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**From Boy To Man**

December 7, 1941, marks the day when the United States became involved in World War II. After Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the internment of all people with Japanese ancestry. In the novel *When The Emperor Was Divine*, Julie Otsuka tells the story of a Japanese family who experiences the difficulties of the internment, with the story of her three main characters: the mother, daughter, and son. Due to the onerous conditions in the camps, one of Otsuka’s main characters, the son, undergoes a major change. As a young boy, the son is forced into maturity because of the responsibility taken from the mother and the daughter. Through the examination of his attitude earlier in the novel and later when he and his family stay in the internment camp, one can see the change that takes place within the boy.

In the beginning of the novel, the son portrays a child who is taken care of by his mother and older sister. Before the family leaves for the internment camp, the mother packs all of his things for him: “She pulled out the Joe Palooka comic books... [and] placed his baseball glove on his pillow” (7). Because he did not pack his own bag, it is evident that he is still very dependent on his mother. The comic book and the baseball glove also signify his childhood and carefree lifestyle. Upon returning home from school, he sits in the kitchen waiting for apples which his mother cuts for him. While waiting for the apples, “He... turned the radio on and off, on and off...” (14). His need to fidget with the radio shows his impatience for the apples. Clearly, before leaving for the internment camp, the young boy displays his child-like energy.

When the family is on the train, one can see that the young boy in Otsuka’s novel still carries the essence of a child. His mind is filled with the things that he has left behind, not the struggle he will hold in the near future. As he sits on the train, he contemplates the unrealistic future he wants: “[The boy] could not make up his mind. Did he want to ride horses? He did. Did he want to be a small man? He did not” (31). The thoughts that fill his mind are trivial, compared to those of his mother. Later, the young boy realizes that he has forgotten his umbrella: “The boy
began to hit the side of his head with the orange” (39). He cannot stand the thought of forgetting his umbrella. This outbreak really shows that he is unable to deal with the stress of the move.

When the family gets off the train and moves to the bus they are assigned to, one can see that the boy’s older sister is still nurturing him. She takes care of him as they step out of the bus. Due to the dust the bus had created, the sister feels obligated to give him her scarf: “He pressed the scarf to his face and took the girl’s hand and together they stepped out of the bus…” (48). The boy still shows characteristics of a young boy through his child-like acts on the train and bus.

When the family arrives at the internment camp, the boy imagines seeing his father everywhere (49). One day in the mess hall, the boy calls out, with his mouth full, to a man who looked similar to his father. After this, “His mother reminded him, once again, not to shout out in public. And never to speak with his mouth full” (50). This shows that he is still not able to behave. As time progresses in the internment camp, he is able to meet new people, “[He] played marbles on the laundry floor. He played Chinese checkers. He roamed through the barracks with other boys… playing cops and robbers and war” (53). Because he is playing war with other children, he does not fully understand the degree of seriousness it has. During the first few weeks in the camp, the boy is still a child.

As time progresses, everyone begins to change. The boy becomes someone that his mother can talk to about different things that occur. She tells him her feelings, which she does not usually do. After some time in the camp, the mother tells her son about the bags under her eyes, “A recent development. Your father won’t know who I am.” The boy says, “I’ll remind him” (63). The mother is able to express her feelings, almost as if he were her companion. The boy begins to change due to that. As time progresses, the mother begins to lose hope: “She had stopped keeping track of the days... [and she] no longer read the paper” (93). She stopped keeping track of the war as well, and told the boy to “tell [her] when it’s over” (93). The mother is handing the responsibility of keeping track of the war to her son. This is when the relationship between the mother and the son begins to change. One can start to see that he becomes more of an adult, and the mother becomes more of a child, confiding in a parent: “The night of [your father’s] arrest, he asked me to go get him a glass of water... I was so tired... So I told him to go get it himself... Now he’ll always be thirsty” (96). The son tries to comfort her, explaining that she did not know that the father would be taken away. In this, we can see that he is maturing. He no longer needs to be taken care of, but rather he is taking care of his mother. He is no longer a young boy, but someone who is beginning to mature.
Not only does the boy become the caretaker for his mother, but he also helps his older sister. Once, in the middle of the night, the older sister is outside jumping rope, but she cannot get it. The rope is short and she trips. She becomes upset and throws the rope down. Because it is late at night, the young boy says, “You better come in now….You’ll catch a cold” (97). It seems as though the tables have turned. When they first arrived, the older sister gave the boy her scarf to ensure that he did not get sick. Now, the boy is telling the girl to come inside because she could get sick. He continues to tell her that she is a good jumper to encourage her, much like an older brother would do. When they wake up, the girl has a fever, and she refuses to drink anything. She acts very immaturely for an older sister. She begins to pick at the scab on her knee, and “the boy grab[s] her wrist and [says], ‘Don’t’” (98). The sister now takes the role of the younger one, and the boy proves himself to be a caretaker.

