

The Social-Cultural Meaning of Food in the Wedding Banquet, Pushing Hands and Eat Drink Man Woman

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Abstract: The struggle for self-identity is the unified philosophical theme in Ang Lee's films. The characters of the "Family Trilogy" that Pushing Hands, The Wedding Banquet and Eat Drink Man Woman may define themselves in the confrontation with the parental authority, which is prevalent in the East and the West, especially in Chinese Confucianism. Characters in Ang Lee's films have common features. They stand for non-mainstream vulnerable groups in the social, political and cultural aspects of the modern society. They are faced with varying degrees of identity crisis. In both ancient and modern societies, the ultimate concern of Lee's films is individuals, especially how individuals find themselves and achieve self-identity in terms of ethics, culture and society in eras of the change. Ang Lee writes the traditions of Li (rituals) by using the dining table. This project aims to explore the social-cultural meanings of food in Ang Lee's films and tries to prove that food in his films is not only an indicator expressive of the conflict between Western and Chinese culture but also is socially and culturally important.

Key words: Identity; Tradition; Culture; Food; Power; Conflict; Ritual

Chapter 1: Introduction

Scholars have increasingly focused attention on eating and drinking because of globalization. People may get closer or drift apart when they are facing the forces of integration and uniformity. These people are the representatives of larger groups who have stable consumption activities, even across territorial expanses. This could explain why food and drink are elements of traditions and Wilson points out that food and drink could be considered as the base of the construction of all social identities.¹ In fact, this may have an exaggerated significance of culinary behaviors and ignore other elements. Previous studies usually underscore the gender, identity and power of the food in films. The identity of food might be given priority because it occupies a large proportion of research. Identity could be grouped by self-identity, nation-identity, cultural identity and political identity. Studies about self-identity are limited. Warde considers that self-identity is bound up with lifestyle.² Bower holds the view that behaviors of the characters on screen provide the audience with a chance to mediate their identities through the food,³ which may be helpful for this project. However, there are a limited number of resources about it. This could be a gap because food preference may indicate the personality of a character and this is a major focus of this project. The choice of food could reflect the personality of the protagonists. For example, in *The Wedding Banquet*, Simon has a western-style breakfast while Wei Tong, his parent and Wei Wei share a Chinese-style breakfast, which may indicate the outer role of Simon. Returning to the political identity of food, Murcott and Watson regard banquets as the assertion of political rights of indigenous people in Food consumption in global perspective.⁴ In fact, banquets could be seen as representing the cultural significance of food because they emphasize the common pleasure of a nation and a detailed explanation is warranted.

Research supports the notion that food contributes to the construction of national identity. Levenstein believes that food sharing could enhance family contacts and weaken authority.⁵ Bower argues that sharing food may bring people nostalgic feelings, which may strengthen the household or group solidarity. He also sees a large meal as a symbol of communication and connection of a family or a religious group.⁶ Brulotte and Giovine insist that food acts as a marker of group and individual identification,⁷ Also, Wilson supports the view that food and drink could show something meaningful about people.⁸ According to Alonso, cultural differences in terms of taste, food and cuisine could be a watchword of ethnic identity.⁹ This point could be seen as evidence to support my project because Martha and Lao Zhu have different choices towards food in *Pushing Hands*, which is a symbol of different national identities. These arguments may offer this project great importance because the three films present food-sharing scenes. *The Wedding Banquet* has a grand traditional-style wedding scene in America; there are Chinese ethnic schools in *Pushing Hands* and the weekly family reunion relates master chef Zhu with his daughters, all of them showing that food consumption brings Chinese people a strong sense of belonging and the consistent cultural identity ties them as a group. This point of view is important since food-sharing plays a significant role in China and people regard the food as their primary demand. Meals are discussed by people regardless of class, gender, wealth and race. It is a common topic for Chinese people and the only topic without any communication barriers.

