

LAST201: Food and Drink

February 3, 2021

Analysis of Rosario Castellanos, "Cooking Lesson"

1. What are the various possible meanings of the title, "Cooking Lesson"? What do we learn from cooking? What does the narrator learn?
2. "In my next movie I'd like them to give me a different part" (351). What does this story have to say about performance, playing a role? What roles does the narrator imagine are available to her?
3. "And yet..." (353). How does the story end? It seems to end rather inconclusively, with the three dots suggesting something still to come. What might come next?
4. Take any of our collective questions and answer it.
<https://last201.arts.ubc.ca/food-and-drink-questions/>

Room 1

Names: Dylan Morin, Beck Laake, Natalie Crawford, Maiya Dixel

-Marriage and cooking go hand-in-hand, at least within our context, cooking skills can be hereditary.

-Struggling with a "passed-down skill", balancing many factors of her culture, disassociates her.

-Interpersonal experience: what is my role? Where do I fit in culture?

-Uncomfortable in her position of what and what she is expected of in this position and role; role of the woman.

-Barriers to experiencing culture, experiences desperation and unwellness as a consequence of being trapped in the house; being trapped in her role.

-Female identity dependent on relationship to man

-Food = Women; the consumption of women.

-The kitchen and bedroom are gendered, different rooms have different expectations for the heroine.

Room 2

Names: Clara, Emilia Heilakka, Maddy Battisti, Desiree

1. Story analysis: she understands something is wrong with the system through her accounts with her husband.
 - a. Hectic in nature: plot, feeling, asking many questions throughout the text, hard to follow, her stream of thought would end abruptly, her accounts were almost raw and written without much forethought or context
 - b. Possible meanings of title: warning, cautionary tale, there is no real resolve

- i. Cooking lessons: could be a way for women to express the anxieties and dangers of marriage
- ii. Cooking is almost a metaphor for the time and energy you put into a relationship or person or partner. The expected assumption of cooking and “wifely” duties, this story is a challenge of “natural” role taking between men and women.
- iii. Rebellion of norms for women, a questioning of what is assumed of me
- iv.

Room 3

Names: Brian Jeong, vihaan soni,

1. - The author’s personal resentment on the role of women
- The stereotypical view on women and role as a wife confines to a role such as cooking
2. - The role of the wife is very limited.. “Traditional role of a housewife” confined to those of what fit under the role of her gender
3. Hope for changes for the better definitely exists, but the concl

Room 4

Names: Maya, Ana Laura, Jada

What does Cooking Lessons refer to

- She is learning her footing through the “Cooking Lessons” as she’s not used to being a housewife. She feels very uncomfortable in this role
- She signed away her life to her husband for the traditional role of a Mexican housewife, brought up insecurities because she doesn’t know how to play the role authentically
- Had to learn that there’s a lack of overlap – how can you be a liberated independent woman but also domesticated?

Her preparing the meat

- Meat is changing, shows her transformation
- Eventually the meat burns, so if she doesn’t catch/protect herself she’ll get burned

Room 5

Names: Coral, Magalee, Isabel

- Women are often compared to food (and food to women), how does this comparison shape the way women are viewed (both by others and themselves)?
 - In literature, women are often portrayed as being “consumed” by men → through magazines, “predatory” behaviour
 - For the entirety of the story, she is the one internalizing the sexism she is against
 - The comparison makes it easy for the narrator to project herself onto the meat; she notes her metamorphosis (the way she changes through marriage, which she feels changes her essence, such as muting her

rawness like the meat's color and flavours are muted through spices and cooking); in the meat, she sees what happens when one doesn't pay attention to one's self (she burns the meat because she doesn't give it enough attention, as she initially lets herself change into the "self-sacrificing little Mexican wife" for her husband)