

FOOD AS A MEMORY TRIGGER: A STUDY OF LITERARY GASTRONOMY

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ABSTRACT

The role of food in life is considered more than just sustenance; it also can convey emotions, evoke memories of the past, and create emotional bonds. Similarly, the function of food aspects in literature is significant. This research aims to explore the role of food towards characters in the anime "Isekai Izakaya: Koto Aitheria no Izakaya Nobu." The study employs a mimetic approach with a qualitative descriptive method, utilizing literary gastronomy as the main theory. The research material focuses on the anime "Isekai Izakaya: Koto Aitheria no Izakaya Nobu." The results of the analysis indicate that the role of food in this anime holds deeper significance beyond mere sustenance for its characters. Food carries profound symbolic meaning, particularly in illustrating memories. It acts as a mirror of the characters' past within the narrative, representing specific experiences or memories like sadness, nostalgia, negative recollections, and pleasant reminiscences.

Keywords: *Anime, Food's Role, Memories, Literary Gastronomy*

INTRODUCTION

Wellek and Warren stated that literature is a creative and imaginative expression that also serves as an art form (Subandi et al., 2023). According to Viranda (2020), literature is the result of human expression manifested in written or oral form, based on thoughts, opinions, experiences, or even feelings, and presented imaginatively as a reflection of reality. Through rich and diverse depictions, literature is also capable of providing profound experiences for its audience, allowing them to feel emotions, understand different perspectives, and explore complex themes. One of the elements often used as a theme in literature is food.

Literary gastronomy is an understanding of literature that is connected to the culinary world, particularly in the context of food. Endaswara (2018) explains that literary gastronomy is a literary examination related to culinary aspects. Culinary itself refers to everything related to food. In the context of literary gastronomy, food plays a central role in enabling a deep understanding of various cultural, aesthetic, and social activities. As a cultural symbol, food not only reflects the wealth of knowledge and experiences but also serves as a medium to convey the feelings and emotions of characters.

Food often plays a significant role in one's childhood or past experiences. According to Utami (2018), food serves not only to fulfill physical needs but also as a crucial element in life experiences. Halligan states that food has a strong connection to memories, the past, and the happiness associated with the past (Artika, 2017). Hence, food is considered capable of triggering memories of the past and evoking feelings of longing.

From the statements above, it can be concluded that the role of food in literature not only functions as an element that fulfills the needs of characters but also as a powerful tool to depict feelings of nostalgia. This is in line with Christina's view (2023) that food and emotions are closely related and mutually influence each other. As is known, food can be associated with specific events or occasions, thus bringing back happy or sad memories. The food consumed then becomes a representation of the character's past experiences or memories that evoke their longing for particular experiences.

One type of literature that illustrates the connection between food and feelings of nostalgia is anime. Anime is a popular form of literature from Japan in the form of animated films (Purba, 2019). In the world of anime, the aspect of food is encompassed within the cooking theme. Anime that revolves around cooking often depicts characters' experiences exploring various aspects of food, including serving as a conveyor of their feelings of nostalgia. *Isekai Izakaya: Koto Aitheria no Izakaya Nobu* is an adaptation of a light novel series written by Natsuya Semikawa titled *Isekai Izakaya "Nobu"* (異世界居酒屋「のぶ」) in 2012. This animation released in 2018, tells the story of *Izakaya Nobu*, who always serves exclusive dishes to its customers in the fantasy world of *Aitheria*. These dishes become the medium through which the characters express their feelings of nostalgia. This anime depicts how food can serve as a tool to reflect the characters' feelings of nostalgia and evoke a longing for specific experiences or memories.

In this research, a qualitative descriptive approach was utilized to explore the role of food in triggering memories within literature, particularly focusing on anime *Isekai Izakaya: Koto Aitheria no Izakaya Nobu*. This method aimed to provide a detailed description and interpretation of the phenomenon, emphasizing a deeper understanding of the meaning and context. Through qualitative analysis, the research gathered data from various sources, including literary texts, scholarly opinions, and analyses of anime, to highlight how food serves as a symbolic and narrative element in depicting characters' experiences and triggering memories of the past. The qualitative approach allowed for a nuanced exploration of the subjective and complex relationship between food, memories, and character experience within the story.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Originally, gastronomy was a study focused solely on food and had no connection with literature. According to Fossali, as cited in Gallenius and Aviandy (2023), gastronomy is an expression of appreciation for the art of food while also examining the relationship between cultural elements and food.

