

"Tita was so sensitive to onions, any time they were being chopped, they say she would cry and cry..." And, as we learn in **LAURA ESQUIREL'S LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE: A NOVEL IN MONTHLY INSTALLMENTS WITH RECIPES, ROMANCES AND HOME REMEDIES** (Doubleday, 17.50), she has plenty to cry about. Entering the turn-of-the-century world of a well-born Mexican family by slipping out of her mother and into a kitchen full of the makings for noodle soup, Tita begins her life-long passion for food. "As a poet plays with words, Tita juggled ingredients and quantities at will, obtaining phenomenal results..." And when her mother won't allow her to marry the man she loves, and instead arranges for Tita's sister to marry him, Tita cannot control her tears. She cries into the cake batter and when the guests "took their first bite of cake, everyone was flooded with a great wave of longing." Each chapter of this story begins with a carefully explained recipe and we see the beautiful life of a woman whose world begins at the kitchen door. Like Water for Chocolate was a best-seller in Mexico in 1990 and it is sure to find many surprised and hungry fans this side of the border. --L.P.



JOHN UPDIKE long has held the respect of readers and writers. His novels in particular always have borne the calling card of excellence in American letters. A favorite Updike theme -- the struggle and strain of the human psyche -- lives again in **MEMORIES OF THE FORD ADMINISTRATION** (Knopf, 23.00). Alfred Clayton is asked for a paper regarding his such memories by a historical association in Vermont. He obliges with only bits and pieces about Ford: "Ford, a former hunk, got to women in a way Nixon hadn't. Twice, I seem to remember, within a few weeks time, a female went after him with a gun." Then Clayton gives over a volume of his own life in those two years and five months -- his eggshell life with his spouse Norma, his mistress Genevieve, and his fellow teachers in small New Hampshire, circa me decade. Mr. Clayton also adds chapters of a biography of James Buchanan, the only bachelor president, he was writing at the time, pulling two former presidents and his own tenure in love together in a quirky package deal. Mr. Updike accomplishes all this with his usual stylistic gifts and his probing of human frailty within beautiful sentences. It is one more he will be remembered for. --J.E.P.



Found in 1991 -- some sixty years after it was written -- was the manuscript of what now is **TRIALS OF THE EARTH: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MARY HAMILTON** (University Press of Mississippi, 25.00, edited by Helen Dick Davis). Written by Hamilton (1866-c.1936) at the request of Davis, who was her neighbor and friend, the story is that of a woman struggling to make a home in the Mississippi Delta wilderness. Mary Hamilton clears land, raises children, runs a lumbercamp kitchen for over one hundred men, takes in sewing, and for her entire life tries to understand her elusive English-born husband. The narrative, remarkable for its clarity and simplicity, brings the characters alive to us, much as they were to her when she said, "To me they will all live as long as I do, laughing and joking, sympathizing with each other and us, in sickness and trouble, and working, toiling to blaze a way and build healthy homes in this dear old Delta where the happiest part of my life has been spent." With an illuminating foreword by Ellen Douglas, this book is destined to take its place among the classics. --L. P.

