

O, by the by, let me bring of justice, to ought to be
 always remembered in connection with what has gone
 before that there was a masterpiece - that is - written,
 and for his attempt to do so - at 12 of
 the time and therefore (the ' of it is
 better) in factly nature the ' justice: the
 coming at the time - and all just is : +
 Kalmoukian (Kalmoukian) : was read: the
 Zaidi (Zaidi) from (of the U.S. / the
 (that is) the world? / the work (of
 which is) the world? / the work (of
 of it) what he was, and : himself as : a kind
 and another language : to give his : answer,
 making his statements : the fact / as for the
 Frenchman (that is) : the fact : and in
 connection that was he : was : after O'Brien, a
 without him, and : what, and what he might
 the same perhaps : that he would, with several
 and observed men : are, one masterly, changed
 because : how you : have, perhaps, to make a
 hour of glory, that : some of you and hundred
 history was a : of the same of words
 and others such as verbiage, enough as planned? just
 and after this act, literature's traditional values,

Questioning Paradigms of Social Reality through Postmodern Intertextuality

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An important part of the postmodern movement has been the questioning of legitimizing authority with a concomitant surge in writing from the previously marginalized sectors of society; this widespread support has accelerated the demise of the traditional categories, genres and canons of artistic expression. Postmodern literature in its fullest development in most literatures rejects the ideal of authoritative representation or the truth-claim of reality that had dominated for so long. In French, Spanish and English literatures, from the eighteenth century to the twentieth, aspects of the mimetic dominated to such an extent that we could excuse Georgy Lukacs for finding art and mimesis as synonymous. In postmodern literature in contrast, the writing is an exploration of the implicit, the testing of authority and the accepted and, finally, the cultivation of the creative metaphor as a paradigm for creation out of conflict. The idea that the literary work of art would disclose or reveal the deeper meaning of life that was in some sense already there in the human condition, has been thoroughly rejected in the postmodern.

In English language literatures all over the world, from Sri Lanka to the southern United States, non-white writers have in an almost singular voice called in the end of colonialism.¹ Women writers in English, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish, etc. have been given, as never before, the means of breaking with institutionalized authority in the world of letters.² They use irony to implicate and subvert. They draw on parody to challenge the authority of the text itself. Most significant of all, they remind us that works of literature

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are first of all the work, the composition, design, organization, selection and effort of an individual and that, consequently, this human construct which in the past was a man-made construct, a white male-made design, in fact was a reconstruction for the perpetuation of a self-serving world.

There should be no mistake about the present state of affairs. There is no going back except in the escapism of nostalgia. The intertextual linkage of the wider world with the world of the text does not move the reader or the community to homogenization; the reverse is the case. Postmodern art in all its manifestations is always pointing out difference, differences within any grouping, differences made visible by positioning of the singular in relation to the others.

In the novels that I will use in this study, as examples of direct and indirect intertextuality, there is nevertheless the always effective breaking of the illusion of limits by the intertwining of discourses. I shall briefly touch on the English novelist John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* of 1969 and on the Mexican novelist Laura Esquivel's *Como agua para chocolate* Like *Waterlor Chocolate* of 1989. In these twenty years that separate the two novels are contained the rebirth, development and maturation of a feminist critique of literature. A philosophical, sociological and critical feminism has begun to question the accepted norms of society much to the consternation of our fathers' generation and this is so not only in Western Europe and Anglo America but also in Latin America.

If Fowles shows the way, it is in the work of Mexican women writers like Laura Esquivel and Carmen Boullosa and Afro-American writers like Alice Walker and Toni Morrison, that we find ironic intertextuality used to such powerful ends, both ideological and aesthetic, as subversion of the old rules of the game of life and a rewriting of the new rules. These writers both use and abuse intertextuality, they set up and then challenge canonic traditions in literature. Alice Walker, for example, uses familiar versions of fairy tales in *The Color Purple*. «The Ugly Duckling,» «Sleeping Beauty,» and «Snow White» are all intertextual narrativity behind the epistolary structure of the novel.