However, the evolution of the concept of literary gastronomy later merged culinary elements with literature, reflecting the harmony between food and literature in an author's creativity (Gallenius & Aviandy, 2023). The term "gastronomia," from ancient Greek, which refers to the stomach, further strengthens the close association between gastronomy and food (Endaswara, 2018). In this context, literary gastronomy can be understood as a new perspective that combines literature with culinary aspects.

The main concept in literary gastronomy is the close connection between culinary elements and literature (Suyasa & Darmutika, 2023). This includes the role of food as a livelihood tool, conversation starter, identity marker, memory trigger from the past, strengthening relationships between characters, fostering togetherness, expressing emotions, and providing nutrition for characters in a story (Anggraini, 2018). This indicates that food not only serves as an object in the narrative but also has a significant impact on the literary elements, demonstrating the profound relationship between culinary elements and literature in the study of literary gastronomy.

Thus, literary gastronomy not only enriches the representation of food in literature but also highlights the role of food in evoking the memories and emotions of characters in literary works.

METHODOLOGY

The approach used in this research is the mimetic approach. The application of the mimetic approach in this study provides a relevant and in-depth way to explore how food is considered a powerful tool of expression, thus evoking memories of characters in the anime *Isekai Izakaya: Koto Aitheria no Izakaya Nobu*. This approach is utilized to investigate the role of food as a catalyst for reflecting the memories of a character in a story.

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method. According to Kumar, research using this method involves the collection, analysis, and drawing of conclusions from the described data. Qualitative research often utilizes description or narrative as the 'unit of measurement' (Shobah & Harin, 2023).

In this study, data collection is conducted by gathering information from the research object. The research object is the anime Isekai Izakaya: Koto Aitheria no Izakaya Nobu, which consists of 24 episodes. The data collection technique in this study is carried out by carefully watching and analyzing the anime Isekai Izakaya: Koto Aitheria no Izakaya Nobu. Subsequently, the researcher records dialogue parts and captures relevant scenes in the anime that correspond to the research problem formulation.

The data analysis technique in this research refers to the Miles and Huberman's Model (1994), which consists of three stages. First, reduce the collected data. Second, grouping and organizing the sorted data and analyzing it. Third, describe each categorized piece of data. Following that, conclusions are drawn, and verification is conducted (Annisa & Mailani, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The process of recalling food memories begins when someone consumes the same food they have eaten before. It is at that moment that a person will compare the food they have previously eaten with the food they have just eaten. This comparison is based on the similarities and differences found in the foods (Artika, 2017). This process can trigger memories of the past and evoke feelings of longing for specific experiences or memories, which is one aspect of the experience of food as a memory trigger. The food then becomes a reflection of the character's past in literature, depicting their longing for certain experiences or memories.

In the results section of this research, the author presents data findings related to the research problem.

a) Food as a trigger for sad memories

Sad memories refer to recollections of past events or experiences that evoke feelings of sorrow, grief, or melancholy. These memories can be triggered by various factors, including emotional cues, familiar surroundings, and events. Additionally, sad experiences also can be triggered by anything that reminds an individual of the sadness, such as a certain smell, a particular song or sound, or food (Munoz, 2014). This is proven by the data in this anime, as follows.



Figure 1
Food as a trigger for sad memories

Johan : 客の前で、料理してできたてを食べさせをというのか。心にく
い。

Flashback

Johan : 進化に毒見をさせている間に料理を冷めてしまうもの。温かな
料理など私は何年も口にしていない。

End of flashback

Johan : これは楽しみだ。

Johan : So they cook the food right in front of the customers and ask them to
eat it right after it's cooked? It's heartwarming.

