curiosity, leading him to delve into mysterious pursuits and distance himself from others. He is the first character of great solitude.

These traits are passed down to his descendants throughout the novel. His eldest son, José Arcadio, inherits his father's strength and impulsiveness, while his younger son, Aureliano, inherits his intense, mysterious focus. As the village eventually connects with neighboring towns, its innocence is gradually lost. Civil unrest ensues, marking a stark departure from the once tranquil atmosphere.

The novel, as implied by the title, takes place over the course of a century. As a result, the author moves through the details of each character's life in terms of major events such as: birth, a heavy focus on childhood, marriages, affairs, and deaths. For many readers, it is this repetition which makes it so hard to close the novel on the last page. The resilient matriarch, Ursula Iguarán, holds onto the belief in her family's destined greatness and works tirelessly to maintain unity despite their differences. However, the encroaching forces of modernity (symbolized by imperialist capitalism) wreak havoc on both the Buendía family and the village of Macondo. Soon tensions rise with the arrival of an American-owned banana plantation, exploiting both land and labor. When the mistreatment of banana workers sparks a violent strike, leading to a massacre by the army, years of relentless rain flood Macondo, leaving it virtually destroyed.

Amidst the chaos, the Buendía family face their own demise. The novel concludes much like it began, with Macondo returning to solitude and isolation. The remaining Buendía members retreat into themselves, disconnected from the world and destined for a solitary fate. In the final scene, the last surviving Buendía deciphers ancient prophecies, realizing that their lives have merely been a predetermined cycle of beauty and tragic sorrow. It is curious how inspired this novel is by García Márquez's youth and his experiences spent in Colombia. From the quaint rural nature of Macondo right down to the massacre at the banana plantation, the connections between *Cien años de soledad* and the personal life of the author are undeniable.

3.2 Observation

Cien años de soledad is a key novel to this study for the way in which it does not center on the Latin American food-love connection. Unlike the poetry examined in the previous chapters which are entirely dedicated to the depiction of this theme, *Cien años de soledad* quite nonchalantly folds food and love into the larger plot dynamics at hand. This sort of inclusion is necessary for a holistic view of the theme, because it demonstrates to the reader that food and love inspire a relationship between one another in a very natural and unintentional way in this region's literature. Of course, the novel is chalked full of romance and important scenes of food which exist independently. For example, in the 2013 journal, "Food Fights: The Intertextuality of Food in *Cien años de soledad* and *Gabriela, cravo e canela*", Chris T. Schulenburg points out that there is "a lethal and soon-to-be-globalized variation of this aesthetic treatment of food" presented in *Cien años de soledad* (Schulenburg 74, 2013). As Schulenburg puts it in *Theory in Action*, "the banana crop in *Cien años*, shared violent connotations with economic imperialism", underscoring the relevance of food in the novel as a means of the geopolitical context in which Macondo is fastened (Schulenburg 74, 2013). This quality and treatment of food is made most apparent in his research through the banana and the echo of its production, harvest, and violent industry.

However, it is more interesting to the purposes of this study when the two themes nestle together. True, there is a sprinkling of food-love metaphors throughout the novel during any given period of the 100 years. For example, it can be seen by Aureliano Segundo's infidelity

being demonstrated in his mealtime practices as he lived with his concubine, Petra Cotes, but always returned to his nuclear home in order to spend dinner with his wife, Fernanda del Carpio (García Márquez 295, 1967). Or how, during the Civil War which breaks out in the second half of the novel, military tactics were held hostage to the deep-seeded belief that two hours were needed in order to digest food before any activities of love or war (García Márquez 303, 1967). So too the horrible monsoon which holds Macondo in a wet state of futility brings up issues for food and love. In these weather conditions, Aureliano Segundo "había [sido] puesto a salvo de toda emergencia pasional, y le había infundido la serenidad esponjosa de la inapetencia. [had been put safe from any passionate emergency, and had infused him with the fluffy serenity of inappetite.][14]" (García Márquez 359, 1967). Later, once he forms a relationship with a local prostitute, Nigromanta, the intimate endurance of the two is described, "Casi siempre, entre amor y amor, comían desnudos en la cama, en el calor alucinante y bajo las estrellas diurnas… [Almost always, between rounds of intercourse, they would eat naked in bed, in the hallucinatory heat and under the daytime stars…][15]" (García Márquez 438, 1967). Finally, food and love connect quite naturally in a highly unnatural relationship. One of many instances of incest within the Buendía family calls for generations to cross as Aureliano of the sixth generation begins a romance with his aunt, Amaranta Úrsula. In their fits of great passion, the two would find themselves making love "a las dos de la tarde

[14] Trans. by Gregory Rabassa
[15] Trans. by Gregory Rabassa

en la mesa del comedor, que a las dos de la madrugada en el granero [at two in the afternoon on the dining table as at two in the morning in the pantry][16] (García Márquez 457, 1967).

Even so, there is a pattern in the plot which works to define the connection between food and love that is far more tantalizing. This rule is to do with the act of binge eating in the conditions of *mania* or obsessive love. *Cien años de soledad* stands out from others of its time for the way in which it so uniquely characterizes love. Throughout his career, García Márquez depicts love in a wonderful variety. Possibly his most famous representations of romantic love can be found in *Del amor y otros demonios* [*Of Love And Other Demons*] (1994) or *El amor en los tiempos del cólera* [*Love in the Time of Cholera*] (1985). While these novels are centered on epic sensuality, it is not to say that gripping love cannot be found in his other, less romance-centered works.

The love stories featured in *Cien años de soledad* have a tendency to be disturbing, strange, and deeply passionate. The original partnership between José Arcadio Buendía and Úrsula Iguarán provides the reader a first look at love and family dynamics. Their marriage is a demonstration of strength and commitment to another as throughout their long lives, both hold immense dedication to supporting one another. With frequent occasion, Úrsula stands in for the both of them as José Arcadio rotates in and out of stages of obsession, mental instability, and the like. Stemming out from the matriarch and patriarch of the Buendía family, there are several other unique formations of love pictured in the novel.

[16] Trans. by Gregory Rabassa

3.3 Analysis

3.3.1 Rebeca Buendía

One such relationship is the triangle of unrequited love existing between Amaranta, Rebeca, and Pietro Crispi. Pietro Crispi, the Italian foreigner, enters Macondo and makes his way into the hearts and minds of the Buendía's in an unforgettable way. Crispi's character is the microscope to the dynamic of the second generation. His function is simply to be a motor of affection, first directed at Rebeca, then given to Amaranta. Once he is rejected twice, unable to fulfill his purpose, Pietro Crispi takes his own life.

Rebeca is a unique character who brings with her a great deal of mystery and charm. For the purpose of her romantic involvement, it is essential to understand Rebeca, first as an orphan, who arrives on the doorstep of the Buendía home. She is so different to the Buendía canon, in fact, that Dr. Nabila Naimi understands that

> "the reader is much like the adopted character of Rebeca, who mysteriously shows up at the doorstep of the strange family one day and must quickly overcome a vast inability to recognize anything around her and then attempt to try to make sense of the disconnected family she now calls her own" (Naimi 101, 2016).

Dr. Naimi explains that she is thus, much like an observer to the wilderness of drama that flows out of the Buendía house. As an outsider strongly maintained by her devout solitude, Rebeca demonstrates throughout her entire life what it means to be within and without.