Postmodernity is both an artistic and cultural phenomena as well as an intellectual and philosophical climate. If we can call the Middle Ages the age of faith or the eighteenth century the age of reason, we should refer to the second half of the twentieth century as the age of questioning. Most of the major thinkers of our time have contributed in a direct or indirect manner to postmodernism. Philosophers like Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur, Habermas, Derrida, and Wittgenstein, are now woven into the tapestry of our disbelief. This is not the place to examine the philosophy of postmodernism. But I do want to stress that one of the fundamental concepts in this discussion is a philosophy of language, that begins with Heidegger's framework that we do not merely communicate through lan-

guage, we live in language. Perhaps the most influential linguist of this half century was Emile Benveniste of the Collège de France who in many respects laid out the groundwork for the victory of postmodern thinking over the stubborn rear guard of logical positivism

Benveniste examined the full consequences of speaking to another in a natural language and he did so not in the analytical terms of structural linguistics but in the probe and argument method of the philosopher. In 1971 he wrote that the self-identification consequence of speaking is the basis of subjectivity which is the '«capacity of the speaker to posit himself as subject» (224). Subjectivity is thereby established as a fundamental property of language; once again I quote from Benveniste: «It is in and through language that man constitutes himself as a subject, because language alone establishes the concept of ego in reality, in its reality» (224). But let us be clear on this point, Benveniste's ideas do not lead to a mythification of language but rather to an unparalleled inquiry into discourse as the means of making meanings, making the self and, of course, making the world for the entire community of speakers. No one is more explicit on this issue than Paul Ricoeur who writes in 1972 that meaning is not to be found in words or in semiotic systems, it is the result of words in sentences, that is, discourse, and therefore the proper level of inquiry is semantics.

We thus have a volatile situation, what our scientist friends would call a critical stage, which is the intersection of a theory that probes and questions all assumptions, rejects norms and does not replace them; it pursues open-ended debate, and features an artistic practice that uses irony and parody, that moves freely in an intertextual discourse of dialectic narrativity. The artistic break with modernism runs much deeper than a mere rejection of one kind of order for another, it is the embrace of disorder and the invitation to make up one's own sense of order out of the debris.

I do not wish to paint the whole scene with the same colours of revolution, for there are many ways of breaking down the established order and offering the reader the chance to think for herself as self and as other. The two novels I shall now turn to mark two salient moments in postmodernism, the revolutionary moment of disruption, 1969, and the moment of maturity, at least for a feminist postmodern, 1989.

The decade of the nineteen sixties has been the most creative period in the life of John Fowles (1926-). His three most important novels were published in 1963, 1965, and 1969. I refer to *The Collector*, *The Magus* and, especially, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* which is the creative realization of the open-ended postmodern novel anticipated in the previous works.

The novel opens in a familiar mode with an omniscient narrative voice who tells the story and describes the scene with authority, but by the third paragraph,

the unsuspecting reader in 1969, is confronted by a rare mixture of traits, for this narrative voice not only has the traditional privilege and authority of the third-person narrative voice, but it is also creating a fictional personality for himself as the author's alter-ego in the manner of Unamuno, Gide and Pirandello, so characteristic of the high modernism of the first half of this century. Yet, this is only the beginning of the surprises the reader is to encounter, for this narrator is not only in touch with nineteenth century realism and with twentieth century modernism, he has metaphorically speaking, one foot in each at the same time. The distance of narrator to story will constantly fluctuate between 1867 and 1967. He admires Michelangelo like a Victorian and he compares his work to Henry Moore as only our contemporary could.

The reader moves along constantly getting more and more involved with the growing fictive personality of the narrator until chapter thirteen is reached (more or less eighty pages, depending on the edition one is reading). The startled reader finds the following first paragraph:

I do not know. This story I am telling is an imagination. These characters I create never existed outside my own mind. If I have pretended until now to know my characters' minds and innermost thoughts, it is because I am writing in Gust as I have assumed some of the vocabulary and the «voice» of a convention universally accepted at the time of my story: that the novelist stands next to God. He may not know an, yet he tries to pretend that he does. But I live in the age of Alain Robbe-Grillet and Roland Barthes; if this is a novel, it cannot be a novel in the modern sense of the word. (1969, 80)

At this point we would not be far off the mark to find strong resemblances to Unamuno's *Niebla* of 1914 where the narrator engages in dialogue with the protagonist arguing about the relative existence of each other or to Unamuno's *San Manuel Bueno, mártir* of 1933 where an implied author addresses the reader directly discussing the reality of the fiction which has been shared. But Fowles is prepared to push the argument further to the breaking point of fictional narrativity. He adds:

But this is preposterous? A character is either «real» or «imaginary»? If you think that, *hypocrite lecteur*, I can only smile. You do not even think of your own past as quite real; you dress it up, you gild it or blacken it, censor it, tinker with it ... fictionalize it, in a word, and put it away on a shelf—your book, your romanced autobiography. (82)

What would have been an allusion to Baudelaire is made explicit by citing his well known line in French. The house of fiction is now on the brink of losing its cohesion and it does by becoming the house of the reader's fiction. Two of the fully postmodern techniques that Fowles uses are explicit intertextuality and multiple endings.

