

Tastes of the Past: Food, Sensory Experience, and Memory in Hisashi Kashiwai's Two Novels

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Abstract—The paper explores the intricate interplay between sensory studies and memory in contemporary food literature. The novels analyzed in the paper are Hisashi Kashiwai's *The Kamogawa Food Detectives* (2023) and *The Restaurant of Lost Recipes* (2024). Using the interdisciplinary field of sensory studies and the concept of memory, the paper examines how sensory experiences through food allow for the exploration of themes like memory, forgetting, and remembering in literature. In the selected novels, food becomes a conduit for memories, helping characters recollect nostalgic memories by stimulating their senses. The paper looks at memory as not only a cognitive process but also a multisensory embodied event connected to food and consumption. The novels depict the process of remembering as both sensory and affective. The relationship between food, sensory studies, and memory is triadic, where each element reinforces the other. In addition to bringing back long-forgotten memories, food and its sensory experiences provide individuals with emotional resonance and catharsis. This allows them to heal emotional wounds caused in the past. The paper also studies how food in literature encompasses broader themes, depicting the importance of food in understanding oneself. Furthermore, the paper analyzes how Kashiwai's depiction of food is deeply rooted in *washoku*, or Japanese traditional food culture, thereby embedding sensory memory within broader cultural, geographical, and emotional contexts. Through this triadic relationship, the paper discusses how food in Kashiwai's novels offers a nuanced portrayal of healing, remembrance, and the preservation of cultural identity.

Index Terms—food fiction, sensory studies, memory, identity, Japanese culinary culture

I. INTRODUCTION

Food holds a unique position in human experience, both as a material necessity and as a cultural artifact. Looking past the biological function of food, it is important to understand how food is central to individuals and communities, how it stimulates the senses, evokes memories, builds identities, and reflects values. When it comes to analyzing the connection between food, senses, and memories, literature plays a vital role in exploring this triadic relationship. In literature, food serves not only as a backdrop or thematic element but also as a narrative device that communicates qualities, emotions, and temporal displacement.

Moreover, food is intimately connected to all five senses, but especially to taste and smell. Apart from physiological experience, the senses also play a key role in stimulating memories. These senses act as a conduit to the past, capable of deeply affecting the individual and enabling them to instantly recall such memories. Humans can associate the sight of food with a particular childhood dish, the scent of a festive meal, or the taste of food with memories of a loved one, and other similar memories that are subconsciously buried deep inside an individual's collection of memories through the senses. These sensory descriptions also play a significant role in literature, as they enable the readers to visualize and empathize with the literary work in a more profound sense. In both literature and everyday life, food serves as a vital element infused with rich sensory detail. Authors use rich sensory descriptions of food, which helps the characters connect with the food on a deeper level, while readers can envision the smell, taste, texture, and color and even hear the food portrayed in the text, allowing the readers to immerse themselves in the narrative.

In *Literature and the Senses* (2023), for example, Kern-Stahler and Robertson look at how literature engages with sensory encounters "...by bringing the nature of encounter into the consciousness often of the protagonist and certainly of the reader" (Kern-Stahler & Robertson, 2023, p. 4). In this context, sensory studies provide a concrete framework for analyzing sensory depictions in literature, offering insights into how these depictions determine the narrative, cultural identity, and memory. Contemporary literary studies have shown a growing interest in sensory studies to examine how embodied experience, perception, and affect shape narrative meaning.

This paper explores how literature portrays the act of eating specific dishes as a sensory experience that helps individuals recall and reconnect with memories. Reconnecting people with a part of themselves that has been lost, neglected, or broken over time depends heavily on memory and the act of retrieving or remembering memories. In addition to observing the role of food and senses in the retrieval of memories, the paper also examines how memories play an integral role in resolving issues faced by those individuals in the present, serving as a restorative practice. It explores this

dynamic relationship by analyzing two contemporary Japanese novels, *The Kamogawa Food Detectives* (2023) and *The Restaurant of Lost Recipes* (2024), both written by Hisashi Kashiwai.