Flashback

Johan : Usually, the food gets cold while the waiter is testing for poison. It's been years since I've eaten warm food.

End of flashback

Johan : I'm looking forward to this.
(Ep. 3, minutes 4.08 – 4.28)

In the data above, it is evident that Johan experiences an event that reflects food as a trigger for memories in the anime Isekai Izakaya: Koto Aitheria no Izakaya Nobu. Johan expresses his admiration for the way dishes are served at Nobu, where food is cooked in front of customers and served immediately after cooking. In his flashback, Johan reveals that usually, the food gets cold because it has to be checked for poison. He expresses that it's been years since he could enjoy warm food.

From this data, it is apparent that Johan's experience of witnessing how dishes are served at Nobu triggers memories of the difficulties he previously faced when eating cold dishes. Therefore, the food served at Nobu becomes more than just food; it also serves as a trigger for sad memories for Johan.

b) Food as a trigger for nostalgia

Nostalgia refers to a sentimental yearning or affectionate longing for a past period, often associated with fond memories, particularly from childhood or youth. Sedikides & Wildschut (2022) stated that studies with Western samples have shown that nostalgia can be triggered by elements from one's past, such as objects or events experienced during childhood (Holbrook & Schindler, 1996; Schuman & Scott, 1989). These triggers can include specific tastes or foods (Supski, 2013; Zhou et al., 2019), which evoke nostalgic feelings and memories associated with earlier stages of life. This is proven by the data in this anime, as follows.

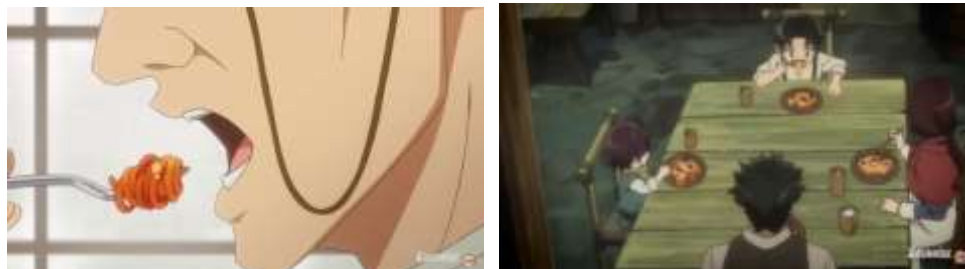


Figure 2
Food as a trigger for nostalgia

Gernot : だが何だ、この懐かしい。これはという宇宙の味ではない。この味は、この愛に溢れたこの味は...

Flashback

Gernot's mother: ほらほら、そんなに慌てないで。もう少しゆっくり食べなさい。

Little Gernot : 僕ね、たくさん食べて、早く大きくなって、立派な人間になる。困った人を助けて、お母さんや皆に音がえすくる。本当だよ。

Gernot's mother: しっかり食べて、頑張ってね。

End of flashback

Gernot : 食べ始めたとき、少しでも子供プライドだと考えた、自分をは自噴。

Gernot : But what is this? It's so nostalgic. This isn't the taste of the universe.
This taste is filled with love.

Flashback

Gernot's mother: Come on, don't rush. Eat a little slower!

Little Gernot : I'll eat a lot and grow up quickly, then become a great person. I'll help people in need and repay the kindness to my mom and everyone!

Gernot's mother: Then, eat well and do your best.

End of flashback

Gernot : I felt embarrassed about myself when I said that as I started eating.

(Ep. 5, minutes 8.01 – 8.41)

In the data above, Shinobu's homemade spaghetti napolitan reflects feelings of nostalgia when Gernot eats it. In the dialogue, Gernot is saying that the spaghetti he's eating has a nostalgic taste because it's filled with love from the maker. This is then followed by a flashback scene where Gernot is a child. In the next dialogue between Gernot and his mother, it is shown that he is enjoying spaghetti made by his mother, which is just as delicious as Shinobu's. Gernot experiences deep nostalgia because the napolitan reminds him of memories from his childhood spent with his mother and family.

