

Culinary Narratives and Emotional Landscapes: Food as a Metaphor for Human Relationships in Tran Anh Hung's Cinema

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Abstract

This paper explores the intricate relationship between culinary narratives and emotional landscapes in the films of Tran Anh Hung, focusing on how food serves as a powerful metaphor for human relationships. By analyzing six of his films—*The Scent of Green Papaya* (Tran, 1993), *Cyclo* (Tran, 1995), *The Vertical Ray of the Sun* (Tran, 2000), *Norwegian Wood* (Tran, 2010), *Eternity* (Tran, 2016), and *The Taste of Things* (Tran, 2023)—this study examines the multifaceted ways in which Tran employs food preparation, presentation, and consumption to reflect and deepen the emotional and relational dynamics of his characters. The first research question investigates how Tran uses the act of food preparation and presentation to symbolize the development and dynamics of human relationships. The second question delves into the use of specific culinary traditions to highlight cultural clashes and emotional complexities, revealing how these traditions serve as a backdrop for the characters' interactions and conflicts. The third question explores how the consumption of food is used to metaphorically express characters' desires, frustrations, and societal constraints, providing insight into their internal and external struggles. Through a detailed analysis of these films, this paper argues that Tran Anh Hung's cinematic use of food transcends mere sustenance, becoming a rich, symbolic language that communicates the subtleties of human connection, cultural identity, and emotional depth. This study contributes to the broader understanding of how culinary elements in cinema can be employed to articulate complex human experiences and relationships, offering a unique lens through which to view Tran Anh Hung's oeuvre.

Keywords: Tran Anh Hung, culinary narratives, emotional landscapes, human relationships, symbolism

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Introduction

Tran Anh Hung, a Vietnamese-born director, has received international acclaim for his style of unique and poetic filmmaking. Taste, smell, and sight are three sensory details that get meticulous attention from the viewers to his films. These details are used for aesthetic purposes and generate emotional and evocative experience for his audience (Nguyen, 2023). Hung's films explore how food functions as a powerful metaphor for discovering human relationships, human experience, cultural attraction, and human desires.

Food plays a transcending role in cinema, making itself a powerful metaphorical signifier. Filmmakers can weave narratives by leveraging the universal act of preparing, serving, and consuming food (Zimmerman, 2010). Cultural identities, social hierarchies, and unspoken emotions among characters can be depicted on screen via food choices, traditions, and rituals (Shames & Bobby, 2016). For example, a lavish banquet may represent wealth while a simple meal can symbolize intimacy and connection. The research can gain insight into characters' expectations, frustrations, and societal constraints with the analysis of the food role within a film's narrative.

This research focuses on the works of Tran Anh Hung, known for using food as a metaphor for human relationships. The study will examine how he uses the preparation, presentation, and consumption of food for conveying sensory details and evocative storytelling. This also aims to make a deeper contribution to how food functions as a narrative way to illuminate the complexities of individual emotions in contemporary cinema.

Tran Anh Hung's films are rich in sensory experiences and human connections (Robert, 2012). They are full of lyrical beauty, narrative depth, and food as a potent metaphor. This research aims to answer the following three questions:

RQ1: How does Tran Anh Hung use food as a metaphor for the development of human relationships in his films?

RQ2: How does Tran Anh Hung utilize culinary traditions to express cultural clashes and complexities in films?

RQ3: How does Tran Anh Hung employ food consumption as a metaphor for characters' desires, frustrations, and societal constraints?

Literature Review

Food in Cinema: A Multifaceted Lens

Many movie filmmakers have applied food to cinematic storytelling and used it as a strong and versatile narrative tool. They have used food to symbolize sustenance-transcending themes (Carson et al., 2013). Food reminds the viewers of memories, evoking nostalgia for significant moments in the past (Lupton, 1994; Mannur, 2007; Negra, 2002). In the movie *Swann in Love* (Volker Schlöndorff, 1984), adapted from Marcel Proust's *Swann's Way*, the evocative madeleine cookies trigger the taste that brought the protagonist back to his childhood. Food can also be seen as a marker of social status (Wills et al., 2011). In *The Great Gatsby* (Clayton, 1974) and *Parasite* (Bong, 2019), the lavish meals in films transport a hierarchy and expose the social order of characters. Besides, food can also function as a factor connected to cultural identity (Messer, 2004; Montanari, 2006). In *Eat Drink Man Woman* (Lee, 1994), traditions and rituals relating to food exposed the complex ways to connect the people to their heritage and cultural milieu. This research examines food in Tran

Anh Hung's films to achieve better understanding of it is utilized in his films and how it shapes character relationships, cross-cultural tensions and emotional tapestries.