The novels are set in Kyoto, Japan, and centered around a father-daughter duo who run a modest restaurant and culinary detective agency. The novels focus on the reconstruction of lost or vaguely remembered dishes by the clients of the restaurant. Through the novels, the paper focuses on how something as simple as food can be crucial in the retrieval of such memories. Each dish holds emotionally significant moments or memories for the clients who wish to relive those memories briefly or use those moments to make important decisions in their lives. In these narratives, food is an avenue through which sensory experience bridges the past and present. This paper uses sensory studies and memory as a concept to analyze Kashiwai's novels, studying how the works use taste, smell, and sight to construct sensory memory and mediate emotional relationships.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sensory studies are an interdisciplinary field encompassing disciplines like anthropology, history, literature, and cultural studies. These disciplines examine the active role of senses in the production of cultural knowledge. As researcher and anthropologist David Howes explains:

Sensory studies involve a cultural approach to the study of the senses and a sensory approach to the study of culture. It challenges the monopoly that the discipline of psychology has long exercised over the study of the senses and sense perception by foregrounding the sociality of sensation. History and anthropology are the foundational disciplines of this field. However, sensory studies also encompass many other disciplines, as scholars from across the humanities and social sciences have, over the past few decades, successively turned their attention to the sensorium. (Howes, 2013)

In another work, Howes (2022) offers revolutionary insights on how senses are culturally shaped, exploring the diverse sensory experiences through interdisciplinary perspectives. The work also highlights the role of senses in cultural contexts.

In literature, sensory studies are a growing discipline, used by scholars to investigate “the distinctive means by which literary texts mediate experience of the world” (Kern-Stahler & Robertson, 2023, p. 2). In literary studies, analyzing how the senses contribute to the construction of meaning, memory, and culture in texts makes this approach particularly effective for examining food. The effects of food upon memory are not concerned merely with the taste of the food but also with its smell, color, and texture, highlighting food's role as a multisensory experience. However, traditional research in the field of sensory studies always followed a hierarchical structure as posited by Aristotle (Kern-Stahler & Robertson, 2023), who ranked taste at the bottom of the sensory hierarchy.

Contemporary research (Korsmeyer, 2014), however, challenges this hierarchical view, instead asserting equal significance of all the senses. A considerable number of research articles have helped clarify the multisensory dynamics that are commonly present in food writing. This can be observed through Chambers (2019), who highlights how fiction by Muslim authors in Britain makes use of sensory allegory and taste imagery to reflect cultural traditions and to reconstruct postcolonial narratives. The work reflects how the senses, especially taste, function as a metaphor for identity formation and cultural continuity. Similar studies explicate the sensory interplay between taste and memory, drawing upon classic examples like Proust (2006), where the taste of madeleines evokes nostalgic memories of the narrator's childhood. This highlights the condition where episodic memory can be involuntarily triggered by food.

Fizell proposes the concept of a “gastronomic body” (Fizell, 2021, p. 4) by elucidating how taste, in combination with other sensory experiences, has the potential to transform typical food experiences into multisensory events, connecting individuals to shared cultural experiences and memories. The relationship between food and memory is a recurrent theme in literature, and contemporary research on literary food studies highlights how meals, recipes, and taste act as repositories of collective and individual memory. The work is evocative of how sensory moments in literary narratives serve not solely as moments of instant gratification but also resonate with echoes of the past.

Both Katz's and Nuessel's works offer a new dimension to the study of the senses in literature. Katz (2023) focuses on the translation challenges encountered by authors when it comes to the translation of culinary metaphors and taste descriptions. Her work draws attention to how sensory references are inherently culture-specific and require sophisticated translational strategies so that the sensory experience is effectively preserved and transmitted to the readers. Similarly, Nuessel (2018) provides further insight into the field of sensory studies in literature by examining how creative writers skillfully evoke the senses in literary texts. Nuessel places emphasis on how it is necessary for writers to possess a good repertoire of vocabulary to effectively describe the sensory experiences in their works. His work examines how authors rely on a limited lexicon of adjectives and employ various metaphorical constructions related to the senses to provide a more comprehensive and vivid sensory experience.