There are also many researchers who have explored the relationship between food and cultural identity. Bauman recognizes the significance of the national identity, suggesting that social approval needs a recognized identity.¹⁰ This kind of identity is that people in a group request a consensus for acquiring the perception of affiliation because people wish to have acceptance. For example, overseas Chinese acquire a feeling of nostalgia through the traditional wedding ceremony in *The Wedding Banquet*, which is not held for Wei Tong and Wei Wei but for all guests. It is an opportunity for overseas immigrants to find their roots in a foreign country. Bower also believes that food consumption could be seen as a reflection of cultural consumption and mentions that filmmakers make comments on roles and create cultures through food.¹¹ However, Ang Lee does not work with this intention. He demonstrates the cultural differences and conflicts between two different regions through films and raises his own opinions about these issues. He comments on the phenomenon of cultural differences between Western and Chinese culture but refuses to create a new form of culture for the audience. In my view, filmmakers have rights to reveal their values but they have no obligations and rights to persuade the audience to accept their values as this is a form of moral kidnapping.

Food also has a close connection with gender. Goody argues that gender hierarchy is closely related to the marriage and food. Women pursue an equal status to men regarding food¹². Vester believes that the ability to cook is a symbol of a mother's love and the competence to be a good wife¹³. Symonds and James believe that women make consumer decisions that provide a cultural background for dishes and they shop for meals. These opinions play an important role in this project because the right of Wei Wei and Simon to cook is presented in *The Wedding Banquet*.¹⁴ Simon can cook but Wei Wei is unable to do so. This could be explained by the fact that Simon is qualified to be a "wife" while Wei Wei failed. In addition, Bowers comments that women cook just to transfer the food to the table while men cook for nobler goals.¹⁵ This may share similar meanings with *Eat Drink Man Woman*. Chef Zhu disagrees that women could be a master chef. Sexual differentiation is particularly evident in China and many people still conform to the stereotype that males are supposed to be worth more than female sex. David also raises an interesting view that women are more tightly related to the kitchen with mixed feelings and this could be proved by Wei Wei, Simon and Gao's mother in *The Wedding Banquet* and Martha in *Pushing Hands*, they always serve in the kitchen while daughters in *Eat Drink Man Woman* may be a counter-example of this because they are not able to enter the kitchen. In addition, Cowan argues that males lose their positions in the kitchen due to the rapid development of technologies.¹⁶ Facing the debate about the grading of gender, the book entitled *Dinner Roles* shows that manly cooking is the erosion of social differentiation between gender and the recession of male authority and it is a way to describe the changes in society.¹⁷ Bowers and many predecessors prefer to believe that manly cooking has extra meanings and importance than women cooking. Just as Inness coined the phrase "the male cooking mystique", women cooking is quotidian while men's cooking is full of

genius.¹⁸ I tend to agree with the view that manly cooking is unusual of the history of China while it is experiencing a change in modern China. Men's cooking behaviors are regarded as actions with masculinity. Most chefs are males because they have better physical quality and more flexible time than women who are expected to return to families rather than being able women.

Food can indicate power. Counihan and Kaplan put forward the point of view that giving someone food could create a connection and someone refusing food could also serve that kind of connection. In conclusion, the acceptance and rejection of food could be a way of attaining power.¹⁹ They also think that masculinities could control the power by refusing and disparaging the provided food. In a similar way, femininities could gain power by abandoning cooking. In that case, food could be seen as a symbol of power and this might have a close link with this project because the three films both contain feast scenes that reveal the transferring of power. For example, in *Pushing Hands*, Lao Zhu gives Martha a cup of Chinese tea to express his guilty while Martha refused, which could be interpreted to mean that Martha controls more power than Lao Zhu. In the end of this film, Martha begins to fry spring rolls and tastes Chinese tea, which could also be interpreted as Martha losing her power in the "battle" between Lao Zhu and herself. To sum up, most research into food films is about the relationship between food and gender and power and identity. However, few studies relate the social-cultural meanings of food with specific films. This essay tends to fill in the gap in this topic with the Family Trilogy. This project is grouped into five chapters. The first chapter is the background of my project and the second is the analysis of food in *Pushing Hands*. This will include the discussion about the food itself, different lifestyles and the acts of eating of the central characters. Chapter three is the exploration of culinary practices of *The Wedding Banquet*, including the rights of cooking, table manners and the relationship between food and identity. The fourth chapter focuses on acts of eating, the deteriorating taste buds and culinary behaviors of *Eat Drink Man Woman*. The final chapter is a brief conclusion.