Upon her introduction, the qualities of daily life in Macondo began to change. As a young girl, Rebeca is understood to be quite strange and as time passes, she develops into an enigmatic woman. She is known for her quiet demeanor and infectious mystery. Men, namely Pietro Crispi and her adoptive brother, José Arcadio Buendía, the eldest son of the second generation of the Buendía family, view Rebeca with a great yearning.

Though she is brought up alongside the second generation Buendías, her differing biological origins are impossible to ignore. Her past is largely unseen, though whatever Rebeca suffered through had influenced her time in Macondo in very visible ways. First, there are episodes of emotional explosivity where she is hit with great waves of sadness. These hikes in emotion lead to prolonged periods of solitude, which she passes in bed or face-first on the bathroom walls. As a young woman, she continued with several habits of infancy, such as thumb-sucking, and rocking in the small wooden chair of her early youth. Of all of her quirks, however, Rebeca is remembered most for her obsessive consumption of dirt.

There is a rich bed of theory relating to Rebeca and her taste for earth, leaving open many directions for interpretation. However, if one thing remains clear, it is that this habit was one of deep self-harm. To some scholars on *Cien años de soledad*, this habit was more of a ritual as Karen Orene Hayes put it, "...Rebeca Buendía had to conquer harmful, self-inflicted rituals which affected her health, such as eating dirt and whitewash from the walls of the home" (Hayes 29, 2006). Rebeca's first re-encounter with dirt occurs fairly early into the novel. Zoning out of conversation, she gazes into the courtyard and notices the little earthworms lifting up small mounds of dirt. This image calls upon blurry memories of her past in which

she used to indulge herself in the chocolatey grounds before she was treated for her urges with a harsh diet (García Marquez 79, 1967). Convinced that her memory misled her and in order to squash the craving, she decides to try a bit of dirt, until "... poco a poco fue rescantando el apetito ancestral, el gusto de los minerales primarios, la satisfacción sin resquicios del alimento original. [little by little she was getting back her ancestral appetite, the taste of primary minerals, the unbridled satisfaction of what was the original food][17]" (García Márquez 79, 1967). Suddenly, Rebeca is engaged in a massive episode of binge-eating, "se echaba peinados de tierra en los bolsillos, y los comía a granitos sin ser vista, con un confuso sentimiento de dicha y de rabia… [she would put handfuls of earth in her pockets, and ate them in small bites without being seen, with a confused feeling of pleasure and rage…][18]" (García Márquez 79, 1967). As soon as her addiction is reignited, it becomes clear that for Rebeca, she is satiating something more than a craving for the taste of dirt. Rather, she is gorging herself so as to demonstrate,

> "el único hombre que merecía aquella degradación, como si el suelo que él pisaba con sus finas botas de charol en otro lugar del mundo, le transmitiera a ella el peso y la temperatura de su sangre en un sabor mineral que dejaba un rescoldo áspero en la boca y un sedimento de paz en el corazón [the only man who deserved that show of degradation… as if the ground that he walked on with his fine patent leather boots in another part of the world were transmitting to her the weight and temperature of his

[17] Trans. by Gregory Rabassa
[18] Trans. by Gregory Rabassa

blood in a mineral davor that left a harsh aftertaste in her mouth and a sediment of peace in her heart][19]" (García Márquez 80, 1967).

At this point in the novel, Rebeca's attention is on Pietro Crispi, the wayward Italian. As her feelings for him progress, this temptation for earth becomes a means for relief. After not receiving her usual letter from Crispi, García Márquez writes, "Loca de desesperación, Rebeca se levantó a media noche y comió peinados de tierra en el jardín, con una avidez suicida, llorando de dolor y de furia, masticando lombrices tiernas y astillandose las muelas con huesos de caracoles [mad with desperation, Rebeca got up in the middle of the night and ate handfuls of earth in the garden with a suicidal drive, weeping with pain and fury, chewing tender worms and chipping their molars with snail bones][20]" (82, 1967).

But then, her obsession with Crispi is interrupted, as her adoptive brother steals her gaze in an instant. José Arcadio Buendía infiltrates the mind and heart of Rebeca as soon as he returns from his journey at sea. Next to Pietro Crispi, José Arcadio was a "protomacho cuya respiración volcánica se percibía en toda la casa [protomale whose volcanic breathing could be heard all over the house][21]" (García Márquez 112, 1967). With as much haste and blustery as his return to the Buendía house, he made his claim on Rebeca with the simple line, "Eres muy mujer, hermanita [You're a woman, little sister][22]" (García Márquez 112-113, 1967). From this point forth, Rebeca's tumultuous disposition for infatuation was entirely dedicated to her

[19] Trans. by Gregory Rabassa
[20] Trans. by Gregory Rabassa
[21] Trans. by Gregory Rabassa
[22] Trans. by Gregory Rabassa

brother. In fact, just as soon as she earns José Arcadio's attention does she begin again feasting on dirt and the lime washed walls. García Márquez writes immediately after, "Rebeca perdió el dominio de su misma. Volvió a comer tierra y cal de las paredes con la avidez de otros días, y se chupó el dedo con tanta ansiedad que se le formó un callo en el pulgar. [Rebeca lost control of herself. She went back to eating earth and the whitewash on the walls with the avidity of previous days, and she sucked her finger with so much anxiety that she developed a callus on her thumb.][23]" (112-113, 1967)

3.3.2 Aureliano Segundo

The second in the long list of peculiar love is the makeshift marriage between Aureliano Segundo and Fernanda del Carpio. The string that bonds these two is limited to formalities and propriety, as Aureliano Segundo is a committed adulterer to Petra Cotes, a concubine kept within the reach of the Buendía line. Aureliano Segundo is characteristic for his gluttony, pictured as much in his dedication to unfaithful sex as in his relationship with food. Though Aureliano Segundo and his Great Aunt, Rebeca, have no biological connection, they do share this disordered quality.

Aureliano Segundo is, in every part of his life, a glutton. His insatiable need for attention, love, and entertainment are impossible to meet for either his wife, mistress, or children. As a result, much of his time in the present tense of the novel is spent in a great struggle to find satisfaction. Yet, Aureliano Segundo did not begin his life in this manner. In

[23] Trans. by Gregory Rabassa

fact, the initiation of this indulgent way of life can be traced back to Petra Cotes coaxing him out of his own solitude and into her feminine space. Not only was Petra Cotes a fixture of desire in his life due to her own personal sensuality, but also due to the fact that:

> "Petra was Aureliano Segundo's first sexual relationship, and she felt as if she had changed his demeanor by her erotic endeavors. Petra felt personally responsible for drawing out another side of his personality, giving him a lust for life and changing his solemn and solitary character into a vital male figure" (Hayes 70, 2006).

Unfortunately, be it with women or food, he seems to meet his demise before achieving such a feat.

The triangle of Aureliano Segundo, Fernanda del Carpio, and Petra Cotes is first introduced in Chapter 10, and continues plowing into the mainframe of the plot until nearly the end of the novel. Aureliano Segundo seeks out Petra Cotes in order to fulfill a part of his life which his wife finds herself unable. As previously described, Aureliano Segundo is a man of deep want and need. Therefore, when Fernanda del Carpio expresses little interest in engaging in sexual activities outside of the necessary, her husband looks to other women. Yet, rather than release Fernanda from her material duties altogether, "Aureliano Segundo felt he needed both women to make his life complete. He loved both women but needed Petra for the sexual side of love more than his wife, Fernanda" (Hayes 75, 2006). However, this adultery is very unlike the typical case. For extended periods of time, Aureliano Segundo is completely moved into Petra Cotes' home, only visiting his wife and children for rituals of traditional families such as dinner or church. Though Fernanda is less sexual than her partner, his

ceaseless dedication to the other woman in his life does a great deal of harm to her quality of life and self-perception, ultimately contributing to her very bitter death.