The intertextuality is to be differentiated from the constant allusion to historical figures like Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, Hegel, Marx, Henry Moore, Barthes, Robbe-Grillet, or Darwin, Hardy, Arnold, etc. Fowles' intertextuality consists of direct quotation of nineteenth century documents and texts introduced through the academic modality of the footnote. For example, on page 87, after reporting on a character's political views, there is a footnote introducing an overview of British politics in 1867 including remarks made by Karl Marx in one of his *New York Daily Tribune* articles. Some of the footnotes amount to full texts interpolated into the narrative including Karl Matthaer's *Observations Medico-psychologiques* (185-188).

In addition to these interpolated materials that are directly relevant background material for the main narrative of the loves of Charles and Sarah there are a number of others that are not relevant except in metaphorical sense. All of the sixty-one chapters have epigrams; sixty are relevant to England in the eighteen sixties; they are citations from the works of Matthew Arnold, A.H. Clough, Thomas Hardy, Lewis Carroll, William Barnes, Alfred Tennyson, Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, John Henry Newman, Jane Austen, as well as the *Children's Employment Commission Report* (1867), and the *Report from the Mining Districts* (1850).

But there is one epigram at the beginning of chapter twenty which has no direct relevance either to the plot or the specific chapter. I quote the epigram: (133)

Finally, she broke the silence and spelled it out to Dr. Burkley. Kneeling, the physician indicated her ghastly skirt with a trembling hand. «Another dress?» he suggested diffidently.
«No,» she whispered fiercely. «Let them see what they've done.»
William Manchester, *The Death of a President*

The reference is, of course, to John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963 and the reported words of his wife, Jacqueline Kennedy. But in this chapter, Charles has gone to meet Sarah in a secluded hideaway in the woods. He has asked her to tell him her story of how she met the French lieutenant and how she was abandoned. Sarah tells her story with dramatic intensity, with the following climax:

And then, at the least expected moment, she turned fully to look at Charles. Her color was high, but it seemed to him less embarrassment than a kind of ardor, an anger, a defiance; as if she were naked before him, yet proud to be so.
«I gave myself to him.»
He could not bear her eyes then, and glanced down with the faintest nod of the head.
«I see.»
«So I am a doubly dishonored woman. By circumstances. And by choice.»

«Mr. Smithson, what I beg you to understand is not that I did this shameful thing, but why I did it. Why I sacrificed a woman's most precious possession for the transient gratification of a man I did not love.» She raised her hands to her cheeks. «I did it so that I should never be the same again. I did it so that people *should* point at me, *should* say, there walks the French Lieutenant's Whore» ... «I knew no other way to break out of what I was.» (142)

Yet 134 pages later the reader finds out that the entire story is a fabrication and that Sarah is a virgin when Charles makes love to her months later. The relation of the Manchester epigram to the chapter is ambiguous at best and truly an indeterminate blank that each reader will have to *fin* according to her or his way of reading. We are left to speculate whether Jacqueline Kennedy's fierce response is to be equated to Sarah's rejection of women's status first as her own fiction then as her action, or whether the anger in both women is but a rejection of their respective worlds.

The intertextuality in this novel therefore fulfils two functions. The most important by far is to force the social and historical context of Victorian England to stand as the extratextual context of the narrative. By breaking the illusion Fowles has also broken the barrier between the narrative world and the sociological, philosophical and political history of England. The context is now the historical understanding of the country that is not only the referential target of the story, but is also the implicit community behind the language itself.

The other, and rather minor, function of the intertextuality in chapter twenty, is to give the reader an indeterminate gap that must be filled without instructions or clues. Readers who know Latin American literature will, of course, recognize that this aspect of postmodernism was fully explored by Julio Cortázar in his *Rayuela/Hopscotch* (1964), one of the most influential post-modern novels in the Spanish American continent and, beyond, in Western Europe.