Chapter 2: Pushing Hands

This film depicts a story in which Lao Zhu comes to the America after retirement. However, the different lifestyle between Martha(daughter-in-law) and him generate many conflicts. The son, Xiao Sheng repels his father and Lao Zhu finally lives alone. The major contradictory disputes of *Pushing Hands* originate from the challenge and collapse of "filial piety" in the Western world. The main point is not the cross-border culture of Chinese and Western cultures but how Ang Lee puts mixed Chinese and Western meals into the concept of benevolence, loyalty, politeness and filial piety. Filial piety is a rule that children get along with their households based on their status in a family. In Confucian ethics, the relationship of different species is special and the responsibility of offspring is limited. For instance, sons should take care of their parents; they should have a special way to treat their parents in case of their parents feel ashamed when they are away from home; going against parents' will may be despised and sons should try their best to have a boy when having a family. Although benevolence righteousness and rituals are important virtues, in practice, filial piety will be regarded as the primary value. *Pushing Hands* shows the tension between the typical traditional Confucian values and Western values. Lao Zhu's traditional Confucian temperament is against the grain of the modern Western values of his son and Martha. Lao Zhu's appearance makes Martha unable to create her own second novel, which disturbs her own exploration of authenticity. In the practice of Tai-Chi, people have to learn to overcome firmness by gentleness. Lao Zhu must do this to survive, and he occupies an invincible position in the new family environment. Therefore, the adaptive nature of Taoist thought will reconcile the traditional Confucian values of thoughts, so as to help Lao Zhu to adapt to the modern world. Lao Zhu competes with a society, which asks him to abandon traditional ideological tendencies and he succumbs anything beyond Confucian values. Therefore, the film's gist is the efforts made by characters to reconcile the traditional belief system and modern Western society. This chapter mainly analyzes the conflicts between Eastern and Western culture from meanings, dietary differences and table etiquette.

Food and identity

The food itself can indicate identity. In *Pushing Hands*, Lao Zhu likes hot food while Martha is not interested in the temperature of food. Heating and cooling food are seen as ideas that are similar to the Yin and Yang cosmology for Chinese people. Food was grouped to a great extent as Yang or Yin in the past and acted as a logic system that might be the greatest of all virtues in the Confucian worldview, which stressed balance, order and harmony.²⁰ In *Pushing Hands*, Lao Zhu and Mrs. Chen usually give hot tea reception while Martha uses ice water hospitality and she used to keep the original food because she believes cold food is fresh. Lao Zhu cooks hot rice for his lunch while Martha prefers salad and cookies not only because she and Lao Zhu have different cooking methods but also because they two have disparate paces of life. Differences may lead to social conflicts and pose a threat to social integration. The preference for healthy meals may be a watchword for middle-class women who pay attention to freshness and nutrition; this kind of choice is supposed to link to the degree of education, suggesting that their state stresses nutrition and appearance.²¹ In that case, the food preference of Martha may indicate a nation's identity and different choices between Martha and Lao Zhu do raise a lot of household conflicts. Lao Zhu likes stirring the food, However, the fire alarm always rings in the America. In addition to different paces of life and cooking methods, feelings of excitement should also be responsible for hot food. Hot food indicates the booming life while cold is a symbol of aloneness. Lao Zhu is a gate keeper of Chinese traditions who prefers jollification while Martha tends to have an independent personality and pays attention to privacy. Another reason could be traced to the traditional Chinese medicine theory that cold is contract, which means that a chill may disturb the circulation of the meridians and blood. For that reason, Lao Zhu uses hot food to keep healthy. In addition, Harmony is shown through well-presented food: Each kind of ingredient in meals has a unique function, but it is the combination of ingredients that can create a unique experience; all ingredients should play a role.²² Lao Zhu emphasizes integration when cooking while Martha focuses on separation. In the film, Lao Zhu has stir-fried eggs with tomato while Martha has a salad with cookies. Lao Zhu puts a variety of raw materials and spice together in a pot. Materials and sauces need and affect each other. Martha with her independent personality usually takes those food materials one by one processing them and then puts them together to retain their original flavor. The theory that man is an integral part of nature is an important part of Taoism. In a similar way, it could be regarded as "integration" into a diet culture.