Sex, however, is not the only expression of gluttony from Aureliano Segundo. Chapter 13 marks an event in which Aureliano Segundo, the gorger, makes his temptations public. At this point in time, Aureliano Segundo and Fernanda are already wed, and so too has his relationship with Petra Cotes come into full effect. To mark the reigniting of their feelings for each other, García Márquez writes, "era tan apremiante la pasión restaurada, que en más de una ocasión se miraron a los ojos cuando se disponían a comer, y sin decirse nada taparon los platos y se fueron a morir de hambre y de amor en el dormitorio. [The restored passion was so compelling, that on more than one occasion they looked into each other's eyes when they were about to eat, and without saying anything, they covered the dishes and went to die of hunger and love in the bedroom.][24]" (291, 1967). Almost as soon as he finds himself sleeping with Petra Cotes, his livestock and other farm animals begin procreating madly just the same and suddenly, Aureliano Segundo's business, romances, and taste for food become greater than ever before (García Márquez 292, 1967).

It's very apparent at this point that the author is confident expressing a food-love connection. However, nearing the middle of Chapter 13, the theme becomes obvious. Eventually, the lore of his immense obesity moves up and down the coast and soon, Macondo is visited by the country's "glotones mejor calificados [best-qualified gluttons][25]" (García

[24] Trans. by Gregory Rabassa
[25] Trans. by Gregory Rabassa

Márquez 292, 1967). Upon their arrival, a tournament-style eating contest begins, and all competitors wish to dethrone the vast capacity of Aureliano Segundo. After eliminating eater after eater, Aureliano Segundo finds himself face to face with *La Elefanta* [the Elephant], prepared to battle for the title.

Something very peculiar occurs in this final feast. When Aureliano Segundo first makes eyes with *La Elefanta*, rather than finding himself intimidated or repulsed by her sheer size, he is aroused. "Era gigantesca y maciza, pero contra la corpulencia colosal prevalecía la ternura de la femineidad, y tenía un rostro tan hermoso… que cuando Aureliano Segundo la vio entrar a la casa comentó en voz baja que hubiera preferido hacer el torneo en la mesa sino en la cama [She was gigantic and sturdy, but over her colossal form a tenderness of femininity prevailed and she had a face that was so beautiful… that when Aureliano Segundo saw her enter the house he commented in a low voice that he would have preferred to have the tournament in bed and not at the table][26]" (García Márquez 293, 1967).

Of course, their feast matched their physical grandeur. Long days of eating and short nights of sleep, the two managed the juice of forty oranges, eight quarts of coffee, thirty raw eggs, two pigs, an entire bunch of bananas, four cases of champagne, two roast turkeys, and more. The competitors powered through the meals with confidence, despite their differing strategies. Unfortunately for Aureliano Segundo, his style for gorging himself in between energetic conversation with friends, laughter, and hosting the crowd left him exhausted and

[26] Trans. by Gregory Rabassa

put at the discretion of *La Elefanta*. Afterall, Aureliano Segundo competed with his natural tendency to binge while his female counterpart "había aprendido a comer siendo ya una respetable madre de familia, buscando un método para que sus hijos se alimenten mejor y no mediante estímulos artificiales del apetito sino mediante la absoluta tranquilidad del Espíritu [had already learned to eat as a respectable mother of family, looking for a method for her children to feed themselves better and not by artificial stimuli of appetite but by the absolute tranquility of the Spirit][27]" (293).

Seeing his state of sheer agony, *La Elefanta* offers a truce which Aureliano Segundo interprets as another challenge. He continues, then, to inhale the turkey set before him until he eventually can swallow no more. Into a plate full of bones he falls unconscious, face down and is resuscitated and recuperated in the home of his second woman. Finally, the beast is bested, and by the same woman he once looked at as an overweight beauty waiting to be discovered.

3.4 Conclusion

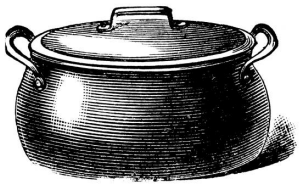
Rebeca's habit signals self-destructive behavior and, a step further, can be interpreted as masochism. Her urges towards consuming earth are a different level of desire than what has been formerly looked at in this study. What Rebeca is experiencing is in many respects, an addiction and eating disorder. It is difficult to say whether or not this binging is meant to be interpreted through the lens of fantasy or reality as many of the consequential symptoms do

[27] Trans. by Gregory Rabassa

follow reality. For example, the chronic stomach pain and vomiting which follows these sequences in the garden allude to a very real repercussion. But despite the reality of it all, the message remains true– Rebeca, as a sexually repressed person, satiates her urges towards the men around her. This, poetically, leads to her own gratification and personal detriment.

Aureliano Segundo, on the other hand, also experiences a binge relationship with food to fulfill obsession. He eats and fornicates and spends his income at a detrimental rate and never looks back once. Aureliano Segundo is an indulgent man, who abuses food and sex and as a result, finds them meeting one another in unusual places. At the eating contest, he witnesses his concubine providing all of the food necessary to put on such an event and at the same time awakens an arousal for the largest woman in the country, simply for the way she is able to gorge with such calm and measure. He is fulfilled never, and only until his face smacks against a rack of poultry bones does he realize such a thing.

Food and love is very alive in the literary imagination of the great Gabriel García Márquez. His genius provides a sliver of clarity in the chaos that is *Cien años de soledad* through the prolonged use of food-love metaphors. He communicates details of intimacy, family, and care through the use of food and cooking. He harnesses the similarities between hunger and desire. In his masterpiece novel, García Márquez points to libido, craving, obsession, and binging and decides to unite them in a royal effort to tell the story of the 100-year family. The Buendía line makes little sense. Their romantic endeavors, even less. Yet, through the connection between food and love, the carnal tenacity strung between generations is made clear.



Chapter 4: To Cook and to Love in *Como agua para chocolate* (1989) by Laura Esquivel

4.1 Introduction

Laura Esquivel was born into the cultural canvas of 1950s Mexico City. Formed in this vibrant setting, Esquivel eventually began her professional career as a kindergarten teacher seeking new ways to engage and inspire her students. Unsatisfied with the children's literature available to her, she decided to create works of her own, lighting the spark of what would later become a fervent passion for writing. In 1989, Esquivel published her first novel, *Como agua para chocolate* [*Like Water for Chocolate*], which quickly became a Mexican and later American bestseller. Seeing its popularity, *Como agua para chocolate* was developed into a Spanish language film in 1993 by Alfonso Arau, which also went on to win several awards. This novel-to-film garnered Esquivel worldwide attention and set the tone for what became a fruitful career in culturally celebrated literature.

This story is set along the political landscape of turn-of-the twentieth century Mexico. Centered on Tita, the youngest of three De La Garza girls, *Como agua para chocolate* is an exhilarating love story facilitated through the powers of food. The plot is fastened on an inquiry of marriage on the part of Tita's true love, Pedro. As was custom in nineteenth and

twentieth century Mexico, Mama Elena De La Garza rejected Pedro's plea for Tita's hand, citing the long-held tradition of the youngest daughter remaining unwed in order to care for her aging parents. As a compromise, Mama Elena offers Rosaura, her second eldest, as an eligible bride. Pedro painfully accepts, willing to marry Tita's sister if only to stay close to her. Furious at the destruction of her fantasy, Tita falls into a deep depression, igniting what eventually becomes a pattern of emotional transmission through her cooking.