As a result of this maturity, the boy has helped keep his mother and sister hopeful, and he has become more self-sufficient. He takes long walks again, but this time he takes them without his sister (100). This shows that he no longer needs his sister to be with him. He is comfortable with being alone, which is a sign of his self-sufficiency. Also, another clear example of his adulthood is that he is able to answer his own questions, even if they aren’t always right. He tries not to bother his mother or his sister, so he provides excuses for when his father will be home: “He’ll be back any day now. Any day. Just say he went on a trip” (83). Clearly, he does not need anyone to help him feel more secure. He is capable of doing things on his own, without the help of his mother or sister. This is evidence that he is no longer a young boy, but an adult.

The boy in the beginning of the novel portrays a young, innocent child who is naïve, but later he turns into a mature adult. Through the examination of his development throughout the book, we see that he takes on the responsibilities of his mother and older sister and becomes a more self-sufficient person.

Work Cited

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Loss of Innocence

In the novel, *When the Emperor Was Divine*, Julie Otsuka incorporates several themes, which relate to Japanese Americans of the time, as well as recurring symbols that represent the emotions and experiences Japanese Americans underwent during World War II. The loss of freedom, identity, and equality, as well as the issue of racism are main themes woven into the novel. Some of the main symbols that reflect these themes are the woman’s white gloves, White Dog, birds, the house key, the lack of names, identification numbers, the boy’s baseball glove, money, and the refusal of a postwar job. Each symbol is significant to the story.

The story takes place in Berkeley in the spring of 1942. Pearl Harbor has just been bombed by Japanese fighters and an evacuation order has been issued for all people of Japanese descent in America to be removed to internment camps, taking with them only what they can carry. Otsuka details the four-year experience of one Japanese family, consisting of unnamed people—the woman/mother, the girl/daughter, the boy/son, and the father/husband—as they undergo racism and the hardship of being forced to abandon their lives, identities, and freedom.

The loss of purity, innocence, and freedom are expressed through several symbols Otsuka utilizes. White gloves convey purity and its absence during the war. The woman’s pet, White Dog, an old and dying white dog, represents innocence and freedom. When the woman is forced to pack-up her belongings and take with her what she can carry, she makes the hard decision of killing White Dog in order to set his happy soul free—rather than leaving him behind for an undetermined amount of time where there is the potential for him to be abused or suffer until he dies. Otsuka’s illustration of a woman who gives freedom to an innocent soul that she loves reflects a humane act of freedom and compassion. When the woman kills White Dog, “she put on her pure white silk gloves,” and after freeing his soul, “she pulled off her gloves and looked at them [...] and they were no longer white” (11-12). Purity, innocence, and freedom are lost during this time. Fear overpowers the population of America and racism stains the purity of humanity. Those who were once innocent and free are now the enemy and are incarcerated.
Otsuka also uses birds to symbolize the themes of freedom, strength, independence, and identity. The inclusion of a caged bird that is eventually set free clearly symbolizes freedom of the husband/father: “[The bird] sounded just like her husband. If she closed her eyes she could easily imagine that her husband was right there in the room with her…. She opened the window and set the bird out on the ledge…. The bird spread his wings and flew off into the night…. Without the bird in the cage, the house felt empty” (19-20). The woman symbolically becomes free of her husband, both physically and mentally. Additionally, the husband’s freedom, prior to being incarcerated, is represented in the bird’s freedom and is later illuminated upon his return home, towards the conclusion of the novel: “The man who stood there before us was not our father. He was somebody else, a stranger who had been sent back in our father’s place” (132). Otsuka also references birds as being of interest to the girl. She adds a scene where the girl balances a book, “Birds of America,” on her head—which is symbolic of freedom, strength, and independence being on the girl’s mind; however, her brother suggests that she needs “to stand up straighter” (13). The boy’s remark suggests that his sister, the girl, needs to be stronger in her views and free and independent of others.

The house key that the woman/mother keeps with her throughout her stay at the internment camp is used to symbolize not only freedom and identity, but also hope. She keeps her key laced around her neck to remind her of a time of freedom. The key is a part of her past and therefore is part of her identity; furthermore, the key serves as a reminder of her identity at a time when it is easy to forget. It also serves as a form of hope—hope that she will return to her house and old lifestyle where everything is in order and no one is the enemy: “The key had become a part of her…. If she took it off, surely terrible things would happen…. The war would last forever. Our mother would cease to be” (107-108). If the key is removed, her identity is removed and all is lost for her. The key ultimately gives meaning and a sense of identity to her freedom-stripped life.