Culinary behaviors and identity

Table etiquette could also reveal the identities of the protagonists. Originally Lao Zhu is going to eat at the dinner table but he finally comes back to the bar counter and has lunch with Martha. Lao Zhu stresses the reunion of a family, that move can be understood as him wishing to get closer to Martha. It is also a part of Chinese culture that puts focus on the unity of humans with society. Zhuang Zi attaches importance to group identification, depreciates personality and insists that moderation is connected with other things. Lao Zhu picks a piece of meat for Jeremy and Xiao Sheng picks up it with Jeremy's plate while Jeremy refuses it. Jeremy is born in America and he has received a Western-style education. He directly expresses his own thoughts. On the one hand, Xiao Sheng is influenced by traditional Confucianism, which holds that youngsters should respect their elders and refusals should be implicit. On the other hand, food usually is an insignificant expression of our identity both as individuals and a broader group.²³ Xiao Sheng hopes that his individuality could be appreciated. The elderly taking food for the younger generation is a way to show their love. Lao Zhu takes food for Xiao Sheng, Jeremy and Martha because he regards them as people with intimate connection. This is also seen from the fact that Lao Zhu gives a chicken leg to Martha but is refused. In Chinese, chicken legs are usually given to children so, Lao Zhu regards Martha as his own child just like Xiao Sheng. Furthermore, Mrs. Chen gives Jeremy a chicken leg when they have a picnic, which is a reflection of care and love. Jeremy also refuses it, which could be seen to suggest that Jeremy does not mean to be rude to his grandfather. Rather, he is unacquainted with the Chinese culture.

Food could help the national identity. In the film, when Lao Zhu first arrived in the United States, he acts as an outsider in this family. Lao Zhu gets familiar with Mrs. Chen because of onion pancakes and scrolls. Furthermore,

Lao Zhu helps Mrs. Chen to make steamed buns stuffed with crab roe. Food is able to be a signifier that has powerful impacts on cultures and identities.²⁴ Food is a potential sign of group identity and a platform by which individuals share a common sense in a large group.²⁵ Food and drink are related to cultural and economic factors and the political identity of groups and individuals.²⁶ In the film, snacks cooked by Mrs. Chen evoke the homesickness of Lao Zhu in Chinese schools. These social organizations could be best analyzed in the aspect of ethnic identity overseas. When Chinese people meet compatriots in a foreign state, their consciousness of national culture is pronounced.²⁷ Even a large number of viewers who do not share a similar regional root with characters in films could experience nostalgic feelings of this kind of group solidarity by sharing foodways.²⁸ Cooking atmosphere and familiar accents could foster the resonance of the two elderly people and let the two old men from Beijing who are incompatible with the new environment come together. The sense of identity of food makes them closer. The method of cooking buns is similar to Tai-Chi; both of them put stress on flexibility and strength. Tai-Chi and buns are representative of Chinese cultural heritage. National identity is presented through these kinds of food to express the idea of the director that differences between Western and Chinese exist in the daily life.

Eating activities with Chinese culture

Table manners are a showcase of Chinese culture. A table is a place where the family has the most communications. The dining table is a profound meaning place where households share secrets and a place which is full of philosophy and life. Therefore, the choice of dining tables deserves more analysis. Lao Zhu likes eating around a round table; dishes are placed in the middle of the table and family members choose their own meals according to their preferences. The family enjoys all kinds of gorgeous meals together, showing unity and jollification. Lao Zhu picks the dish into others' bowls, which reflects the mutual courtesy of Chinese tradition. Food is not only the object of cultural communication but also a media of emotional contacts. For Martha and Jeremy, they take what they need and do not have to be fixed in the seat. They respect their own food and never try food on others' plates because they focus on self-respect and individuals. Conflicts happen in the dining table, which is a special setting. It could be explained by the fact that Ang Lee presents the conflicts with the way of Tai-Chi, which conquers the unyielding with the yielding and highlights the internal dramatic intension while weakening the outer dramatic conflicts. In addition, the order of seats could indicate personal identification. Chinese people regard the right side as valued place while the left is the humble place because waiters always serve in a clockwise direction. Therefore, someone in the right seat can eat before those on the left side. In this regard, Lao Zhu occupies the seat of honor, which may represent power and authority. Martha sits in a more noble position, at the right side of Lao Zhu, while Xiao Sheng and Jeremy are on the left, which could be interpreted to mean that Lao Zhu shows respect to Martha because she gives birth to Jeremy and serves as a "hero". Another interpretation could be that Lao Zhu takes her as his own daughter. In order to highlight the conflict between Chinese and Western cultures, the director uses Lao Zhu on behalf of the oriental tradition while Martha is a representative of Western ideas. Lao Zhu sits a more valuable seat than Martha, which may mean Martha could make a concession for Chinese traditions in the end and her frying spring rolls, learning Tai-Chi and treating guests with a cup of tea could prove this point.