Food Metaphors in Asian Cinema

Many scholars have shown their interests in the intersection of food in films in Asian cinema contexts, particularly culinary practices that are embraced with cultural identity and emotional interaction (Lindenfeld & Parasecoli, 2016). Food metaphors in film have been a subject of scholarly interest, being a strong narrative tool to express complex character experiences and human relationships (Bower, 2004; Song, 2019). For example, in Indian cinema and literature, food imagery and metaphor has been utilized to symbolize cultural identity and character narratives. Likewise, the use of food in storytelling has been emphasized within culinary cinema, where food becomes a narrator, showing human emotions and soul of the story (Keller, 2006; Martin, 2005; Parasecoli, 2008).

Through Tran Anh Hung's Vietnam trilogy, including *The Scene of Green Papaya* (Tran, 1993), *Cyclo* (Tran, 1995), and *The Vertical Ray of the Sun* (Tran, 2000), food and cuisine practices have been represented to express nostalgia and loss (Robert, 2012). Food metaphors in his films depict the complexities of characters' emotions and the lasting impact of intergenerational trauma (Winston, 2001). Traditional Vietnamese food is prepared, presented and consumed with the purpose of reflecting the human's emotional landscape and social environment the characters live in. Food stories in Tran Anh Hung films, such as in his Vietnam trilogy, have been aesthetically portrayed via the themes of nostalgia, cravings, air of unease among the characters. His films express layered narrative for using the multi-pronged role of food as a metaphor in film narrative to highlight the human's inner worlds, cross-cultural friction and psychological tapestry.

Food for Thought: Culinary Metaphors in Cinema

Film scholars have stated that food is a widespread and multifaceted storytelling device in cinema (Bower, 2009). Food is portrayed as a strong metaphor for many purposes in films. Food or shared meals can trigger memory or reminiscences (Bower, 2004; Ferry, 2014). In *Like Water for Chocolate* (Arau, 1992), food options can signify socioeconomic status or social disparity. In *Tampopo* (Itami, 1985), the film utilized food to depict cultural identity, including traditional cuisines as cultural legacy.

Nevertheless, there is a lack of research in exploring food metaphors as character relationships in Tran Anh Hung's films. In *Cyclo* (Tran, 1995), there is no research mentioning human relationships connected with food that are used to tell the film story though there is a lot of analysis of esthetic appeal and social critique. This study focuses on closing this gap by looking at food as a metaphor in his films. The research can achieve better understanding of the way food metaphors reflect intricacies of character relationships, cross-cultural friction, and inner worlds in Tran Anh Hung's films.

Research Methodology

The project will apply a qualitative method to examine the six films directed by Tran Anh Hung, including *The Scent of Green Papaya* (Tran, 1993), *Cyclo* (Tran, 1995), *The Vertical Ray of the Sun* (Tran, 2000), *Norwegian Wood* (Tran, 2010), *Eternity* (Tran, 2016), and *The Taste of Things* (Tran, 2023) via food storytelling and its link to character interactions. The

analysis is done using footage and scenes portraying food narratives or the depiction of traditional dishes. To pinpoint the food metaphors and representations connected to meals and to the progress of human relationships in films. This qualitative study will help to understand better the ways the director uses food elements to express the characters' expectations, cross-cultural frictions, inner worlds, and character relationships under social pressures. The key themes are food and traditional dishes presented in the films, showing his film aesthetics and the multi-dimensional role of culinary narratives.

The qualitative method is appropriate to examine the emotional aspects of culinary narratives in Tran Anh Hung's films because of the personal and explanatory characteristics of traditional cuisines and film viewed as cultural contexts. The choice of discourse analysis and storytelling research for exploring the underlying significance linked to both traditional food and cuisines and sensory perceptions the characters experience during the preparation, presentation and consumption of their meals. By employing this method, the analysis can seize the inner worlds, cultural interpretations and characters' emotions and their relationships through the portrayal of food. This approach is suited to reveal the spectrum of emotions and cultural connotations through the close textual analysis of footage, conversations, and visual styles in Hung's works to see his visual narratives via food imagery. Repetitive patterns and recurring themes of food in his films will be classified and determined by thematic coding. This way will help to specify how character interactions, emotional landscapes, and cultural clashes are set up via culinary narratives. Then, by applying semiotic analysis, signifiers will be decoded to explore cooking techniques and their storytelling framework.