What was missing, in these early postmodern novels, was a direct confrontation with the most pervasive denial of freedom in most societies: the continued representation of women as politically, socially and intellectually subordinated to men. Fowles' novel makes some mild moves in defense of the feminist position (Cortázar does not even consider it), but a full fledged deconstruction of distorted representation would not begin until women themselves would take up the assault on unquestioned authority of social norms. By taking advantage of intertextuality, parody and irony, they would begin to break down the authority of patriarchy in literature.

In the limited space of this study I cannot go into the numerous postmodern novels written by women that have built up the rejection of submissive, subordinate and dependent literary images of women. I have, thus, chosen a recent Mexican novel that is a celebration of being a woman and does so without

reprobation. *Como agua para chocolate/Like Water for Chocolate* (1989) is the first novel by Laura Esquivel (1950-). She subsequently wrote the film script for the motion picture which was released in 1992. Both novel and film have had, and continue to have, extraordinary success in the Spanish-speaking world and also in English and French.

The novel establishes an immediate intertextual context with women's magazines of the time of our grandmothers, in the very concrete reality of pre-revolutionary Mexico, that is, Mexico at the beginning of this century. The full title is *Like Water for Chocolate: A Novel in Monthly Installments with Recipes, Love Stories, and Home Remedies*. The first part of the title is obvious to any Mexican woman: Mexican chocolate is prepared only with water at the point of boiling, and is used as a simile to describe any event or relationship that is so tense, hot, and extraordinary that it can only be compared to the scalding water that is called for in the preparation of the most Mexican of all beverages dating from at least the thirteenth century: hot chocolate (Soustelle 1970, 153-161). Secondly, the subtitle is taken directly from the model: a novel in monthly installments, with recipes, love stories, and home remedies. The title and subtitle therefore cover both the parody and the model. Thirdly, the reader finds on opening the book, in place of an epigram, a traditional Mexican proverb: To the table or to bed you must come when you are bid; the woodcut that decorates the page is the typical nineteenth century cooking stove. The fourth and most explicit dualistic technique is that Esquivel reproduces the format of her model.

Each chapter is prefaced by the title, the subtitle, the month, and the recipe of the month. The narration that follows is a combination of direct address on how to prepare the recipe of the month, interspersed with story-telling about the loves and times of the narrator's grandaunt Tita. Each chapter ends with the information that the story will be continued and an announcement of what next month's, that is, next chapter's, recipe will be. These elements, taken from the model, are never mere embellishments. The recipes, and their preparation as well as the home remedies and their application, are an intrinsic part of the story. There is therefore an intricate symbiotic relationship between the novel and its model in the reading experience. Each is feeding on the other. The verbal imaging of the novel makes use of the elaborate signifying system of language as a dwelling place.

Esquivel's novel moves on two textual levels effortlessly: intertextually the text moves the reader directly into Mexico's past and into the so-called pink-ghetto (the kitchen and the bedroom) to which women have been confined. But instead of bitter reproach there is a celebration of intelligence, skill, creativity in a world that denied that women had anything more to contribute

to society than to provide sustenance, both culinary and sexual, to their male masters.

The other level is the narrative story of a family in northern Mexico as narrated by a young woman, our contemporary, who is retelling the story of her grandaunt, Tita, her life, loves and above all, her gastronomic creativity within the complex maze of Mexican cuisine. The story goes from the narrator's great-grandmother, to her grandaunt Tita, to Esperanza who is the narrator's mother: four generations of Mexican women who have claimed their birthright as their own persons without rejecting their art for living which is the creation of a living space, its rituals and food.

It is in the play between the intertextual referentiality and the narrative story that Esquivel builds an narrative world that is at once fiction and non-fiction. The indeterminate factor in this novel is not a specific unnarrated gap but rather the future of the narrator who has been told so often that she has a strong resemblance to her grandaunt that she has grown to identify with this woman who died before the narrator was born. She believes that her grandaunt lives in her through the cookbook she has left and which is, of course, the frame of the novel itself.

The feminist recuperation of artistic creativity within the confinement of the house and, especially, the kitchen and the bedroom, is not presented by her in an ideological argument, but rather by means of an intertextual palimpsest which is the hallmark of postmodern art. The study of verbal and visual imagery must begin with the understanding that both the novel and, to a lesser extent, the film, work as a parody of a genre. The genre in question is the Mexican version of women's fiction published in monthly installments together with recipes, home remedies, dressmaking patterns, short poems, moral exhortations, ideas on home decoration and the calendar of church observances. In brief, this genre is the nineteenth century forerunner of what is known throughout Europe and America as a woman's magazine.³ Around 1850 these publications in Mexico were called «Calendars for young ladies.» Since home and church were the private and public sites of all educated young ladies, these publications represented the written counterpart to women's socialization and, as such, they are documents that conserve and transmit a Mexican female culture in which the social context and cultural space are particularly for women by women.