The lack of identity of Japanese Americans is visible in Otsuka’s choice of not attaching names to her main characters and in the incorporation of identification numbers when the family is taken to the internment camps. Otsuka allows the reader to fill in the absent names with their own, which brings them closer to the story and gives them a first-hand experience. The absence of names also highlights the absurdity of the racism latched onto the family, because the family is symbolic of everyone. The identification numbers given to the family, along with the forced evacuation to an unknown location, further strip them of their identity and dehumanize them. Their existence is whittled down to a number: “…they would pin their identification number to their collars and grab their suitcases and climb up onto the bus and go to wherever it was they had to go” (22).
The racist "enemy" label that was given to Japanese Americans, and this family in particular, was absolutely preposterous considering the largely American-influenced upbringing or Americanization of the family. The American influence on the boy, his identity, and his love for his baseball glove is evident, because "the first thing he put[s] inside of his suitcase [is] his baseball glove" (18). The most historically American sport—baseball—is the boy's implied favorite sport. "Every morning, at Mountain View Elementary, [the boy] placed his hand over his heart and recited the pledge of allegiance" (71). This is absolutely the act of a patriotic American citizen, but during World War II, this patriot was seen as an enemy. All Japanese Americans were seen as the enemy; they were, in fact, treated like criminals. After the war, the War Relocation Authority "sent each person home with train fare and twenty-five dollars in cash...[which] was the same amount given to criminals on the day they were released from prison" (117-118). Otsuka illustrates how lowly the Japanese American race was viewed and how inhumanely they were treated, with criminal status for a crime that they did not commit. When the woman is offered a postwar job in a small dark room in the back of a store where she would not be seen, she politely declines and comically states: "I was afraid I might accidentally remember who I was and...offend myself" (129). Otsuka uses the woman to demonstrate how ridiculous the accusations are, how racism has become so prominent during and after the war, and how the woman is a human being like any other American.

The search for freedom, identity, and equality was tough for Japanese Americans in a racist America during and after World War II. Otsuka ingeniously and successfully connects the reader to her novel and reflects the hardships of Japanese Americans through her incorporation of significant symbols.

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...the girls reminded them of the peace and the comfort of home, against the horrible war that trapped them.

Riaka Khodadad
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Soldiers and Home

War is something that affects people not only physically, but also spiritually. War touches people’s spirits because it makes them think about death. Going to war, you have to leave your family, your friends, your wishes, and a lot of other things because you never know if you will ever come back again. While fighting, while scared, while thinking about death, while fear fills your every breath, and while you know you may never again see the things you love, you think of something special. You think about something that is precious and significant, something that gives you hope and reminds you that life is still worth living, something that gives you the force to try your best and to stay alive. In the book *The Things They Carried*, Tim O’Brien talks about how different characters try to continue living by thinking about their loved ones.

In the 1970s, it was mostly men who served in the army and fought in the Vietnam War. Most of the men who served in the military were teenage boys, barely graduated and trying to start their own lives. Their only desire was to live in peace and maybe someday have families of their own. In their teenage minds, girls were their only reminders of home and happy times. Girls were who they thought of to make them smile at times, or even to give them good luck. Not because the girls were waiting for them, but because the girls reminded them of the peace and the comfort of home, against the horrible war that trapped them.

In *The Things They Carried*, O’Brien describes one of those soldiers: “Even now, twenty years later, I can see [Dobbins] wrapping his girlfriend’s pantyhose around his neck before heading out on ambush” (117). Dobbins’ girlfriend broke up with him in late October, through the mail. Even then, Dobbins still wrapped her pantyhose around his neck because he thought that those stockings still had a magic power. Those pantyhose were good luck because of all the good memories they carried with them. They became a charm he wore because it gave Dobbins the strength to fight. They made him calm when he could not find peace: “...he sometimes slept with the stockings up against his face, the way an infant sleeps with a flannel blanket, secure and peaceful” (117).
Hope was also something soldiers were seeking: hope to stay alive, hope to reach their goal one day, and hope to go back home someday: “Lieutenant Jimmy Cross carried letters from a girl named Martha.... They were not love letters, but Lieutenant Cross was hoping, so he kept them” (1). Lieutenant Jimmy Cross loved Martha even though she did not love him back, but it was love that gave him the spirit to fight. When Ted Lavender died in the mission under Lieutenant Cross’ command, Cross burned all her letters and pictures because he thought that dreaming of Lieutenant Cross was getting in the way of concentrating on his job: “Henceforth, when he thought about Martha, it would be only to think that she belonged elsewhere. He would shut down the day dreams....” (24). Martha was the lieutenant’s path back to home. She was his way to peace. She was his way to Mount Sebastian’s silence, where he came from. He did not stop thinking about her because his love was the reason for him to accomplish his mission to survive and ensure that his platoon survived.