Tita was not a normal child. Her struggles in life seemed to begin from the moment of her birth when her mother was unable to provide her with breast milk. To keep this infant nourished, the family cook, Nacha, took to caring for Tita and feeding her using alternative methods. She satiated her through homemade teas until she was old enough to try solid foods, introducing her to the gift of Mexican cuisine. Nacha was more for Tita than just the *nana* of the De La Garza home. Rather, she was a maternal home in which Tita nestled after a childhood of incessant disapproval from Mama Elena. Nacha also found a special place in her heart for Tita, spending hours together in the warmth of the kitchen, cooking and learning from one another. It is from this peculiar formation in the kitchen that Tita becomes so close to food and unlike her sisters, possesses more than a skill, but a power in culinary art.

The novel is staged in twelve chapters, each defined by a classic Mexican recipe: Tortas de navidad [Christmas Rolls], Pastel chabela [Chabela Wedding Cake], Cordornices en pétalos de rosas [Quail in Rose Petal Sauce], Mole de guajalote con almendra y ajonjolí [Turkey Mole with Almonds and Sesame Seeds], Chorizo norteño [Northern Style Chorizo], Masa para hacer fósforos [A Recipe for making Matches], Caldo de colita de res [Oxtail Soup], Champandongo,

Chocolate y rosca de reyes [Chocolate and Three Kings' Day Bread], Torrejas de natas [Cream Fritters], Frijoles gordos con chile a la Tezcucana [Beans with Chile Tezcucana-Style], and Chiles en nogada [Chiles in Walnut Sauce]. In this organizational style, Esquivel conceives a perfectly balanced plot of storytelling and directed recipes instruction which flows in and out of narration objectives which is self-described as a book "que narra en cada una de sus recetas esta historia de amor enterrada [that narrates this buried love story in each of her recipes.][28]" (Esquivel 247, 1989). At points throughout the beginning, middle, and end of each chapter, Esquivel weaves in an oral account of each recipe. This style is inventive and accelerates the excitement of digging into each month's tale.

4.2 Observation

Como agua para chocolate truly is the inspiration for this project. The novel is daring in storytelling, eroticism, and character arcs, but what makes it most iconic is the way it so beautifully relates food and love. Examples of this thematic connection are abundant throughout the entirety of Esquivel's work, as this love story is told through the cooking and devouring of traditional Mexican meals. The novel begins with the saying "A la mesa y a la cama, una sola vez se llama [to the table and to bed, are only called out once][29]" (Esquivel s/n). From beginning to end, food and feeling are one in the same. The third person omniscient narrator ushers the reader to see that Tita sorts her feelings through food or objects of the

[28] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen
[29] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen

kitchen. For example, "Se sentía completamente vacía como un platón al que solo le quedan las migajas de lo que fue un excelente pastel [She felt completely empty, like a big plate that only has the crumbs left of what was an excellent cake][30]" (Esquivel 210, 1989). In Tita's case, this empathetic observation is relatively tame. In general, Tita feels all emotions with a cruel depth. When she is sad, it is as if she is at the bottom of a well, dodging waves of her own tears. When it comes to feelings of lust, Tita experiences thoughts and physical reactions which completely push the boundaries of what is seen as traditionally and privately appropriate.

There are four primary types of love expressed in *Como agua para chocolate*: *Eros* (romantic love), *storge* (familial love), *agape* (selfless love), and *philautia* (self-love). The first, most easily identified is *eros* or romantic love. *Eros* exists between Tita and Pedro, Gertrudis and Juan, and Alex and Esperanza. The novel, significantly centered on romantic love, shows many examples of sensuality, eroticism, as well as more tame loving gestures. However, what makes this story unique from the next, is the way it enables the creation and endurance of love through food.

4.3 Analysis

4.3.1 Food-Body Metaphor

Having grown up in the conditions of the kitchen, Tita learned empathy and understanding through cooking. Esquivel makes this quite clear early in her writing,

[30] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen

describing that "este inusitado nacimiento determinó el hecho de que Tita sintiera un inmenso amor por la cocina y que la mayor parte de su vida la pasara en ella. [this unusual birth determined the fact that Tita felt an immense love for the kitchen and that she spent most of her life in it][31]" (4, 1989). But, this literary tool doesn't only function in this regard. Food itself is also used "as a metaphor to convey affection and love" (Naimi 78, 2016). So in this sense, food is both a device of artistic censorship, as well as a metaphor of the production and dissemination of love. As a result, when she comes into her feelings for Pedro, she makes sense of them through the *buñuelo* [fritter]. Tita's unique ability to draw similarities between food and feeling is first present early in the novel:

> "En ese momento comprendió perfectamente lo que debe sentir la masa de un buñuelo al entrar en contacto con el aceite hirviendo. Era tan real la sensación de calor que invadía todo su cuerpo que ante el temor de que, como a un buñuelo, le empezaran a brotar burbujas por todo el cuerpo– la cara, el vientre, el corazón, los senos–... [At that moment she understood perfectly what the dough of a fritter must feel when it comes into contact with boiling oil. The sensation of heat that invaded her whole body was so real that when she feared that, like a fritter, bubbles would begin to sprout all over her body – her face, her belly, her heart, her breasts…][32]" (Esquivel 15).

This moment is the beginning of several food-body metaphors which Esquivel creates. Tita considers the sensation of a bubbling dough when looking back on the way Pedro's eyes once

[31] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen
[32] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen

met hers at Christmas the year before. Tita understands her sexuality here, with the aid of the fried fritters. It makes sense to her, then, the excitement of a sensual look and the way it impacts her body with the same energy that forces dough to expand in hot oil. Here, Tita recognizes the feelings of cooking and undeniably forges a connection between food and love which will live on for the rest of the novel.

This relationship with food is breathed into the next generation too. The *buñuelo* and all of it's connotation returns again at the very end of the novel when Esperanza, Tita's niece, meets Alex, "Cuando Esperanza le dijo a Tita que al recibir la mirada de Alex sobre su cuerpo ella se había sentido como la masa de un buñuelo entrando al aceite hirviendo, Tita supo que Alex y Esperanza se unieron irremediablemente. [When Esperanza told Tita that upon receiving Alex's gaze on her body she had felt like the dough of a fritter entering the boiling oil, Tita knew that Alex and Esperanza were irretrievably united.][33]" (Esquivel 239, 1989).

This special theme is placed throughout Tita's love story. Esquivel brilliantly uses food-body metaphors to explain events which would otherwise be too explicit for the general audience. These exchanges of growth in the sense of self can be understood as a food-body metaphor or connection. Esquivel employs these metaphors as often as possible, as they hold two grand purposes. Firstly, the food-body metaphors help the reader grasp Tita and her complicated past. Though she did not grow up in a home which promoted emotional expression or deep feeling, she still forged an outlet for her sentiments in food. Secondly, as

[33] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen

Jenison Alisson dos Santos and Ana Cristina Marinho Lúcio put it, Laura Esquivel "utiliza recursos gastronômicos em sua narrativa para recodificar e ressignificar a expressão de sentimentos de suas personagens, como amor, ódio, austeridade e ressentimento. [makes use of the gastronomic resources in her narrative to recode and resignify the expression of feelings by her characters, such as love, hate, austerity and resentment][34]" (Santos et. al. 1).