From this data, Shinobu's spaghetti napolitan reflects memories because it is not just food but also serves as a trigger for nostalgia for Gernot. Therefore, the food served at Nobu becomes more than just food; it also serves as a trigger for nostalgic memories for Gernot.

c) Food as a trigger for unpleasant memories

Unpleasant memories are the recollections of negative experiences that individuals remember with discomfort or distress. These memories often involve traumatic events, painful experiences, or situations that evoke negative emotions like sadness, anger, or fear (Morales-Brown, 2023). Maffei (2020) said that unpleasant memories associated with food can be triggered through a process known as conditioned taste aversion. This occurs when a negative experience with a particular food creates a strong link between the food and negative emotions. As a result, individuals are more inclined to avoid consuming that food in the future due to the formed association. This is proven by the data in this anime, as follows.

Eva : ベアトホードさんて、昔、イカで何か悪いこととか甲板じゃないんですか。

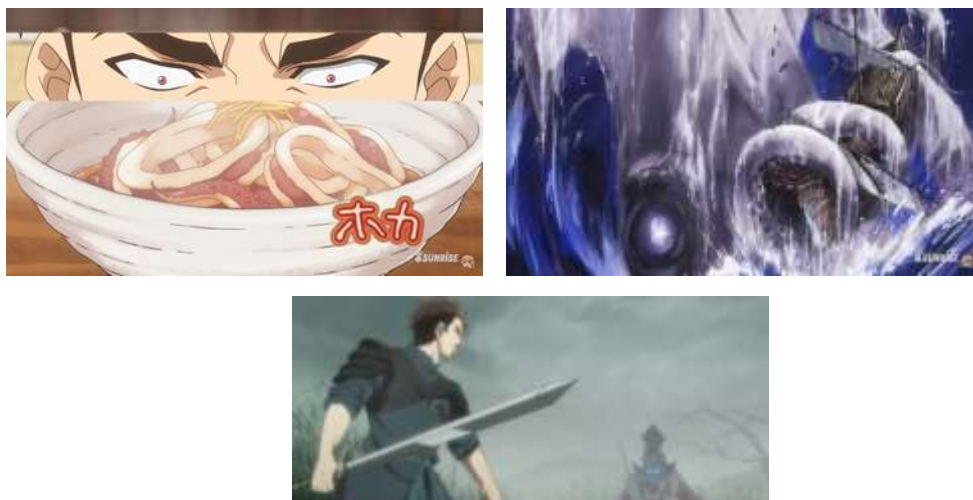


Figure 3
Food as a trigger for unpleasant memories

- Berthold : なあ、実はそうなんだ。俺のじじさんは...
- Flashback
- Berthold : 大型冒険商船の船乗りだった。海の男はみんなを恐れ知らずのツアものざらい、だが奴らでも恐れるものがある。船を飲みかもほど本なもの、それがイカだ。
- End of flashback
- Berthold : そういつに手合こたものは一人としていないという。
- Eva : ほ-ほんとうですか。
- Berthold : ああ。じじさんの体験だった。間違いない。
- Eva : で-でも、海にイカなければ大丈夫ですよ。
- Berthold : いや。この傷もイカのせいなんだ。
- Flashback
- Berthold : あの霧雨が煙る戦争でのことなんだ。あの日、俺は気づかずにイカを一口食べてしまったんだ。たった一口味だけなのに。やつを戦争にイカ兜ど獵兵を送り感で来た。
- End of flashback
- Eva : そ-そんな...
- Berthold : 干し物イカ味ただけでこれだ。
- Eva : Berthold-san, do you have any bad experiences with squid in the past?
- Berthold : Yeah, actually, my great-grandfather was...
- Flashback
- Berthold : ...a sailor on a large adventure merchant ship. They are a group of fearless people. However, there was one thing they were afraid of. A terrifying monster that can devour an entire ship, the squid!
- End of flashback
- Berthold : It's said that no one can handle a situation like that.
- Eva : I-Is that true?
- Berthold : Yeah. It was my great-grandfather's experience. There is no doubt about it.
- Eva : B-But it should be fine as long as there are no squids in the sea, right?
- Berthold : No. This scar was also caused by that squid.
- Flashback
- Berthold : It happened in a rainy and foggy war. That day, I accidentally ate a squid. Even though it was just a small taste, it sent soldiers wearing squid-shaped helmets to attack me!
- End of flashback
- Eva : T-That can't be...
- Berthold : This is all because I tasted dried squid.
(Ep. 9, minutes 5.34 – 6.50)