Findings and Conclusions

The Language of Food Preparation and Presentation

In Tran Anh Hung's films, food is prepared and presented for the purpose of not only serving meals but also a way to depict the relationships between the characters and their interactions. In *The Scent of Green Papaya*, the lady, the mother in the family, makes tea for her husband, the father in the family and he stops playing music to drink tea, illustrating an emotional relationship and shared concern. The scene that the old maid Ty guides the young maid, the main female character Mui, how to fry vegetables with beef, demonstrating the long-serving maid and the new one and reflecting the transfer of inter-generational knowledge and skills. However, Ty and Mui enjoy their meal together but separately in the kitchen, expressing that they come from different social classes; despite being well-treated by the family they work for, they cannot be included in the family meals. The grandmother, the oldest in the family, has the meal alone, excluding the whole family. Though she is taken good care of by her daughter-in-law, who manages everything from family finances to childcare, the grandmother scolds at her, indicating a conflict between her and her daughter-in-law without understanding for the latter's current sorrow.

The consciousness of details in preparing food, from mincing to presenting dishes, demonstrates meticulousness in cooking but also shows emotional engagement of characters into the food they prepare. In the scene where Mui shreds green papaya and presents each meal, and her joy upon observing the unripe papaya seeds. Her actions are not only about preparing a meal but are devoted attention. Another evidence is the old maid Ty's happiness with purchasing rice, pouring rice into a jar and using a milk can to scoop it into a basket. Food is also a means to entertain the guests when they come to the family.

Food preparation is depicted in terms of incoherence and collaboration. In *The Vertical Ray of the Sun*, three sisters, Suong, Khanh, and Lien work on food preparation for commemoration, expressing their happiness and connection in working side by side. In *The Scent of Green Papaya*, Mui stops working at the first landlord and moves to another one where she has emotional intimacy with the young gentlemen she attends to. What she learned about cooking from the previous family has been applied to serve her young master. She prepares each meal with great care, presents it beautifully on a tray, and serves it to her young lord, who she forms an emotional connection with.

Food metaphors in films is utilized to help the viewers understand more about the relationships among the characters. In *The Vertical Ray of the Sun*, the food table in front of the altar is offered to the beloved one who passed away and this event is regarded as a religious ceremony and a chance for family members and close relatives to assemble and bond. After the offering ritual, chicken is shredded and served to everyone attending the commemoration. After the memorial service, the three sisters wash glasses together, creating a cheerful chat and homely atmosphere that the viewers can think are inseparable. At the end of the feast, they and other family members drink tea together, singing one Trinh Cong Son's song. Their connections seem close-knit, and the family looks very cozy; nevertheless, the story behind is different as each female character has her own sad story.

The viewers can deeply understand the characters' connections and emotions via visually gorgeous scenes of food preparation, presentation, and consumption. With the close-up shots, vegetables or meat is chopped up, cooked and presented on plates in detailed attention, painting an exquisite picture of characters' cooperation, conflicts and dramatic lives. This forms a distinctive language of emotional lives and characters' connections from cooking to characters' inter-communication during the food preparation process. In *The Vertical Ray of the Sun*, Lien wakes up from her bed, opens the door, and orders food from the alley food stall where she often has breakfast with the man sharing the room with her. Vietnamese people are accustomed to having breakfast outside rather than self-preparing it. The scene where Khanh picks vegetables, singing Trinh Cong Son's song then Kien, her husband approaches express the couple relationship and her happiness increases when she informs him that she is pregnant. She helps him wash his hands and they lean into each other happily.

Culinary Traditions and Cultural Negotiations

Cuisine in Hung's films portrays the intricacies of character relationships, cultural conflicts and the inner world. The food preparation and meal enjoyment play a role of a metaphor for the energy of gatherings, conveying the obligations, stress, and silent bonds that highlight their communication. In *Cyclo*, food preparation scenes describe a diverse terrain about the socio-economic gaps in Vietnam. The Southern Vietnamese like to have a lunch with rice and drink iced tea and this is reflected in the opening scene with Cyclo and his friend, providing the importance of food as a sign of nutrition and friendship. Nevertheless, the following scene establishes the striking difference between the rich and the poor when there is footage of poor children shining shoes.