The balanced diet is a reflection of Taoism. In the film, Lao Zhu thinks that grains, fruits and vegetables are implicit and beef, lamb and pork are explicit. Food may be an ideal conveyor of explicit messages.²⁹ For instance, Lao Zhu picks up food for Xiao Sheng, Martha and Jeremy to express his love and care and he gives a cup of tea to Martha to represent his guilt. Explicit and implicit culture is in accordance with the traditional Chinese ideas of Yin and Yang. Yang usually presents the sunny side of a hill and Yin is the shady side. Yang also represents the bright and warm factor of the cosmos while Yin indicates the dark and moist one. Sometimes, Yang is used to stand for men and Yin symbolizes women; however, they not exist independently; each sex has many qualities of the other side and everything has both aspects.³⁰ There is a combination of the two aspects in order to make up for deficiencies. Lao Zhu gives a piece of meat to Jeremy and thinks that what he eats what he will have. Although it is a simple meal, ancient Taoism is still depicted through it. Yin and Yang are the two basic elements of the world; they mutually oppose and affect each other. Lao Zhu

cultivates himself according to a religious doctrine and achieves philosophy through a comprehensive study of life. In that case, many subsequent dramatic elements appear. Yin and Yang are about Taoism theory Tong, which could be understood as the sense that a question may trigger the other question and a solution could be applied to other problems. That is the characteristic of Chinese philosophy thinking, which is quite different from the opinions of Martha who states apples are apples and oranges are oranges. On the contrary, for Lao Zhu, everything is associated with other things.³¹ At the same time, if the balance is broken, it will lead to the disorder of the internal texture and trigger a series of chain reactions. The concept of Yin and Yang is attached to the discussion of an ordinary dinner, the corresponding relationship between concrete objects, meat and vegetables to abstract Chinese philosophical categories.

Tea culture is inseparable from Chinese traditional thoughts. Tea is more important with quite different cultural meanings than family dinner. It is social and people should spend a lot of time choosing it.³² The spirit of tea culture has four aspects: firstly, fusion stems from Zhou Yi, which is the theoretical origin of natural philosophy and humanistic practice in Chinese traditional thoughts and cultures. This means that all things are composed of two elements of Yin and Yang. They coordinate with each other. Keep vitality to benefit all things is the human truth. The second aspect of tea culture is silence. A Chinese tea ceremony creates a quiet atmosphere and an ethereal quiet state of mind through tea activities. When the fragrance of tea infiltrates the heart, the mind will become empty in silence and the spirit is sublimated and purified. People may meet nature in emptiness and achieve the realm of harmony between human and nature. Lao Zhu drinking tea is a contrast to the blundering mood of Martha. Because she types the keyboards heavily, it seems that she is blundering. The final aspect is “pleasure”. Everyone can obtain physical and spiritual pleasure in tea activities.³³ Lao Zhu gives a cup of tea to Martha when she is working. She refuses it while she accepts an orange given by Xiao Sheng. This may mean that Martha does not accept Chinese culture. The Chinese tea ceremony is the essence of the integration of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Confucianism is represented by Confucius and Mencius, which emphasizes Ren (benevolence) should be regulated by Li (rituals). Tea culture reflects the spirit of Confucianism, respectfulness and humility. It embodies theories of cultivating moral character, regulating the family and ruling the state. The Buddhist philosophy lays emphasis on the purification of the heart and tea helps meditation calm the lustful mind. Taoism advocates nature and pure mind with few desires, which is in accordance with the ideas of tea culture.