In war, men sometimes get so emotional that they do not see the effects of their actions. Mark Fossie was a medic at a medical detachment near a village called Tra Bong. He loved his girlfriend, Mary Anne, so much that he thought bringing her to Vietnam would give him more peace than just receiving letters from her. So, he bought a ticket, and after much trouble, she finally arrived. Unfortunately, Fossie did not realize that war made people change. Mary Anne was a girl who came to Vietnam to help her boyfriend to be happy and remind him of all the good times they had back in their home city: “Mary Anne made you think about those girls back home, how clean and innocent they all are....” (113). She came with a pink sweater and a skirt, and when she left the medical detachment and joined one of the Special Forces near Tra Bong, she wore a soldier’s outfit and tongues as jewelry around her neck. Mary Anne changed; she was not the sweet, nice girl who used to be a reminder of the good times back home. Mark Fossie did not realize that “you come over clean and you get dirty [no matter man or woman] and then afterward it’s never the same ....” (114). Fossie, by bringing his girlfriend, not only lost his girlfriend but also lost the peace that he had found in her letters. He lost the reason that gave him the spirit to fight and survive.

Thinking about the role of women on the battlefield might make us believe that women have not done so much, but thinking a little deeper, we discover that while women were not physically present on the battlefield, they were present in hearts of the people who were fighting in those fields. It was those women who gave them the spirit to fight and who gave them the hope and the strength to survive. In the worst moments, when there was no hope, no will to survive,
no reason to fight, no love or support, it was memories of those women who brought the soldiers back to existence. It was women who woke them up from their oblivion, and it was women who reminded them of the peace back home, and the beauty of nature, and that nature was not as cruel and as hopeless as it seemed. It was women who showed them there was still hope and reason to survive in the battlefields.

Work Cited

It was as if Tita was entering Pedro’s body through the sauce containing her blood...

Olga Naumova
Instructor: Mary Shannon

The Craft of Cooking

_Like Water For Chocolate_, by Laura Esquivel, is not only a great novel, but is a book of the most exquisite recipes. In the beginning of every chapter, Esquivel announces the dish for the chapter and lists the necessary ingredients. This is important because it makes the reader aware of the food the chapter will revolve around, and food in this book has a significant meaning. As the chapter begins, it is always with preparation of that dish, usually by Tita, the main character.

Tita is the cook in the family and the youngest of the three daughters of Mama Elena. As the youngest daughter, she has to follow a family tradition which prohibits her from marrying because she has to take care of her mother until her mother dies. Unfortunately, Tita is deeply in love with her boyfriend Pedro, who marries Tita’s sister, Rosaura, to be close to his love—Tita. Tita, on the other hand, remains single, even after Mama Elena’s death. Furthermore, she retains her position as the family cook. As Tita prepares food throughout her life, the dishes she makes have a magical way of reflecting or even transferring her mood, and the atmosphere they are cooked in, into those who eat them.

Rosaura’s wedding cake, for which Tita helped to prepare the icing, was the first occurrence of Tita’s mood transfer to the guests. As Tita prepared the meringue icing the night before the wedding, she cried due to her lost love. Her tears mixed in with the icing she was stirring. Although it did not affect the taste of the cake, it brought on an agonizing emotion of longing. Esquivel, talking about Nacha (the main family cook before Tita) writes: “When she finished beating the meringue, it occurred to Nacha to lick some of the icing off her finger to see if Tita’s tears affected the flavor. No, the flavor did not seem to have been affected, yet without knowing why, Nacha was suddenly overcome with an intense longing” (35). The same feeling of longing seized the guests as they took their first bite of the cake. Frustration, torment, and despair followed, resulting in ubiquitous vomiting and consequently, a ruined wedding. This example demonstrates the transfer of Tita’s negative mood to the consumers through her culinary production. However, negative emotions are not the only ones that can be transferred; transfer of positive emotions also take place as Tita continues her craft of cooking.
The idea of preparing quail in rose petal sauce occurred to Tita when Pedro presented her with roses to congratulate her on her new position as ranch cook. Disapproving the gesture, Mama Elena told Tita to get rid of the bouquet. However, “[She felt] shaken . . . to get a bouquet of roses, and from Pedro besides. It was the first deep emotion she had felt since her sister’s wedding, when she had heard Pedro confirm his love, trying to hide it from everyone’s prying eyes” (47). Tita could not just throw the roses away, so she decided to put them to good use and prepare quail in rose petal sauce. Embracing the roses tightly to her chest, rose thorns pierced her hands and chest, turning the pink roses red from blood. A chemical reaction occurred when Tita added the rose petals to her sauce. As she served the quail and everybody took his/her first bite, Gertrudis became the medium for Tita the transmitter, and Pedro became the receiver: “On her the food seemed to act as an aphrodisiac; she began to feel an intense heat pulsing through her limbs. An itch in the center of her body kept her from sitting properly in her chair” (51). It was as if Tita was entering Pedro’s body through the sauce containing her blood, and Gertrudis, being the medium, was the one who became sexually aroused as a result of the lovers’ communication. After dinner, she took a shower; however, the water evaporated when it touched her skin, creating an aroma that was sensed by Juan, one of the soldiers on the battlefield, who immediately galloped toward the aroma to the ranch and took her away with him. If not for the petal sauce, this would not have happened.