The cooking scenes within Cyclo's family depict the energy of their connections. The old grandfather involves himself in food preparation while his older sister takes care of the family money and cooks' food. This task assignment reveals the stereotypical gender roles in Vietnam and the significance of family harmony despite adversity. Food enjoyment shapes a metaphor for human expectations, annoyances, and social restrictions. Cyclo expecting to

have a good life, forces him to be involved in criminal acts and interwoven with this scene is a lavish party highlighting the impossible dreams of the unprivileged. So, having a meal symbolizes holistic well-being and hope for a better life. Hung masters in utilization of traditional food and culinary practices to discover the intense emotions and hardships of his character's life. From there, he develops visual language that surpasses cultural borders and rebounds the global viewers.

Tran Anh Hung ingeniously uses cuisine traditions to highlight the cultural conflicts and the complexities of emotion in *Cyclo*. The exploration of food preparation, presentation and consumption serves as a strong metaphor for the development and motivation of human relationships. The beginning scenes of the family having a meal together or the bustling market express the significance of meals in Vietnamese society. Hung also applies food metaphors to convey inner turmoil and unspoken expectations. Cyclo eating noodles alone reflects his isolation and vulnerability while the girls indulging in fruits portray an escape from their unpleasant truth.

The film's climax, party chaos, collides with the tragic death of the Lady Boss' son, emphasizing more the separation between the rich and the poor. While the guests are fascinated with a lavish party, not knowing an unfolding tragedy, the characters' struggle for survival and their entanglement in the city underworld are exposed. Food, in many forms and contexts, becomes a strong metaphor for the gap between the rich and the abandoned and cultural conflicts shaping their life in *Cyclo*.

Food plays a role as a metaphor for cultural negotiation, resistance, and assimilation. The act of preparing and consuming food reflects the characters' struggle and adaptation in their socio-cultural environment. Vietnamese traditional food is shared by the family members, symbolizing unity and endurance among the poverty while the characters preparing for and eating meals in different contexts show their effort to maintain cultural identity and family relationship.

Furthermore, consuming food in moments of tension or conflict, for example Cyclo's interrupted meal, demonstrates the internal and external struggle of characters, revealing the desires, disappointment and limits they have to face. Through the cuisine stories, Tran Anh Hung expresses effectively the complex interaction between cultural heritage and emotional landscape of characters.

The film has another scene with Cyclo, the main character, who shares a simple meal with rice and iced tea with his friend in a street vendor. This simple act has a deeper meaning as it emphasizes the mutual experience in food as a thread connecting people, enhancing friendship and the sense of community. In the limited space of Cyclo's house, preparing a fish dish becomes a testament to resilience and unswerving support of the family for each other. Currently, the bustling atmosphere of a restaurant across the street, where families have dinner among the sounds of life, emphasizes the vibrancy of Vietnamese culture. The contrast between the joy and difficulties highlights the multifaceted nature of life in Ho Chi Minh city.

Cyclo's interrupted meal, caused by Poet and his accomplices, symbolizes the infiltration of violence and threats to his life. The overturned noodle bowl portrays the destruction of his peaceful life, forewarning a coming dispute surrounding him. Cyclo's disorientation points out his despair and feeling of powerlessness when he consumes mysterious liquid. In another life, Poet drinking wine shows escape and self-destruction, describing his downfall into a

darker world. These two characters' consuming something impure and unclean represents the inner chaotic mood and their mental degeneration.

The lavish party, set in a chaotic street, plays the role of a mask for hidden tension and conflict. Children imitating the adult's act, such as fireworks, suggest violent imitation and disregard for consequences. This foreshadows tragic events, resulting in the death of Lady Boss' son. During the tragedy, Lady Boss' grief-suffering embrace toward her son completely opposites self-inflicted torture of Poet in the burning room. These contradictory scenes emphasize the deep impact of loss and destructive power of uncontrollable emotion.

By interweaving cuisine elements into the story structure, Hung invites the audience to watch a profound exploration of the human condition set in bustling context of Ho Chi Minh city.

Through Tran Anh Hung's lens of cinema, particularly the films depicting culinary etiquette, the viewers enter a world of food traditions, not simply about eating. They are subtle symbols of deep layers of thought about human culture and psychology. In *Norwegian Wood*, simple meals between Watanabe and Naoko are not only about food sharing but also silent conversations, where deep feelings are conveyed through each piece of cake or each spoon of yoghurt. These moments are mirrors reflecting desires, characters' feelings and cultural exchanges, where inner conflicts are subtly exposed. The choice of specific dishes and specific culinary etiquette becomes a unique cinema language, helping Tran Anh Hung to explore hidden corners of the human soul and complex cultural sharing.