Contemporary research on literary food studies also highlights how meals, recipes, and taste act as repositories of collective and individual memory. Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* is one of the most famous and enduring examples of food memory in literature. This particular example has proven to be a timeless example of how food, with its smell, taste, and color, influences memory and triggers past events and experiences. Green et al. (2023) further explore the Proustian phenomenon where sensory experiences like smell and taste evoke powerfully emotional and vivid autobiographical memories. Apart from the Proustian example, Korsmeyer and Sutton (2011) analyze similar instances in literature, offering critical insight into conceptualizing taste as a total social fact in food literature. Their work highlights

how taste is closely linked with memory and how taste becomes a key trigger for self-recollection or self-realization. Additionally, their work also contends how food functions as a multisensory and narrative instrument, capable of rebuilding temporal layers inside an author's memory by integrating current feelings with past recollections.

Parallel to these efforts, other studies highlight the impact of food on memory and identity formation. Abarca and Colby (2016) explore how food memories, expressed through food narratives, are both personal and socially constructed, comprising sensory, cognitive, habitual, and performative elements. Moreover, their work posits that food memory is a vibrant, polytemporal occurrence that constantly alters connections between history, personal identity, and collective cultural narratives. Additionally, Reid et al. (2022) offer further information on how food influences memory and the emotional state of an individual. It emphasizes that there is a nuanced relationship between food, memory, and emotional well-being. The work also posits how food, when compared to music, scents, etc., is a potent source of nostalgia and meaningful memories of people, places, and crucial events. As studies on the interdisciplinary nature of food, memory, and sensory experiences continue, there is a growing interest in how culinary acts interspersed with sensory studies serve not only as reflections of individual and collective histories but also as narratives promoting healing and regeneration of the body and mind. The triadic relationship between food, sensory studies, and memory in literature provides a fertile and potent framework for understanding how mundane culinary experiences provoke vivid recollections, mediate complex cultural negotiations, and also heal emotional wounds from the past that continue to affect the present.

III. DISCUSSION

Hisashi Kashiwai's *The Kamogawa Food Detectives* (2023) and *The Restaurant of Lost Recipes* (2024) focus on an unusual and unconventional restaurant run by Koishi Kamogawa and her father, Nagare Kamogawa. The restaurant not only functions as an eatery serving quality Japanese meals but also acts as a culinary detective agency where the father-daughter duo help their customers recreate specific dishes that have been lost to time, circumstance, or memory. Each chapter of both novels follows the story of a new individual or customer who seeks Nagare and Koishi's aid in recreating a dish that is evocative of a forgotten moment, a lost loved one, or a past self. Despite the episodic nature of the narrative, where each story is independent of the other, the structure of the story is cohesive, connected by a uniform affective and sensory rationale. Each chapter begins with a unique case where the customer presents a dish, giving a vague or fragmented sensory description of it, which is then recreated by Nagare. The dish in question is often a commonplace, widely found dish. Yet, what makes the Kamogawa detectives' role unique here is the ability to recreate the exact taste, sight, and scent of the dish as described by the customer. A former detective turned cook, Nagare uses the minimal clues like taste, ingredients, season, setting, feelings, and sight provided by the customers. He also conducts his own investigations to find out the ingredients and methods needed to reconstruct the dish in question. He typically takes two weeks to investigate the dish he is required to prepare by visiting places connected to the customer's past and employs his investigative skills to decipher the exact ingredients and the method of cooking.

The paper foregrounds recurring sensory representations of food using qualitative close textual and thematic analysis. The discussion examines these sensory representations as narrative sites stimulating memory and facilitating process of healing within the novels. The sensory clues provided by his customers form the foundations of Nagare's meticulous investigations, aiding him in reconstructing the dishes as accurately as possible. This process leads to a revelatory moment where the customer consumes the dish in question and regains a forgotten memory, an emotional truth, or the will to make a difficult decision in the present. Green et al. (2023) discuss how smells and food enrich personal memories and nostalgia by studying how these memories are more potent than other memories and the positive psychological functions they serve. The two novels discussed in the paper reflect how individuals reconnect with their past through the sensory experiences evoked by food. These memories function not merely as a recollection of the past but also play a restorative role, helping individuals address unresolved emotions and thereby improving their mental and emotional state. The novels focus not only on food as a narrative device but also highlight the sensory experience of eating by depicting how the customers connect food and memories through senses like taste, smell, texture, and even the sounds of dining. Forgotten memories are recalled not via cerebral remembrance alone, but also through sensory stimulation inherent in the foods associated with those recollections. The novels also underscore how memories continue to exert a meaningful impact on present experiences.