In the data above, Eva asks Berthold if he has any bad experiences with squids. Berthold then reveals that his great-grandfather was a sailor on a merchant ship and that sailors, although fearless, still fear squids, terrifying sea monsters. Berthold then recounts his experience on the battlefield, where he accidentally ate a squid and was subsequently attacked by soldiers wearing squid-shaped helmets. This reflects that squids not only serve as consumable objects but also trigger frightening memories and bring about traumatic experiences for Berthold. Food not only provides nourishment or enjoyment but also has the power to trigger unpleasant memories for Berthold.

Therefore, the food served at Nobu becomes more than just food; it also serves as a trigger for unpleasant memories for Berthold.

d) Food as a trigger for pleasant memories

Pleasant or happy memories are the joyful and cherished moments that people remember with delight. These memories are typically linked to unique or special events, rich sensory experiences, focused attention, personal significance, emotional depth, memorable peaks, overcoming challenges, the act of storytelling, and nostalgic objects (Dsouza, 2021).

Still in the same source, numerous joyful experiences engage multiple senses simultaneously. For example, memories associated with food often activate our taste buds, sense of smell, and visual perception (even before taking a bite). This multifaceted sensory engagement is a significant reason why many of our happy memories revolve around food. This is proven by the data in this anime, as follows.



Figure 4

Food as a trigger for pleasant memories

- Shinobu : どうする、エヴァちゃん。あの二人が喧嘩でも始めちゃったら。
- Eva : 大丈夫ですよ。あれは二人とも楽しんでやってるだけですよ。
- Flashback*
- Eva : 家の兄弟も同じですから。
- Eva's younger brother: ああ。こいつ大きなチーズ食べた。吐き出せこんな。
- Eva : こら。
- Eva's younger sister : あっ、お兄ちゃん私がスープだった。
- Eva : やめなさい。
- End of flashback
- Eva : フフ。それに、美味しいものを食べて喧嘩するなんてありえないですよ。
- Shinobu : What should we do if they start fighting, Eva?
- Eva : Don't worry. They're just having fun.
- Flashback*
- Eva : My siblings at home are like that too.
- Eva's younger brother: Ahh, she's eating the biggest piece of cheese! Spit it out!
- Eva : Hei!
- Eva's younger sister : Ahh, brother took my soup!
- Eva : Stop it!

End of flashback
Eva : Hehe. Besides, nobody fights when enjoying delicious
food.
(Ep. 5, minutes 6.46 – 7.32)

In the above data, Shinobu asks Eva what to do if the two people start arguing. Eva reassures Shinobu that they are just having fun. In the flashback, Eva recalls incidents at home where her siblings often quarreled over food. They fought over food, but it didn't change their affection for each other. Eva believes that people don't fight when enjoying delicious food. From this data, it is evident that when Eva sees the debate between two customers over food at Nobu, it triggers memories of disagreements among her siblings over food at home. Therefore, food is not only seen as a necessity for the characters but also serves as a trigger pleasant memory for Eva.

Thus, in this anime, food serves not only as an element that fulfills the characters' needs in literary works but also as a powerful tool to evoke memories for a character. This concept aligns with the view of literary gastronomy theory, which states that food in literary works not only has functional value but also possesses strong symbolic value. These foods also reflect the characters' past in literary works, depicting their experiences or memories.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion regarding food and memories in the anime Isekai Izakaya: Koto Aitheria no Izakaya Nobu, it can be concluded that food in literary works, particularly in the anime mentioned, is not just an element that fulfills the characters' needs in the story. The food also carries strong symbolic value, especially in depicting memories. This food serves as a reflection of the character's past in the literary work, portraying specific experiences or memories such as sad memories, nostalgia, bad memories, and pleasant memories.

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