In *Norwegian Wood*, the shared meals, from lively parties to simple family meals, are more meaningful than nutrition. Sharing food becomes social etiquette, bonding people together and reflecting deep cultural values. Meals are carefully prepared, like the birthday cake offered to Naoko, showing an act of caring and a symbol of social norms of love and kindness. Reciprocally, solitary meals and moments of eating hastily depict loneliness, sorrow and deep wounds in every character. By analyzing the details of cuisine, viewers can recognize food is a physiological need and an important factor in contributing to cultural identity and individual psychology.

In Tran Anh Hung's works, cuisine etiquette plays a central role as a deep metaphor for desires, conflicts, and complex social relationships. The scenes of eating, from the private dinner between Watanabe and Naoko to collective meals in the hospital, contain metaphorical messages. The choices of food, the way to enjoy it and culinary space become an important factor in discovering the characters' inner world. For instance, the dinner between Watanabe and Naoko evokes secret desires and painful memories while the meals in the hospital reflect the loneliness and expectation to connect. Moreover, Tran Anh Hung uses cuisine to compare cultures. The difference in eating habits among the characters creates funny situations and mediates deeper cultural conflicts. From then on, the director skillfully exploits cuisine as a prism to explore broader social issues. In addition, food consumption is utilized as a metaphor for human emotional experience.

In *Norwegian Wood*, details of eating and gathering describe Japanese culinary customs and explore the characters' complex psychology. With meetings, Tran Anh Hung skillfully portrays the characters' inner struggles when they face cultural pressures, individual longings, and deep heart wounds. The scene of Watanabe and Naoko eating together becomes a metaphor for a fragile relationship between two people with unspoken words and existing painful memories. Similarly, in the scene of Naoko sharing about her love with Kizuki,

breakfast becomes a tense conversation, exposing the difference between two characters and conflicting social expectations. Food etiquette, though in a hospital or friends' gathering, becomes a communication ritual, and there are chances for characters to determine their identity and social positions. In the scene of Watanabe talking about his emotional relationship, Hatsumi and Nagasawa's reactions show the power of the story. Stories about cuisine are not only about food, but also the way the characters express emotions, thoughts and hidden corners of the soul. Tran Anh Hung discovers characters' deep motives and weaknesses and emphasizes the significance of listening and understanding other stories.

Food Consumption and the Psychology of Characters

Eating Habits

In *Eternity*, food plays a key role in conveying characters' emotional states and expectations, particularly in the scenes depicting family meals. The scene where Valentine and her children gather around a cozy meal depicts a lively picture of family love. Though her husband, Jules, is absent, the warm and close atmosphere covers the space, emphasizing the strength of family connections. In this context, a meal is not only a daily activity but also a means of peace and a source of comfort and emotion, helping the members to feel more stable. It becomes a symbol of the enduring nature of family love, where shared nurturing is a solid support amidst life's upheavals, and symbolizes continuity despite loss.

However, food consumption in *Eternity* highlights complex emotions such as sorrow and reflection. The scene where Valentine has a meal with fewer family members and dim light from candles reflects the dark mood. The private and quiet meal points out her awareness of the passage of time and the loss of loved ones, especially the reduction of family members at the dining table. The act of sharing meals, though simpler and calmer, makes a contrast with previously lively family gatherings and demonstrates a change in Valentine's life. In this circumstance, food consumption becomes a subtle hint of loneliness and inevitable changes of time while reinforcing the theme of impermanence and family bonds despite life's ups and downs.

Food Preferences and Their Connection to Characters' Inner Desires or Anxieties

In *Eternity*, the use of cuisine images is a tool of delicate art to explore the characters' psychological depth. Mathilde and Gabrielle sip the cup of tea, exposing the crack of sister relationships. Drinking tea, a symbol of coziness and closeness, becomes a shell hiding the true emotional distance. By focusing on body language, eyes and surrounding space, Tran Anh Hung draws a lively picture of distance and inner conflict in every character.