Table manners and the differences between western and eastern culture

Culinary behaviors could reflect the difference between western and oriental culture. In the first 16 minutes of *Pushing Hands*, Xiao Sheng, Lao Zhu, Jeremy and Martha share a table and Lao Zhu eats Chinese food while Jeremy and Martha have spaghetti. Xiao Sheng has two sets of tableware, knives, forks and chopsticks. Jeremy is unable to use chopsticks, which means that Jeremy and Martha represent the Western-style. Xiao Sheng’s plate is filled with Chinese dishes and Western food. Chopsticks, knives and forks are the most representative of culinary, representing two kinds of wisdom; not only the difference in eating habits, but also in the Eastern and Western lifestyle differences. Lao Zhu emphasizes eating slowly and he may spend many hours at the dining table. Martha has a fast-paced life. For example, she opens the fridge and digs a spoonful of cake by hand while Lao Zhu carefully prepares his breakfast. It could be inferred that she has had that habit for a long time from the many fingerprints on the cake. She quickly finishes her breakfast with that process while Lao Zhu enjoys a chicken leg, vegetables and rice leisurely. Lao Zhu pursues a lively life and hot food could bring him a sense of jollification while Martha prefers to have breakfast on her own. In addition to having different views on food, they share different opinions on drinks. Lao Zhu regards hot tea as the source of life while Martha likes ice water or lemonade. Lao Zhu aims to create a warm atmosphere, which may promote the relationship among households. On the other hand, Martha is concerned about personal privacy and space. She needs a rational and objective environment. Lao Zhu chooses an experiential and a receptive diet, paying attention to the spiritual enjoyment instead of nutrition while Martha stresses scientific, utilitarian and reasonable dietary habits. Ang Lee depicts the conflicts between the two roles with monotonous long takes without sharp quarrels and edits so as to create a depressing atmosphere and the brewing of conflicts in later plots.

Chapter 3: The Wedding Banquet

This film depicts that a homosexual, Wei Tong, cheating his traditional parents. He has to get married with Wei Wei, who needs a green card. Ang Lee's films often highlight the tension between identity and social norms. The protagonists often hide their identity in the face of hostile external pressure. However, these characters are also driven by the desire to seek and express their identity. As a result, the storyline of the film describes the struggles and pains of the tension around the truth. The Wedding Banquet is a comedy that disdains the absurd social mask for homosexual couples who are sometimes forced to integrate into society. The conflict of this film comes from the tension between the desire of Wei Tong to live with Simon and the filial piety he has advocated for Confucian values. The Wedding Banquet and Pushing Hands present the mutual conflict between the interests of people for the truth and the individual desire for freedom in the face of traditional Confucian ideology. In this film, a philosophical identity is reflected; the real meaning of social identity is doubted. Important parts of identity are hidden, which makes the protagonists out of society and causes confusion and tragedy when they are exposed. The protagonists are subjected to environmental constraints and their unique way of existence is not accepted by the social and political world. The portrayal of their identity is pessimistic, suggesting that true identity is ultimately irreconcilable in the society. There are a lot of incongruities between the understanding of personal identity and the reality of the social world. The existence of an ethical code tells us which kind of identity is acceptable and which is unacceptable. This reveals that identities that are not socially acceptable may lead to tragic consequences.³⁴ This chapter aims to explore the relationship between food and identity, the social-cultural meanings of table manners and the wedding banquet and the might of cooking.

Food and cultural identity

Food could prejudice the personalities and identity of characters. The cultural identity refers to the acceptance of a person or a group influenced by the culture of the belonging group. Cultural identity is a process of establishing identity and it consists of a lot of cultural elements. The food may be the best observation of culture. In this film, Wei Tong has pizza with Simon; they have a candlelit dinner and Simon drinks red wine while Wei Tong has water. Simon acts as other westerners who like stimulating beverages, such as red wine, beer and lemonade. Wei Tong drinks water because he keeps the oriental diet habit, showing that they have different views on their identities. Simon announces his sexual orientation while Wei Tong hides his. In fact, consuming food and drink could be a social behavior that marks the boundary of personal and regional identities.³⁵ In the film, Wei Wei picks up a bottle of wine to drink when she is drawing. In that case, she is forthright, which could explain why she decides to raise a child by herself. However, she has her back to the audience, which may indicate that men are usually associated with powerful and successful images while women are usually associated with weak and victimized images. Lifestyles also have clear class differentiation and each class has different symbols to indicate their identity of membership.³⁶ Bourdieu considers that the distinction between social class in their food preference may be a badge of identity.³⁷ For example, Wei Wei has a bottle of wine in her shabby house. After Wei Wei comes to Wei Tong's home (she has become one of the upper class), she drinks lemonade. This is a shift of her mood. Wei Wei is down and out and drowns her worries in drink and fruit juice is a sign of the relaxing and cheerful mood.