Rosaura, on the other hand, after taking a few bites of the quail in rose petal sauce felt sick and nauseous. This sauce, with an extra ingredient from Tita, expressed her emotions toward certain people who tasted it. Similar reactions, but with different emotions and different outcomes, occurred through other dishes too.

After several years, when Rosaura confronted Tita regarding Pedro, a heated argument broke out. While cooking beans and cutting crust off tortillas to throw to the chickens, the sisters brought everything that had been bothering them regarding Pedro to the surface. Scorn, jealousy, insults, and irritation quickly filled the atmosphere. Following the argument, Tita went to feed the chickens with tortilla crusts she had just cut off. A strange scene took place as the chickens’ behavior turned aggressive. They were flying all over the patio, attacking each other, pecking and scratching:

Soon the chickens were inescapably trapped by the force they themselves were generating in their mad chase; they couldn’t break loose from that whirl of feathers, blood, and dust that spun faster and faster, gathering force at every turn until it changed into a mighty tornado, destroying everything in its path, starting with the things that were closest. (218)
The mystery was that Rosaura’s and Tita’s argument passed on to the chickens through the tortilla crust. Food, in this case, transferred the mood it was prepared in to those who ate it.

Tita’s troubles for that day, however, were not over yet. As she returned to the kitchen, she found beans that had been cooking for a long time still uncooked. It was as if the beans miraculously were forming their own personality. At that moment, Tita remembered Nacha’s words: “When people argue while preparing tamales, the tamales won’t get cooked. They can be heated day after day and still stay raw, because the tamales are angry. In a case like that, you have to sing to them, which makes them happy, then they’ll cook” (219). Recalling images of Pedro as he was making love to her, Tita calmed down and began to sing. First, the beans relaxed with satisfaction, then began to boil intensely as Tita’s images filled her with passion. In fact, passion, whether it was negative or positive, was the most common feeling transmitted through the food.

Intense love and passion were once again demonstrated at Esperanza’s and Alex’s wedding. Esperanza (the daughter of Rosaura and Pedro), and Alex (the son of Dr. John Brown), were deeply in love and perfect for each other. Tita, Pedro, and others shared the happiness and excitement of the bride and groom. In this joyful atmosphere, preparations, including cooking, took place. Tita prepared chiles in walnut sauce; they turned out to be not only delicious but also stimulated passion and desire for love within the guests. The chiles had the same reaction as the rose petal sauce. At Esperanza’s wedding, however, desire for lovemaking came from the atmosphere the chiles were cooked in, and amorousness transferred over to the guests. Immediately after eating the chiles, an urge for sex spread over those at the wedding, starting with Gertrudis. Guests left to have sexual intercourse, leaving Pedro and Tita alone. Using this moment, also wanting to be intimate with each other, they went to the dark room. Joining and becoming one, both of them felt so amazing that Pedro’s soul left the world.

Food in the novel *Like Water For Chocolate* is essential to the plot. Tita turned food into influential dishes which transferred the emotions of the cook, or the mood they were prepared in, to those who ate these dishes. The food influenced those people and their actions. Gertrudis, as a result of the quail in rose petal sauce, met her husband, Juan, and became a general. Rosaura’s wedding was ruined because guests started vomiting from the extensive longing they felt after they ate the wedding cake. The chickens fought and the beans did not cook due to the argument Tita had with Rosaura while cooking. Finally, at Esperanza’s wedding, guests were overwhelmed by passion and desire for love after eating chiles that were cooked in an atmosphere full of love. All of these examples throughout the story show how food conjured characters to change their lives.
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