Similarly, the scene of a party table full of cakes where nobody enjoys becomes a deep metaphor for emptiness inside Mathilde and Gabrielle. The richness in material is opposite to the poorness in emotions, showing an unsteady and insecure feeling. Though food is beautifully arranged, characters decline it, reflecting that they experience a deep spiritual crisis and cannot find happiness in life's simple things.

The director cleverly utilizes the cuisine footage to discover the theme of loneliness, sorrow and disconnection in relationships. Food, a basic psychological need, is raised to a new level of cultural symbol, illustrating human desires, fear and secret thirst.

The Emotional Context Surrounding Shared Meals or Solitary Consumption

In *The Taste of Things*, eating behavior is not merely a physiological need but also a deep cultural symbol, reflecting characters' social relationships and complex emotions. The scene of meal between Dodin and his friends skillfully portrays the role of cuisine in community building. The act of food consumption meets one's needs and creates a space of communication where individuals connect and share joy. The meal becomes social etiquette, enhancing friendship and creating a sense of belonging. Eugénie's table setting and the meticulousness of food arrangement emphasize the meaning of food symbolism in building relationships.

On the contrast to this scene, another scene in the kitchen shows Pauline enjoys her meal alone with sorrow. The absence of social interaction in the meal highlights her emotional isolation. The contrast of food abundance and Pauline's emotional emptiness depicts a haunting image. Eugénie's act continues to prepare food for others while she is in a very hard time, describing her sacrifice, altruism but loneliness and tiresome. Tran Anh Hung uses culinary imagery to explore complex aspects of human psychology.

Food Consumption Reflects Characters' Relationships With Societal Norms and Expectations

In *The Taste of Things*, food consumption reflects characters' relationships with their social expectations, roles, and interests. When Dodin enjoys food with his friends, it is the time for them to relax and enhance their friendships, showing that food can make social connections. Conversations about politics and food emphasize the role of food in improving social standards, positions and power. The meal represents community cohesion and the center for community and private life.

At the same time, Eugénie has a special interest in cuisine with her cooking skills though she is not fully recognized. When she prepares food for Pauline, praising from others highlights the role of Eugénie in society as a woman responsible for housekeeping. Though receiving compliments, she seems to be boosted by the social expectations rather than her individual ambitions, depicting the pressure that a woman must complete the traditional role. Therefore, food consumption describes characters' relationships with social standards while food can both identify and challenge their roles in social structures.

Food Becomes a Source of Comfort, Control, or Rebellion for the Characters

Besides being a source of nourishment, food can reflect intimacy and care among the characters. Preparing and sharing food is a strong means for Dodin and Eugénie to communicate and show emotion. Dodin prepares carefully every food, devoting himself to the meal that he expects her to enjoy when she is not well. He pays attention to details of everything from broth to good food garnishes, showing his devotion to the food that nourishes his love and admiration for Eugénie. Through every footage that he prepares a special soup dish; food is truly a metaphor for a character expressing his care for the other's health and happiness.

Eugénie, in contrast, finds comfort in carefully prepared food. For her, food brings not only physical contentment but also emotional relief. Every time she enjoys food made by Dodin, she feels his love infused into the food. Her enjoyment for food, particularly in the moment of

weakness, reflects that food can bring her a secure feeling and emotional connection with Dodin. Through the meal, food is a reminder of their deep relationship.

For Dodin, food represents control. He feels he is controlling everything in the kitchen while preparing meals and setting up the kitchen. Food preparation and arrangement are the way he maintains order and controls emotions in his life. The kitchen is a creative space and labor for him and a place where he can manage not only nourishment but also the emotional atmosphere around him. The meticulousness in preparing depicts stability and purpose he finds in the cuisine process, especially in the time of emotional instability.

Nevertheless, food also becomes a form of powerlessness when the story takes place. Eugénie's health impairments and Dodin's control over the meals does not work. Though he prepares food carefully, the act of taking care of her with meals cannot save her from worsening health. Eugénie's death makes food as a reminder of suffering from the loss while the kitchen, a symbol of warmth and control, is now a reflection of Dodin's helplessness before unchanged things.

Finally, when Pauline appears in the story, food continues to play an important role in maintaining traditions and controlling the next generations. Dodin tries to teach Pauline to cook but there is tension in this action. Though Pauline has potential, she cannot replace Eugénie, and her inexperience creates a gap between the old and new. Food Dodin prepares Pauline has the aim to instruct her and describes the expectation for maintaining cuisine heritage, even when a special connection that Dodin used to share with Eugénie cannot be replaced.

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