Dos Santos and Marinho Lúcio go on to explain that,

> "abordar o romance de Esquivel a partir do escopo proposto nos permite identificar a comida e seu consumo não apenas isoladamente como um processo biológico, mas também como uma possibilidade de perceber, sentir e ler o mundo e as relações interpessoais através de uma ressonância emocional oferecida pelo dado culinário [approaching Esquivel's novel through the affective scope allows us to recognize food and its consumption not only as a biological process, but also as a possibility to perceive, feel and read the world and the interpersonal relations through an emotional resonance enabled by the culinary presence][35]" (Santos et. al. 1).

This tactic can be seen in effect when Esquivel writes scenes at the dining table in which characters experiencing anger, arousal, sadness, and more also have that interaction with their meal. Take for example, when Tita is unexpectedly joined in the kitchen by Pedro in the early months of his marriage. The very act of her cooking arouses him in a way best described through the physical processes of the kitchen,

[34] Trans. by Santos et. al.
[35] Trans. by Santos et. al.

> "El sonido de las ollas al chocar unas contra otras, el olor de las almendras dorándose en el comal, la melodiosa voz de Tita, que contaba mientras cocinaba, había despertado su instinto sexual… [The sound of the pots clashing against each other, the smell of almonds browning on the griddle, Tita's melodious voice, which she told as she cooked, had awakened his sexual instinct…][36]" (Esquivel 66, 1989).

In this passage, Esquivel defines the sensuality of cooking, paying extra attention to the featured foods and the physical motions of Tita, watched with a beating heart by Pedro. She goes on to explain that "... estos sonidos y olores, sobre todo el del ajonjolí dorado, le anunciaban a Pedro la proximidad de un verdadero placer culinario. [... these sounds and smells, especially that of the golden sesame, announced to Pedro the proximity of a true culinary pleasure][37]" (Esquivel 66, 1989). Soon, Tita notices his hot gaze on her. Still a virgin, Tita has no explanation for the way his intangible touch has made her feel. What she does know, however, is the chemistry of cooking,

> "Tita supo en carne propia por qué el contacto con el fuego altera los elementos, por qué un pedazo de masa se convierte en tortillas, por qué un pecho sin haber pasado por el fuego del amor es un pecho inerte, una bola de masa sin ninguna utilidad. [Tita knew in her own flesh why contact with fire alters the elements, why a piece of dough

[36] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen
[37] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen

becomes tortillas, why a breast without having gone through the fire of love is an inert breast, a ball of dough without any use.][38]" (Esquivel 67, 1989).

Energy, warmth, touch– these are the things which propel a person or a ball of dough towards their full form. Each time she gains a new experience of intimacy, not only does she begin to understand herself better, but her cooking too.

The last indication of a food-body connection is present in the fact that, in *Como agua para chocolate*, a character's relationship with food can be used to know their heart. Open-minded and loving, Tita and Nacha have a true knack for cooking and nourishing those around them. Ardent and repressed, Gertrudis and Pedro are finally able to awaken her sexuality through the consumption of food. Contrastly, Rosaura and Mama Elena struggle with food, not only as failed cooks, but as troubled eaters as well. The reader may find the root of the digestive problems which plague Rosaura or the death of Mama Elena due to paranoia of being poisoned through her meals is actually indicative of a lack of love in their lives. For example, late into the novel, Rosaura shows signs of a declining metabolism,

> "Desde hacía unas semanas tenía graves problemas digestivos, sufría de flato y mal aliento. Rosaura se sintió tan apenada por estos trastornos que inclusive tuvo que tomar la decisión de que Pedro y ella durmieran en recámaras separadas. [For a few weeks she had had serious digestive problems, suffering from flatus and bad breath. Rosaura was

[38] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen

so embarrassed by these disorders that she even had to make the decision that she and Pedro would sleep in separate bedrooms.][39]" (Esquivel 169, 1989).

One could interpret this as rotten energy traveling through Tita's food and into Rosaurua's gut, but what Esquivel guides the reader to see is that where there are troubles of the heart, there too are troubles in mealtime.

It is important to understand *Como agua para chocolate*, especially through the context of the food-body connection, as an inherently feminist text. Despite taking place in the context of the kitchen and through the catalyst of food, Esquivel urges the reader to see cooking and eating as forms of liberation from the otherwise repressive conditions of 1895-1920s rural Mexico. In other words, the reader can consider that "Esquivel may place Tita in the kitchen, the stereotypical female domestic space, but the author redefines both Tita's culinary skills and this female domain" (Dobrian 60, 1996).

Were it not for the magical realism woven into the very fabric of this text, perhaps the skills Tita sharpens in the kitchen would not be so empowering. But Esquivel makes sure that the feminist tone of the novel is maintained. The author creates a context in which cooking enables Tita to show Pedro her truest feelings of the intimate heart, eating allows Gertrudis to exit the repression in which she was raised and go live out the freedom she so seeks in life through sex and military profession, and causes Rosaura, the most committed of the three sisters to patriarchy, to reevaluate her worth as a wife as she struggles to perform in the

[39] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen

kitchen. In other words, the functions of the kitchen serve as a mirror to which the three De La Garza girls can reflect upon their role within gender stereotypes of the time. In her 1996 article, “Romancing the Cook: Parodic Consumption of Popular Romance Myths in "Como agua para chocolate"”, Susan Lucas Dobrian views the novel as a parody on classic patriarchal values, urging the reader to “read [it] not straight but slant” (56, 1996).

Dobrian is not alone in these interpretations. Katherine Louise Dell, in her 1997 dissertation identifies the variety of feminist aspects of the novel. Dell opens her general argument with the idea that “En *Como agua para chocolate* la cocina es el espacio de la creatividad, la elección y el control de Tita, que hace que ella reformule la imagen tradicional de la mujer en el "espacio femenino” [In *Como agua para chocolate*, the kitchen is a space of the creativity, choice, and control of Tita, that makes it so that she reformulates the traditional image of the woman in the “feminine space”]” (Dell 68, 1997). The food-body connection established in this novel is inherently feminist, as it contributes to a comprehensive grasp of each woman’s understanding of self. Thus, the reader can also recognize levels of *philautia* or self-love present in *Como agua para chocolate*.

4.3.2 *Storge* in the Kitchen

While it is true that many readers characterize the food-love relationship in *Como agua para chocolate* through its iconic scenes of aphrodisiac-induced eroticism, I would first like to examine another context in which food and love join to express their joint similar cultural value. This example is that of cooking as an act of familial love or *storge*. True, *Como agua para*

chocolate is a romance novel, however it also deals very tenderly with the complicated pains of family all throughout. Dobrian understands the discovery of the family unit taking place in the kitchen, writing "As Esquivel redefines the kitchen, she also revises the concept of family, providing a new image, not based on blood lines but on true emotional attachment" (Dobrian 61, 1996). From this, the reader can see the kitchen both as the heart of action of this novel, as well as the heart of family. Afterall, it is here where family is found, made, and challenged most of all.

