Latina/Latino Studies Workshop

Wednesday, October 28, 3:30-5:00pm
1207 W. Oregon, Room 133, Urbana

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“The Lingchi and the Ethics of the Gaze”

The lingchi, or the death by a thousand cuts (a form of public punishment banned in China in 1905, in which the body of the live victim is publicly sliced and dismembered), became the subject of Farabeuf or the Chronicle of an Instant, a 1965 novel by Mexican writer Salvador Elizondo (1932-2006). This nouveau roman, considered one of the most important novels written in Mexico in the last half of the 20th century, focuses on a Louis Hubert Farabeuf (1841-1910) a French surgeon author of a medical treaty on amputations. A photograph of the victim of the lingchi becomes the core upon which Elizondo layers different levels of meaning and interpretation: from his own theory of the novel, to the place of Mexico on contemporary world literature, to his disquisitions--following Georges Bataille--on the relationship of eroticism to art, to the distinction between pain and pleasure, to the nature of ideographic writing itself. In light of the 50-year anniversary of the publication, what are we to make of the novel, especially given current notions of post-feminism? What does an ethnic post-colonial reading contribute to both our understanding of the novel, and to the “western” concepts of art itself?