There are also many culinary behaviors which could show the identity of the protagonist. Simon and Wei Wei eat a cake, which could predict the gentleness of Simon because women like cake while men are not interested in this. In a dining scene, Gao's parents enjoy tea while Wei Wei, Wei Tong and Simon drink juice. In China, children usually drink juice and elders drink tea. Furthermore, tea is a symbol of Chinese culture while juice stands for Western culture. It could be understood that Gao's parents are the defenders of Chinese tradition while Wei Tong, Wei Wei and Simon are supporters of Western culture. Meals are for the closest family members and friends while drinks are for those who are less intimate. Simon may have a less intimate relationship with them.³⁸ Another scene is one in which mother Gao and Wei Wei prepare breakfast, which is a reflection of patriarchal society. This can also be seen in the two scenes where mother Gao gives prepared orange juice and medicine to father Gao after he finishes his morning exercise. Wei

Tong fills his water by himself, which is different from his parents. It can also be interpreted that he does not agree that women are inferior to men. This detail depicts the quite different lifestyle and the status of women in the West and the East. The director puts the four characters in a scene to stress the difference. When they have breakfast, Simon uses a fork and knife while others use chopsticks. This scene shows that Simon is different from other family members, which may suggest that it is difficult for him to live in harmony with Gao's parents because of different living habits. Simon gives an egg to father Gao, however, there are only four people in this scene and Lee just shows Simon's hand from the picture of outside. This might indicate that Simon is an outsider compared to this family. Moreover, in the airport, they both use transparent cups while Simon uses a different cup, which may mean that Simon is special among them and is still be an outsider for the family.

Table manners and personal identity

The table etiquette could be considered as a hint of the identity of characters. As the result of influences of traditional thoughts of respecting for seniority, the order of seats is meaningful. One person with supremacy sits on the seat facing the door. Distinguished guests usually sit in the place nearest the host, where they can enjoy the dishes first. In the first dining scene, father Gao sits in the middle of the table, Wei Tong and Simon sit at the right hand of Gao and mother Gao sits at his left with Wei Wei. Wei Tong and Simon occupy a more distinguished seat than the female characters, which could reflect the traditional idea that men are superior to women. In China, the hierarchy of seat relates to the distance from the host; the near seats are valued and the far one is menial. In this case, Simon and Wei Wei have less value than Wei Tong and mother Gao in the family because they sit further from father Gao. The authority of father Gao is also presented in that he has priority to taste and comment on the dishes cooked by Simon and then others have a taste. Simon pushes the plate closer to father Gao, which could be seen as meaning that Simon is willing to please father Gao. Father Gao evaluates that soda has the right proportion and the soak time is learned with a moderation. This could be a vehicle for the moderation of traditional Confucian thoughts. In the Chinese restaurant, father Gao lets the owner of a restaurant, Lao Chen have a seat while he refuses because he strictly follows the rule that subordinates cannot sit with the leader because they have a different status. This could be understood as the reflection of loyalty in Chinese culture. Lao Chen tells Wei Tong that having a wedding feast is the expression of filial piety.