Food, love, and *storge* is first illuminated through the unique relationship between Tita and Nacha, the family cook. Nacha occupies an important role in Tita's life as she served as both a mother and instructor of the kitchen. She gave Tita a maternal force which was denied by her cold and abusive biological mother, as well as a passion for cooking (de Helfer 225, 2003). Nacha passes away after tasting a swipe of frosting from Rosaura's wedding cake accidentally infused with Tita's tears of great longing. Nacha passes in the night, overcome with sadness and loneliness. Once Tita becomes aware of her loss, her life becomes overwhelmed with darkness. Without Nacha to guide her, the challenges she faced in everyday life seemed altogether too much. But through the power of food, Tita brings Nacha back into her life, if only for a fleeting moment, through the flavors of her favorite recipes. In the care of John and his house cook, Chencha, Tita is coaxed back to health, first with tea, and eventually with a traditional Mexican *caldo* [soup]. The narrator recounts that:

> "cuando dio el primer sorbo Nacha llegó a su lado y le acarició la cabeza mientras comía, como lo hacía cuando de niña ella enfermaba y la besó repetidamente en la frente. Ahí

estaban, junto a Nacha, los juegos de su infancia en la cocina, las salidas al mercado, las tortillas recién cocidas, los huesitos de chabacano de colores, las tortas de navidad, su casa, el olor a leche hervida, a pan de natas, a champurrado, a comino, a ajo, y cebolla. [When she took the first sip, Nacha came to her side and stroked her head as she ate, as she did when she was sick as a child, and kissed her repeatedly on the forehead. There they were, next to Nacha, the games of his childhood in the kitchen, the trips to the market, the freshly cooked tortillas, the colored apricot bones, the Christmas cakes, his house, the smell of boiled milk, cream bread, champurrado, cumin, garlic, onions.][40]" (Esquivel 124, 1989).

Here, Nacha is preserved through food, evoking the memory and melancholy of a childhood into adulthood. Chencha, in turn, represents an indigenous force of homemaking, in which Tita finds the comfort of her passed Nacha.

Another such relationship which allows for food, love, and *storge* is the one which flourishes between Tita and her niece Esperanza. As an infant, Esperanza had difficulty feeding as her mother, Rosaura, was unable to produce adequate breast milk. Just as Nacha did for Tita a generation prior, Tita took on the responsibility to nourish the child using the magic of cooking. In wake of this, Esperanza established a connection to Tita as a means of safety and comfort, and just like her aunt, locked into a lifelong fondness of the kitchen (de Helfer 222, 2003). This symbol of family and care does something for both Tita and the baby. Without

[40] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen

Tita, Esperanza would struggle tremendously to grow and survive in the conditions of her family. Meanwhile, without Esperanza, "al poder nutrir al hijo de Rosaura, Tita expresa el deseo maternal que le ha sido negado por la tradición familiar. A través de su comida, Tita da voz a lo prohibido: a su cuerpo, a su alma, a su sensualidad, a sus deseos y a sus pasiones. [In being able to nurture Rosaura's son, Tita expresses the maternal desire that has been denied to her by family tradition. Through her food, Tita gives voice to the forbidden: Her body, her soul, her sensuality, her desires and her passions]" (Dell 45, 1997). Here, once again food serves as the vehicle rather than the confinement for Tita's feminine liberation.

And of course, the care Tita provides for Esperanza goes much further than finding ways to nourish her. Often looking over her while tending to needs of the home, Esquivel describes a daily routine in which,

> "[Esperanza] lloraba muchísimo en cuanto sentía que se alejaba del calor de la estufa, al grado que lo que Tita tenía que hacer era llevarse a la recámara el guisado que estuviera cocinando, para así lograr engañar a la niña, que al oler y sentir de cerca el calor de la olla en la que Tita cocinaba conciliaba el sueño. [She cried a lot as soon as she felt that she was moving away from the heat of the stove, to the point that what Tita had to do was take the stew she was cooking to the bedroom, in order to deceive the girl, who when she smelled and felt the heat of the pot in which Tita cooked, she fell asleep.][41]" (148, 1989).

[41] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen

This scene exhibits not only *storge*, but also *agape* or selfless love, a feeling which continues into the whole of their relationship. As Esperanza grows, Tita is witness to all of her major milestones and receives them with as much excitement and pride as if she were her own. On one such milestone, Tita sat Esperanza on her lap for a serving of beans and to her surprise, "qué alegría sintió el día en que escuchó el sonido de la cuchara al chocar con la punta del primer diente de Esperanza. [what joy she felt the day she heard the sound of the spoon hitting the tip of Esperanza's first tooth.][42]" (Esquivel 217, 1989).

Memory seems to be the greatest tell of *storge* and *agape*, and became more clear than ever when Gertrudis, a now army general, returns to the ranch to visit her sisters. She kindly requests some childhood treats from Tita, looking most forward to hot chocolate and fritters. She takes one sip of the chocolate and exhales very poetically, "la vida sería mucho más agradable si uno pudiera llevarse a donde quiera que fuera los sabores y olores de la casa materna. [Life would be much more pleasant if one could take the tastes and smells of one's mother's house with one with one's wherever one went.][43]" (Esquivel 179, 1989). In this moment, food reaffirms the love that bonds the sisters, especially in a time after Mama Elena's death. Without the steering of such a brass matriarch, the three women find themselves again in the recipes of their past, and in turn, find peace, warmth, and solace.

[42] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen
[43] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen

4.3.3 *Eros* and the Aphrodisiac

Now, to indulge in the preeminent motif of food and love in *Como agua para chocolate*: the aphrodisiac. The use of aphrodisiacs in literature is no new invention. As a matter of fact, aphrodisiacs have left their mark on stories since Homer's *Odyssey* (Castillo Cerdá 440). The product of this rich history of a food-love connection in literature is that it gives the story of *Como agua para chocolate* an antiquity which matches well with its intended timeline. Gala del Castillo Cerdá, describes in her chapter the relevance of including aphrodisiacs in a love story. Here, she writes, "En [*Como agua para chocolate]* abunda lo erótico y lo culinario a la par que lo literario, tres elementos que desde tiempos inmemoriales se vienen considerando indisociables [In [*Like Water for Chocolate*], the erotic and the culinary abound as well as the literary, three elements that have been considered inseparable since time immemorial]" (Castillo Cerdá 439, 2015). Katherine Hernández Tusarma, a Colombian scholar studied the use of aphrodisiacs in *Como agua para chocolate* in her 2015 dissertation in which she defined the role of these culinary elements:

> "El cuerpo y la comida erotizada como canal comunicativo, la pasión y deseos reprimidos como mensajes, los personajes como interlocutores de sus sentidos y percepciones. Es claro el proceso comunicativo de esta estructura implícita en el ritual representado en la mesa [The body and eroticized food as a communicative channel, passion and repressed desires as messages, the characters as interlocutors of their senses and perceptions. The communicative process of this structure implicit in the ritual represented at the table is clear]" (Hernández Tusarma 56, 2015).

The aphrodisiac is a key symbol in this novel, because it forms the bridge between food and love both literally and figuratively.

There are so many aphrodisiacs in this literary masterpiece which cause panic and pleasure, like the mole de guajolote y almendra con ajonjolí or the chorizo norteño. The *mole*, for example, enacts a sexual panic amongst wedding guests in the final scenes as they leave in an ardent chaos. The *chorizo norteño*, too, offers so much to the reader in terms of innuendo of Tita's desire. Afterall, she prepares this dish in the wake of an erotic encounter with Pedro. Del Castillo Cerdá writes that, while this scene is not aphrodisiacal in flavor, it brings up many of the physical symbols relating food and sex, "Así, encerrada en su cocina, acaricia el chorizo que tiene entre sus manos, claro indicador fálico, mientras recuerda un ardiente encuentro sexual con su amado [Thus, locked in her kitchen, she caresses the chorizo she holds in her hands, a clear phallic indicator, while remembering a fiery sexual encounter with her beloved]" (Castillo Cerdá 443).