A. Sight, Smell, and Taste: Sensory Pathways to Memory

In both *The Kamogawa Food Detectives* and *The Restaurant of Lost Recipes*, senses play a primary role in the recollection of memories. The customers approach the restaurant with vague sensory memories of the dish consumed in the past. These sensory memories aid the individual in recollecting the dish and eventually people, events, and emotions associated with the dish.

This is going to sound a little abstract, but when I try to remember it, the first thing that comes to mind is the word "happiness." If you're after something a little more concrete, I do remember that she used yellow rice. (Kashiwai, 2023, p. 55)

The text highlights how food-related sensory memories are not merely limited to smell and taste but also include information from other senses, such as vision.

"Yellow rice," repeated Koishi as she noted this down. "Anything else?"

“From what I can recall, it wasn’t as sweet as people tend to make it these days—it had more of an acidic taste. Almost lemony.” (Kashiwai, 2023, p. 55)

“As I say, this is all fifty years ago, so I might not be remembering everything correctly,” said Tomomi, as though somewhat discouraged by this reaction. (Kashiwai, 2023, p. 55)

And the same sensory memories, when replicated in the present, help the client recall nostalgic memories and reconnect with emotions connected to the dish. This helps in understanding how memory is not merely a cognitive act but is a bodily one, ingrained in material experiences. The role of memory here is not merely nostalgic recollection, but it is also implicit in the construction of personal identity. The texts illustrate how memory plays a crucial role in present decisions and choices. Often, the customers in the texts approach the Kamogawas to recollect important memories or past emotions before undertaking momentous decisions in the present. This reflects how sensory experiences prove vital to the reconstruction of the dish, and by consuming the dish reconstructed from fragmented sensory memories, it enables the recollection of the lost memories originally associated with it.

Kashiwai’s novels echo the Proustian literary and psychological model of involuntary memory. The search for a lost dish begins not with concrete memories, but rather with elusive sensory impressions: the dryness of nori and bonito flakes, the tartness of rice, the unusual pink shade of fried rice, or the slight bitter aftertaste of udon. These fragmented sensory cues result in a process of culinary and emotional recovery, resulting in a fully actualized sensory moment that draws long-lost memories into vivid focus. In the process of reconstructing dishes, Nagare and Koishi’s role becomes significant as they enable the transformation of their customers’ fragmented memories into tangible, sensory experiences.

B. Culinary Mediators: Nagare and Koishi as Facilitators of Sensory Remembrance

The central characters of the novels, Nagare Kamogawa and his daughter Koishi, play a crucial role in bridging the divide between their customers and their faint memories associated with lost or forgotten dishes. Their involvement in the construction of their customers’ dishes involves a process of thorough investigations, hard labor, and meticulous attention to detail. The father-daughter team does not merely reconstruct dishes based on the customer’s request, but they also act as interpreters, decoding the information the customers provide to recreate the dish. The customers who approach the Kamogawa detectives for their services arrive only with a partial recollection, which is mostly sensory, of the dish they wish to recreate. While Koishi gathers information about the dish by engaging with the customer, Nagare interprets and recreates the dish. Nagare’s process combines his past as a detective along with his culinary intuition, uncovering buried experiences, emotions, and memories through careful reconstruction. Their role as interpreters plays a crucial role in decoding their customers’ fragmented sensory experiences and memories. This allows them to accurately reconstruct their customers’ dishes, thereby helping them regain their memories.

When a customer arrives at the Kamogawa Diner with only a vague recollection of a dish she once ate, Koishi triggers her memory by inquiring about the details of the day and its surrounding context.