It was in the 1850's that fiction began to take a prominent role. At first they were descriptions of places for family excursions, moralizing tales, or detailed narratives on cooking. By 1860 the installment novel grew out of the monthly recipe or recommended excursion. More elaborate love stories by women began to appear regularly by the 1880's. The genre was never considered literature by the literary establishment because of its episodic plots, overt

sentimentality and highly stylized characterization. Nevertheless by the turn of the century every literate woman in Mexico was or had been an avid reader of the genre. But what has been completely overlooked by the male-dominated literary culture of Mexico is that these novels were highly coded in an authentic women's language of inference and reference to the commonplaces of the kitchen and the home which were completely unknown by any man.⁴

Behind the purportedly simple episodic plots there was an interhistory of life as it was lived with all of its multiple restrictions for women of this social class. The characterization followed the forms of life of these women rather than their unique individuality, thus the heroines were the survivors, those who were able to live out a full life in spite of the institution of marriage which in theory, if not in practice, was a form of indentured slavery for life in which a woman served father and brothers only to move on to serve husband and sons together with her daughters and, of course, the women from the servant class. The women's fiction of this woman's world concentrated on one overwhelming fact of life: how to transcend the conditions of life and express oneself in love and in creativity.⁵

Cooking, sewing, embroidery and decoration were the usual creative outlets for these women and, of course, conversation, storytelling, gossip and advice which engulfed every waking day of the Mexican lady of the home.⁶ Writing for other women was quite naturally an extension of this intrahistorical conversation and gossip. Therefore, if one has the social codes of these women one can read these novels as a way of life in nineteenth century Mexico. Laura Esquivel's recognition of this world and its language comes from her Mexican heritage of fiercely independent women who created a woman's culture within the social prison of marriage.⁷

Como agua para chocolate is a parody of nineteenth century women's periodical fiction. They were both expressions of popular culture that created a unique space for a segment of the population. I am using the term parody in the strict sense in which Ziva Ben Porat has defined it. I quote from her 1979 study: «[Parody is] a representation of a modeled reality, which is itself already a particular representation of an original reality. The parodic representations expose the model's conventions and lay bare its devices through the coexistence of the two codes in the same message» (247).

Gilles Deleuze's insight into the language of sexual repression adds considerable weight to a second reading of the relationship between Mamá Elena and Tita. The dominating mother's imposition of a routine and continuous work in the house has the superficial result of desexualization of the highly charged situation that comes about when the newly wed Pedro and Rosaura take up residence in the ranch with Mamá Elena and Tita. Pedro's obsession with Tita's body and Tita's sense of being a castrated woman, force sexuality to the surface.

Sexuality is never acknowledged, denoted or manifested; it is only an allusion, a trace of the desire where the loved one has passed, but it thereby takes on a much greater role than in a house where it is acknowledged. The more sexuality is denied and desexualized energy is expanded, the more do all of Tita's activities become invested with an overwhelming symbolic sexuality which in the end comes to fix the reader's eye with almost unbearable attention on sexual attraction, desire, passion, obsession and, finally, conflagration. Thus, it can be proposed that Mamá Elena is the unwitting *Celestina* who fosters the sexualization of Tita's actions and thereby drives a basic attraction of a young man for a young woman into an obsession. On the part of Tita, her struggle is to escape the castration condemnation her mother imposed on her at birth. She fights to escape by sublimating her desire through her cooking, by nursing her nephew Roberto at her breast and, when this is denied to her, escaping into madness. She can emerge from the castration curse only after her mother's death and her understanding of Mamá Elena's own repressed sexuality of which she was the hapless victim.

The separation of food and eating from sexuality is an indirect effect of the denial of the body's sexual functions as natural traits. This denial of the body is the underlying thread that tightens the unity of the novel. From birth Tita is predestined by her mother to be denied the normal sexual functions of her body. She will not make love, not have a child, not nurse an infant at her breast, not know intimate affection, let alone joy or an orgasm. The reasons for Mamá Elena's condemnation are in part convenience and in part rage and revenge for her own frustrated sexuality. From adolescence to her death, as her sexuality defines her woman's body, Tita begins to rebel against her condemnation. She transmits her sensuality of a young woman in love to the food she prepares, to the environment she creates around her. The preparation of food is directly linked to her thwarted sexuality. When she discovers that her breasts have filled with milk defying the physiological system of the body, she does not understand how she can nurse the child, but she does know that she has experienced one of her deepest pleasures, second only to sexual intercourse: that of being able to feed another through her body. When she prepares the banquet for her nephew's baptism she does it with such love that the food filled all who ate it with an overpowering sense of joy. The fragrance of Tita's body is not only that of the rich scent of jasmine, but it is also mingled with the scent of food.