While each instance in which food and love intertwine in this novel are relevant and necessary to a holistic understanding of Esquivel's tactics, there is only one which stands out for its legendary artistic freedom. Chapter 3 gives the recipe for *Codornices en pétalos de rosa* [*March – Quails in Rose Petal Sauce*]-- one of the major catalysts for the wilderness of interest which followed the international publication of *Como agua para chocolate*. This passage demonstrates with great fanfare Hernández Tusarma's use of the aphrodisiac as a vehicle through which "el cuerpo, los sentidos y la comida se conjugan en el ritual representado en la

mesa [the body, the sense, and food coming together in the ritual represented at the table]" (Hernández Tusarma 56, 2015).

It is March, Rosaura and Pedro are married, Nacha has passed, and Tita is in the lowest state imaginable. However, her world turns right-side-up again when Pedro gives her a large bouquet of red roses to celebrate one year as *la cocinera del rancho* [the Ranch cook]. The gift, however, is quickly noticed by a very pregnant Rosaura and leaves her with a sting of betrayal. Mama Elena, as always, immediately swoops in to relieve her second daughter's feelings and commands Tita to do away with the bouquet. Devastated to see such a beautiful thing go to waste, Tita contemplates in little time what she could use the flowers for so as not to let them die in vain. In a final goodbye, she grasps the roses close to her chest, accidentally pricking her skin and drawing gentle drops of blood. She takes to the coop and it is time to make quails in rose petal sauce.

Why this dish? As Isabel Allende outlines in *Afrodita* 1996, there are an army of foods recognized for their aphrodisiacal powers. Predictably, each element of this dish is identified as aphrodisiacs on their own. Once combined, Esquivel shows her readers the magical effects they possess. Del Castillo Cerdá walks us through the individual meaning of each ingredient with the care and patience required in order to fully grasp the genius of Esquivel. She describes how Tita "cocina un plato que mezcla tres de los alimentos más afrodisíacos según Isabel Allende: las aves, las rosas y la sangre, y además le añade miel y anís [cooks a dish that mixes three of the most aphrodisiac foods according to Isabel Allende: birds, roses and blood, and

also adds honey and anise]", combining two classic Latin American texts– that of Allende and Esquivel. Del Castillo Cerdá goes on to explain,

> "Las aves son afrodisíacas por su carne morena y su sabor intenso; las rosas tienen un olor que despierta todos los sentidos, y la sangre es el elemento estrella de todos los filtros de amor… La sangre tiene una carga metafórica visual muy afrodisíaca según autores como Eulàlia Purtí, y para Michelet, beber sangre uno del otro crea una comunión que mezcla las almas. La miel, por su parte, es usada en innumerables filtros de amor por su enorme carga erótica… [Birds are aphrodisiacs because of their brown flesh and intense flavor; Roses have a smell that awakens all the senses, and blood is the star element of all love filters…Blood has a very aphrodisiac visual metaphorical charge according to authors such as Eulàlia Purtí, and for Michelet, drinking blood from each other creates a communion that mixes souls. Honey, on the other hand, is used in countless love filters due to its enormous erotic charge…]" (del Castillo Cerdá 442).

With this in mind, the intense events which follow the consumption of the *codornices en pétalos de rosa* come as little surprise.

It's a massive lunch, fit for a village. Tita prepares food for the whole family, however, she does not prepare them for what this food will cause them to feel. The De La Garza's gather at the table, accompanied by Pedro, and Tita serves them each a healthy portion of her love-induced meal. Unbeknownst to them, "La fusión de la sangre de Tita con los pétalos de las rosas que Pedro le había regalado resultó ser de lo más explosiva. [The fusion of Tita's blood with

the rose petals Pedro had given her turned out to be most explosive.][44]" (Esquivel 49, 1989). When the group first takes to the table, the energy in the room is tense after the morning's drama. After a few bites of lunch, however, the climate in the dining area makes a sudden shift. Immediately and without much thought for repercussion, Pedro exclaims "¡Este es un placer de los dioses! [This is a pleasure of the gods!]" after his first taste of the love-induced sauce (Esquivel 50, 1989).

The aphrodisiac begins and everyone at the table begins to feel the effects pulsing throughout their unconsenting bodies. As the process continues Pedro begins to struggle under the influence of the roses,

> "Tal parecía que en un extraño fenómeno de alquimia su ser se había disuelto en la salida de las rosas, en el cuerpo de las codornices, en el vino y en cada uno de los olores de la comida. De esta manera penetraba en el cuerpo de Pedro, voluptuosa, aromática, calurosa, completamente sensual. [It seemed that in a strange phenomenon of alchemy his being had dissolved in the rising of roses, in the bodies of quails, in wine, and in every smell of food. In this way she penetrated Pedro's body, voluptuous, aromatic, warm, completely sensual.][45]" (Esquivel 51, 1989).

For Rosaura, who lacks love in her heart, the quail in rose petal sauce hits her stomach with great cruelty and leaves her with "naúseas y mareos, no pudo comer más que tres bocados

[44] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen
[45] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen

[nausea and motion sickness, she couldn't eat more than three bites][46]" (Esquivel 50, 1989). On the other side of the table, however, her elder sister was experiencing something quite the opposite.

Gertrudis, as sexually daring as repressed, unsurprisingly takes well to lunch. It is a new experience for her, which first lands her a massive deal of discomfort at the table, which she eventually satiates outside. As she moves through her entrée, the narrator describes, "Parecía que el alimento que estaba ingiriendo produce en ella un efecto afrodisíaco pues empezó a sentir que un intenso calor le invadía las piernas… Empezó a sudar… [It seemed that the food she was eating produced an aphrodisiac effect on her as she began to feel an intense heat invade her legs… She began to sweat…][47]" (Esquivel 50, 1989). Without realizing, the sexual energy pulsating through Gertrudis' body was a product of that which was felt so deeply between Tita and Pedro The narrator describes this phenomenon with Tita as the emitter, Pedro the receptor, and Gertrudis the synthesizer of such raw eroticism.

Completely inebriated with passion, Gertrudis begins to struggle under the influence of Tita and Pedro's sexual desire, "... realmente se sentía indispuesta, sudaba copiosamente por todo el cuerpo [...she really felt indisposed, she sweat copiously throughout her entire body][48]" (Esquivel 52, 1989). Truly suffering in such conditions, she decides she needs a cold shower to relieve herself.

[46] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen
[47] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen
[48] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen

Rushing to the outdoor shower, Gertrudis steams with heat, emitting the rich scent of rose. Desperate, she rushes to fill the drop tank with clean water for her washing, but runs out of time. The sheer heat pumping off of her skin lights the wooden stall ablaze and she escapes her burning shower in massive panic. Her pheromones traveled far beyond the reach of the family ranch and were curiously intercepted by a Villista soldier towns away. Though he did not know Gertrudis or her location, "lo guiaba el olor del cuerpo… Llego justo a tiempo para descubrirla corriendo en medio del campo [he was guided by the smell of her body… He arrived just in time to discover her running in the middle of the field][49]" (Esquivel 54, 1989). In a wave of natural movement, the Villista grabs a completely naked Gertrudis, lifts her onto the horseback, and they ride off into the horizon making love.