“So, what kind of dish are you looking for?” said Koishi...

“Actually, I don’t really remember. You see, it’s something I’ve only eaten once—and it was over fifty years ago,” replied Nobuko, a perplexed look on her face.

“Well, tell me what you do remember. Was it meat, fish, or vegetables?”

After a short pause, Nobuko replied, “Yes, a restaurant. In Kyoto.” (Kashiwai, 2023, pp. 32-33)

Koishi plays a vital role in the initial stage of the investigation by collecting the primary details of the dish. She begins by inquiring about the dish, its taste, and any unique features or recipes, helping customers recall fragments of memories. Koishi’s investigations form the initial foundations for Nagare’s own investigations, helping him understand and identify the dish his customers want and the ingredients used in it. The customers are informed to return two weeks after their first visit, during which Nagare carefully recreates the requested dish. Koishi’s inquiries are not only helpful to Nagare’s investigations but also help the customer connect their faint memories with tangible experiences like scent, sight, touch, and taste. When Nagare recreates the dish, he also recreates the ambience and setting, which he identifies based on the details provided by the customers and his own investigations. In one instance, for example, when a customer named Nobuko Nadaya requests Nagare and Koishi to recreate a beef stew she remembers eating at a now-defunct restaurant named Furuta Grill, Nagare painstakingly recreates the entire day as remembered by Nobuko fifty-five years ago.

“You ate your stew at a restaurant named Furuta Grill. It’s down a narrow alley, nestled under the leaves of a black locust tree. There’s a counter on your right as you walk in. You and the gentleman in question would have sat there, side by side. He tells the chef your order. Two bowls of beef stew, please. The chef starts peeling potatoes and carrots, working away at a leisurely pace. And you’re sitting here, waiting.” Nagare spoke slowly. “Well, it wasn’t just the beef stew I went looking for. I ended up retracing that whole day you spent in Kyoto.” (Kashiwai, 2023, p. 39)

Nagare then walks the customer through the events of the day, enacting the role of the gentleman accompanying her to the restaurant that day. He entirely recreates this experience based on the details given by Nobuko and his own investigations, conducted in the weeks after. Initially, Nobuko has very minimal recollection of the day. However, Nagare attempts to stimulate her memories by guiding her through the events of the day and by evoking her sensory memory. He recreates not just the dish but the entire experience of the day, which helps Nobuko to gradually regain memories. This echoes Sutton’s (2001) idea, where the senses are fused into food memories and later act as triggers that help the individual

to recollect those memories. The novels explore how the senses can facilitate the recalling of past events. It shows how food is profoundly connected to memory and how sensory details enable customers to associate dishes with memories.

C. Forgetting and Remembering: Food and the Senses in the Reconstruction of Memory

When individuals approach the Kamogawa Diner to recreate dishes from their past, it is typically because they are connected to certain significant memories of events or people that they wish to recover. Often, this impulse to recover memories is prompted by pressing issues in the present, with the customers believing that retrieving those sensory memories could resolve the current issue or dilemma they are facing. For others, it may simply be a means of closure or coming to terms with unresolved feelings. In one chapter of the novel titled “Tonkatsu,” one customer, named Suyako Hirose, approaches the restaurant to recreate her ex-husband’s *tonkatsu* (a Japanese pork cutlet). Suyako’s ex-husband, Denjiro Okae, used to run a *tonkatsu* restaurant named “Katsuden.” However, after a sudden illness causes him to be hospitalized, Denjiro has no other choice but to shut down his restaurant. This is why Suyako approaches the Kamogawas, hoping to taste her ex-husband’s *tonkatsu*.

“So, why the sudden request to recreate the tonkatsu from your ex-husband’s restaurant? Why not just ask him directly?”

“Every year on my birthday, the twenty-fifth of October, he used to send me a little something. But last year nothing came.”