Finally, Tita's realization at the end that Pedro died from the emotion of the sexual orgasm he had just experienced, and that she had not shared in it because she had pulled back from the brink of letting herself go in the powerful sensation, fills her with remorse. She then understands that by eating the matches John Brown had given her and thinking about each sensual moment when her body felt Pedro, she could build up to the orgasm she had resisted.

One by one she eats the matches and remembers a kiss, a caress, and then, intercollese slowly builds up sensations in her body until an orgasm explodes in her. This masturbation which links sensual memory and eating culminates in a Romeo and Juliet-like love climax in death.

I want to conclude with three observations on feminist art in postmodernism: 1) this is not a protest, it is a celebration of the space of one's own which may have been hidden from view in the past but is now open to all; 2) at the center of postmodernism there is the vesting of creative weight on the reader and this makes intertextuality a means of providing an interpretive context. In the case of Fowles it was nineteenth century Britain, in the case of Esquivel it was our grandmother's kitchen and bedroom; 3) the maturity of feminist art and criticism has transcended the need to concentrate on an attack on the negative aspects of the traditional (mis)representation of women, the challenge today is to celebrate women's creativity in the full domain of the human adventure from the so-called decorative arts to the fine arts and science.

Notes

¹ English language literature has a much more urgent need of postcolonialism because of the class structure of British colonial institutions in the Indian subcontinent, North America, the West Indies and South Africa. The number of great postcolonial writers in English is growing with such writers as Michael Ondaatje, Derek Walcott, Salman Rushdie, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker. It is not surprising that the most effective postcolonial criticism is also from this part of the world. Romi K. Bhabha sums up the present situation: «What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of ordinary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences» (1994, 1).

² In 1991 I organized a workshop at the IeLA congress in Tokyo on women writers around the world. Selected papers were published in December 1993 with the title *New Visions of Creation*. The volume bears witness to the world-wide breakthrough of feminist criticism today.

³ Mexican cookbooks in the nineteenth century were often handwritten, hand-sewn books which were passed on from one generation of women to the next. I am fortunate to have inherited such a book. The recipes and home remedies are all presented through a running narrative together with short stories prompted by the recipe in question. In the United States Irma S. Rombauer's first edition of the *Joy of Cooking* (1931) follows the same tradition. Unfortunately her daughter, Marion Becker, has not chosen to continue the narrative tradition.

⁴ Susan I. Lombardi has written an important critical analysis of the genre in English as a significant mode of gendered discourse.

⁵ The U.S. feminist critic Elaine Showalter recognized seventeen years ago that the cultural situatedness of women must be the starting point for any aesthetic consideration of their work. She writes: «Women have generally been regarded as 'sociologi-

cal chameleons,' taking on the class, lifestyle, and culture of their male relatives. It can, however, be argued that women themselves have constituted a subculture within the framework of a larger society and have been unified by values, conventions, experiences, and behaviors impinging on each individual» (1982, 11).

6 Judy Chicago's efforts to raise the aesthetic awareness of women to their work for the home, has been revolutionary. Laura Esquivel's novel is written as a Mexican recognition of this woman's art form. Chicago writes: «A dinner party where family traditions are passed down like the carefully preserved tablecloth made by a beloved grandmother. A dinner party where women provide an environment of comfort, an elegant setting, and a nourishing and aesthetically pleasing meal. A dinner party where women put the guests at ease and facilitate communication between them. A dinner party, a traditional female act requiring both generosity and personal sacrifice» (1980, 8-21).

7 There have been numerous reviews of the novel and the film around the world. Each reviewer finds points of comparison to the local culture and, to varying degrees, expresses fascination or dismay at what they call the magical realism of the novel and film. Of course, magical realism is a category invented by critics who are not from Latin America. The dimensions of the real in Latin America are very much a part of the oral tradition and the hybrid creation of extreme variability. The best review from Latin America of the novel/film that I have read is that published by Ramos Escandón.

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