4.5 Conclusion

This project would not exist had it not been for the realization which came to me after first reading *Como agua para chocolate*. The connection between food and love that Laura Esquivel creates and maintains throughout the novel is distinctly Latin American by culture and tradition. *Como agua para chocolate* is a creative novel, mixing elements of the usual cookbook with the unusual romance novel, creating something shocking and beautiful in that genre exchange. Esquivel devotes pages of pure artistry to a Mexico and an indigeneity which, in her time, were often left blank. Through Tita, Esquivel provides the reader with "los secretos

[49] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen

de la vida y del amor a través de la cocina. [the secrets of life and love through cooking.][50]" (Esquivel 240, 1989), underscoring the importance of these two independent objects in Latin American society. *Como agua para chocolate* is driven by the shared primordial hunger held between all creatures on this Earth to eat and reproduce. Beyond this basic understanding, however, is an awareness held by writers like Esquivel, García Márquez, Allende, Belli, and Neruda that a wonderful work of art takes place at the crux of food and love. They have so much in common. They say so much about one another. Life without the two would end shortly, and while it was lived, would be no pleasure and all pain.

Food and love exist on many levels in *Como agua para chocolate*. The primary example which Esquivel creates is the metaphor of a food-body empathy or connection. This is followed by Tita's cooking as an act of love, for the effects of *eros* (romantic love), *agape* (selfless love), *storge* (familial love), and *philautia* (self-love). Finally, the art of the aphrodisiac is mastered by Esquivel to move eroticism beyond the simple literal plain. By the end of the novel, the reader is encouraged to recognize food and love as something less independent from one another and rather indicative of each other.

[50] Trans. by Carol and Thomas Christensen

Conclusion

In his 2006 culturally study, *Pasión a fuego lento: Erotismo en la cocina mexicana* [*Slow-Burning Passion: Eroticism in Mexican Cuisine*], José N. Iturriaga underlines the basic connection between food and love, “Appetitos terrenales ambos, la comida gaurantiza la supervivencia del individuo, y el sexo gaurantiza la supervivencia de la especie [In both earthly terms, food guarantees the survival of the individual, and sex guarantees the survival of the species]” (Iturriaga 17, 2006). The primordial need to survive as both a person and a kind move people to eat and reproduce with a certain tenacious quality. Because they are so essential (food and sex), human beings develop very curious relationships with them. Too little of either amounts to a life of suffering, indicating dangerous levels of poverty and depravity. Too much of either risks the failure of being appropriately savored.

Using food as a metaphoric tool has been employed in Spanish-language literature since colonial Spain. This dynamic is evident in the works of Baltasar Del Alcázar, and lives on today in modern poetry and novels of the Americas, such as the writing of Natalia Toledo. As the language expanded across hemispheres, so too did this valuable connection. The 20th century, however, is the most essential era for some of the most jarring and iconic iterations of the food-love connection in Latin America.

Between 1900 and 1999, Latin American authors including Gioconda Belli, Pablo Neruda, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Laura Esquivel, Isabel Allende, and so forth reinvented the means by which these two independent fixtures of life could be tied together. For the poets, forging this bond means compelling their art forward through imaginative

expression. For the novelists, food is a mechanism of love articulating themes of selflessness, eroticism, and genuine love.

Chapter 1 of this investigation looks closely at the poetic artistry of Gioconda Belli. In her 1991 poetry collection, *El ojo de la mujer*, Belli published “Amor de frutas,” an open-form text in which she objectifies the sex of her male lover through various fruits available in her home, Nicaragua. She describes their intercourse through the physicality of these fruits– the shapes, the flavors, the wetness of it all– making one of food and love. Chapter 2 is a deep dive into the romantic mind of Nobel Prize Laureate, Pablo Neruda. The Chilean poet offers a massive body of food-related work, but two stand out as exemplary for the unique way in which they combine aspects of food and love to provide a greater message. In his 1954 “Oda a la ciruela,” Neruda describes the process of eating a plum as something inherently sexual. He urges the reader to see that the oral motions which are required in order to fully enjoy this sweet fruit are equivalent to those necessary in the bedroom. He combines the reminiscence of a boyhood spent in the South of Chile, gathering plums and devouring them under the shade of its carrier tree. The naive freedom he felt in those times is something he can always return to with each bite of the plum, no matter how far he strays from his excited adolescence. The second Neruda work is “Soneto XI,” an early poem from his romantic masterpiece, *Cien sonetos de amor* (1959). Unique from the first two selected poems, “Soneto XI” draws connections between hunger for food and desire for love and pleasure as two basic animal needs. In this sonnet, Neruda becomes a wolf, prowling the Chilean countryside in search of his lover. He explains with deep affection that his hunger is not something that can be satiated with bread, but rather the consumption of his muse. In this poem, Neruda reminds us that, at

times, it is not enough to kiss or have sex with our significant other. At times, the deepest need is to consume them for all that they are.

As the study moves into the two novels, Chapter 3 looks at the presence of food and love in Gabriel García Márquez's magnum opus, *Cien años de soledad*. In these 422 pages, this theme is recurrent, standing out in unique and provocative ways. A new form of the relationship between food and love is visible in the romantic and consumptive habits of characters like Rebeca Buendia and Aureliano Segundo, who engage in binge-eating in order to manage with their obsessive love or *mania*. Rebeca, an orphaned mystery who arrives at the Buendia door as a young girl, copes with her unrequited feelings for Pietro Crispi by forcing mouthfuls of dirt down her throat. She does so as a form of self-harm, secretly hoping it will curb her longing for his affection. Aureliano Segundo also engages in binge-eating as a means of finding satisfaction. He is a characteristic glutton, seeking refuge in the pleasure of food, sex, and money all throughout his life. His habits for decadence culminate in a shameless and life-threatening eating competition between the greatest eaters in the country. In the final challenge, he is faced by a competitor known as *La Elefanta* whom he crudely sexualizes before losing to her strategic binging.

Finally, Chapter 4 centers on the raison d'être of this investigation, Laura Esquivel's 1989, *Como agua para chocolate*. This novel in its entirety is an homage to the inherent bond between food and love in Latin American society and culture. While there are so many instances of metaphor and innuendo that occur in this context, the novel is best understood through three main avenues of food and love: food-body metaphors, *storge* as seen in the kitchen, and *eros* channeled through the aphrodisiac. Since infancy, Tita learns the meaning of family, love, and care in the confines of the

kitchen with the ranch cook, Nacha. As her craft is refined, she finds empowerment in the art of cooking to express her emotions, sexuality, and identity through each and every dish.

These works are reflective of the context in which they were created. The authorship, national-origin, ingredients, and language used all indicate the presence and persistence of food and love in the Latin American cultural diaspora. While this investigation takes place along the Latin American plain, the metaphors and values which are born from food and love can be seen in an even wider realm of cultures and timelines. Possible areas of expansion for this project/research would include a comparative study of the existence of the food-love connection in the literary works of other regions of the world under different languages.

In the tapestry of life, food and love are threads that intricately weave together the most beautiful moments. Whether it's the warmth of a home-cooked meal shared with loved ones, the hunger and desire you feel for another, or the similarities you notice between the physicality of eating and intercourse, these experiences nourish not only our bodies but also our souls. Seeking out these precious moments of connection will inevitably lead to a deeper appreciation of the tastes and emotions they evoke. This, in turn, allows individuals to cherish the bond between food and love, enriching our lives in ways most basic and profound.

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