“It turned out he’d been admitted to the Japanese Red Cross Hospital in Higashiyama. When I visited him there, just after the New Year, he was terribly thin. Barely a shadow of his former self. He’d been quite a big man in his prime, you see.” (Kashiwai, 2023, p. 83)

Throughout the chapter, Suyako’s intention in replicating Denjiro’s *tonkatsu* is so that she can replicate it herself. However, through the process of rediscovering Denjiro’s *tonkatsu* recipe, she realizes how his recipe infuses memories of their relationship to create a dish that embodies his care and attention to her likes and dislikes. The dish not only evokes Suyako’s memories but also helps Suyako realize how Denjiro’s memories of the time spent together have re-materialized in the dishes served at Katsuden. Reid et al. (2025) see how food nostalgia does not merely provide comfort but also is implicit in fostering social cohesion, offering emotional comfort, and helping nurture and build relationships. In the novel, the nostalgic memories surrounding the food Denjiro cooked and how his wife enjoyed his cooking serve as inspiration behind the dishes he serves in Katsuden, which is curated carefully so that even individuals with sensitive palates can enjoy the food.

At Katsuden, they always served three types of sauce with the meal. From right to left: sweet, spicy, and ponzu. They’d serve six bite-sized pieces of tonkatsu, so most customers would dip two in each sauce.

Suyako set her chopsticks down and joined her hands together again over the round plate. “That was exactly how my husband’s tonkatsu tasted.” (Kashiwai, 2023, p. 83)

As Nagare explains how he rediscovers Denjiro’s *tonkatsu*, he emphasizes how even the breadcrumbs used for frying *tonkatsu* reflect Suyako’s preference. As Suyako is unable to eat overly greasy or fried foods, Denjiro uses his memory of Suyako’s tastes and preferences to create a dish that could be enjoyed even by people who are averse to greasy, fried dishes.

Towards the conclusion of this chapter, Nagare reveals how Denjiro has already passed away. Nagare further speculates that the reason Suyako wished to eat Denjiro’s food one last time is to remember him and their memories together. This is indicative of how food is used to process and cope with trauma and grief. The sensory memories stemming from food not only help customers recover memories but also act as a restorative tool, healing emotional wounds. The memories evoked by the dishes allow Suyako to reconnect with her husband one last time while also allowing her to mourn her loss and gradually recover from it. By doing so, the novel seamlessly blends food, memory, and sensory experiences to highlight how food can effectively help individuals recover and heal from grief and traumatic incidents.

D. Japanese Food Culture and Memory

The dishes recreated by Nagare and Koishi not only reflect their finesse and ability in accurately creating recollections from their customers’ memories, but also, at their core, the dishes reflect Japanese culture and tradition. Be it the dishes recreated at the behest of their customer or the dishes they serve to their regular customers, Nagare’s cooking reflects *washoku*, or “Japanese food,” which was added to UNESCO’s list of intangible cultural heritages in 2013. According to UNESCO, *washoku* is defined as a “social practice based on a set of skills, knowledge, practice, and traditions related to the production, processing, preparation, and consumption of food” (UNESCO, 2013, para. 1). Rather than a singular, repeated style of cooking, Cang (2018) highlights that *washoku* encapsulates the entirety of Japanese culinary practice, including the techniques, ingredients, and social contexts that define Japanese identity. The culinary concept of *washoku* emphasizes seasoning, harmony of flavors, use of fresh, local produce, and food presentation. In the novel, the food served by Nagare is an elaborate affair, where every dish and every drink served complements one another. While describing each dish, it is observed how Nagare pays attention to seasonality and local produce, imbuing Japanese culture in the food he cooks.

In the novels, the dishes served at the Kamogawa Diner to first-time customers are left to the discretion of the chef. Most of the newer customers are depicted as individuals who arrive at the diner in the hopes of recreating a dish consumed in the past. On their first visit, these customers are served traditional Japanese cuisine, or *washoku*. Each meal is elaborate,

consisting of several dishes prepared with seasonal, fresh ingredients, their taste evocative of the place or locality they are sourced from. When one customer and Nagare's old friend, Hideji Kuboyama, who worked alongside him as a detective, visits the Kamogawa Diner, Nagare serves him an elaborate fare of traditional Japanese dishes. "Looks like quite the feast!" said Hideji, his eyes widening. They call it 'Kyoto comfort food' these days, but in the past no one would have dreamed of charging people money for simple fare like this" (Kashiwai, 2023, p. 7).

Despite calling it "simple fare," the dishes served are not only elaborate but also prepared in traditional Japanese style, reflecting the cuisine and flavor of Kyoto, the city where the Kamogawa Diner operates. As Hideji begins eating, he associates each flavor of the dish and the way it is prepared with a specific geographical region. It highlights how sensory details not only trigger memory but also encode rich cultural and geographical information. Connerton (1989) discusses how daily practices and repeated rituals gradually evolve into cultural behaviors, which contribute to social and cultural memory. The novel depicts how the concept behind *washoku* echoes Connerton's ideas, highlighting the role of food rituals in the construction of collective and individual memory.

"The bitterness of these kikuna leaves works very nicely. A real Kyoto flavor, isn't it?"

"How about steeping your rice in tea? You could mix it with some of the sardines. Koishi, why don't you pour him some hojicha?"

"So, you call it Kurama-style in Kyoto. Where I'm from, if you simmer something with sansho pepper, that's Arima-style."

"Must be a case of local pride then. Kurama and Arima are both famous for their sansho, aren't they?" (Kashiwai, 2023, p. 8)

Most dishes created by Nagare are traditional yet simple meals, cooked using local, seasonal ingredients, embodying the core values of *washoku*. As a result, each dish is an embodiment of collective cultural memories passed down through generations. These dishes not only reflect Japanese cultural values but also act as a conduit for nostalgic memories. This highlights how culture and food rituals that emerge from it play a prominent role in creating new memories and remembering forgotten ones.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the novels *The Kamogawa Food Detectives* (2023) and *The Restaurant of Lost Recipes* (2024), food is employed as a sensory and narrative device capable of reconstructing memory and identity. The work depicts how the food and senses are not mere aesthetic narrative techniques but tangible, active mechanisms that mediate the relationship between the past and present. The novel places emphasis on sensory perception, via food, as a way to emotional recovery through reconnecting memories to the present. The novels reflect Sutton's (2010) concept of gustemology, which posits that sensory experiences of food influence and are also influenced by culture, memory, and social relations. Through his novels, Kashiwai explores how food and its sensory experiences shape memory. It also reflects on how memory is not merely cerebral but also embodied through bodily experiences.

The connection between food, memory, and the senses is facilitated by the characters Nagare and Koishi Kamogawa. Their approach to food not only highlights the importance of sensory markers and the role of senses in food but also expresses how culture and tradition are inextricably tied to the interpretation, preparation, and presentation of the dishes. Nagare's ability to recreate dishes just as the customers have experienced them in the past is not merely a result of his investigative flair but also stems from a deep respect and understanding of the dynamics of Japanese culture. Through their keen attention to detail, investigative style, gift for cooking, and profound understanding of regional and emotional context, Koishi and Nagare transform transient sensory memories into tangible, distinct dishes, reconnecting customers to forgotten relationships, places, and moments. These reconstructed dishes not only reflect gastronomic skill but also become rituals of remembrance and healing, highlighting broader themes of Japanese culture and *washoku* that place emphasis on harmony and seasonality.

The paper also looks at how sensory studies provide a comprehensive framework for the study of food and sensory memory in literature, thereby building a triadic relationship. Memory is a core concept in both novels, mediated through the senses, highlighting how embodied experiences play a key role in narratives. It also looks at how literature depicts the sensory body as a site of memory, identity, and emotions, especially in the context of emotional loss, memory, and cultural continuity. By foregrounding the triadic relationship between food, sensory studies, and memory in literature, this paper advances interdisciplinary conversations between literary studies, sensory studies, and food studies. Additionally, future research could focus on how sensory studies could be applied in literature to study how gender, aging, care, or domestic labor mediate memory through food. Hisashi Kashiwai's novels provide a lush, textured depiction of how food can serve as a portal to the self and others. The novels depict how remembering the past is not merely an act of the mind but a deeply felt experience, held in the taste of a forgotten meal or in the scent of cooking by a loved one.

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