The power to cook

The right to cook is a symbol of family status. In a traditional Chinese family, it is reasonable for the daughter-in-law to cook for the family. Households enjoy the meal made by the daughter-in-law with peace of mind, which could be regarded as the supporter of her identity in the family. In the film, the identities of Simon and Wei Wei are depicted vividly. When Gao's parents come to America, it is time for Wei Wei to cook for them. When Simon and Wei Wei stay in the kitchen, Simon concentrates on cooking while Wei Wei drinks leisurely. Suddenly, mother Gao comes in and they exchange roles in a great hurry. At the same time, Simon suggests Wei Wei filtering the bitter juice and then boil the bitter melon. This move is meaningful because Simon as Wei Tong's real soulmate is the real person who could cook. Francis argues that from the beginning and in essence, the combination of both sexes is the principle of social integration.³⁹ However, in my view, the combination of sexes may trigger social conflicts. The camaraderie of Simon and Wei Tong raises chaos and father Gao is sent to the hospital. Gao's parents with their deep-rooted Chinese traditional concepts can only accept Wei Wei as their family member. In the first dining scene, father Gao highly praises the cooking skill of Wei Wei, shown in his facial expressions. Wei Wei secretly points to Simon, implying that Simon is the real chef. Simon is delighted when the dishes are praised by father Gao and he feels nervous when father Gao frowns. Although father Gao highly praises Wei Wei, the tension and care of Simon indicate that he yearns for the right to cook. When Wei Wei is frying eggs, there are three eggs, which may reveal that the relationship between Wei Tong, Simon and Wei Wei because she puts three eggs in a pot while only two of them are presented. This may mean that the wife of Wei Tong could be only one person. Wei Tong makes a joke that things will get worse if Wei Wei keeps cooking.

This may have a deeper meaning that Wei Wei having the power of cooking may threaten Simon and Wei Tong. Wei Wei holds the spatula although the owner of it should be Simon. Simon has to go through an open authorized ceremony and then wins the right of cooking. Before this, Simon also wishes to gain the recognition of Gao's parents, thus, he is ambitious.

The spatula could be a symbol of the relationship among the protagonist with sacred and secular meanings. For the third time of cooking breakfast, Wei Wei is not skilled enough but insists on doing it on her own. Simon takes away the slice and teaches her, but Wei Wei recaptures it and makes a lot of noises, which is just like a kind of provocation. The situation undergoes a subtle change; Simon and Wei Wei change from interaction to competition, which may predict a shift in the family. Wei Wei has found herself already falling in love with Wei Tong and is pregnant. She wants to be a real daughter-in-law in the family, therefore, she stubbornly holds the spatula. At the same time, Simon has already sacrificed too much in order to maintain the relationship with Wei Tong. He is unwilling to have invisible power. He prefers to control the power of cooking and make his identity recognized. Ultimately, mother Gao says that the dishes are prepared by Simon are a handover ceremony, pushing Simon to the front stage from the backstage. Simon wins the power while father Gao picks up a piece of meat for Wei Wei. He praised the cooking skill of Simon in former mealtime but eventually refuses the dishes cooked by him. Even if father Gao has no alternative to accept the truth that Simon is the real lover of Wei Tong he is still dissatisfied with the fact. Washing plates is a courteous move with formality, which means that father Gao is expressing the psychological estrangement between Simon and himself. It is also the central embodiment of complex feelings of frustration and guilt. In conclusion, the spatula could be seen as a symbol of the family identity. Real and fake identities are presented through it, increasing the ornamental value and intensifying the comedic effects.

Wedding ceremonies often act as the constitution of social order. There is no individual and groups are an inevitable result. Xuncius thinks that ritual ceremonies work for relatives and political structures, guiding the expression and operation of the Li.⁴⁰ Deregulation may bring people anxiety and uncertainty.⁴¹ For Chinese people, identities are created for the communities and parties have acquired a new identity that remind people of self-discipline. Therefore, banquets are a process of evolving the private affairs of the parties into a public event and are a link to the relationship between the stranger and the social order. They are also required by jollification for social order. Collective memory is the prerequisite of cultural identity and the common memory of a group is in culture. The shaping process of identity has played a very important role. Cultural memory protects the integral and unique cognition of a group, which has nothing to do with the individual's attitudes, but with the social order of a group who share a common identity.⁴²

The cultural meaning of banquet

There is also a fundamental difference between China and Western countries in terms of the concept of banquets. Chinese people emphasize ostentatious and pleasure-seeking behaviors. The richer the dishes, the more precious the sincerity of the owners that is reflected. This is probably due to the traditional values of the Chinese people: being frugal but being generous to guests. In the film, Lao Chen creates a lively atmosphere for guests with hearty food and there are a lot of people in the hall, which makes Gao's parents burst into a laugh. Western banquets are generally simple and casual. Food is casual for westerners due to them regarding food as an opportunity to make new friends and maintain friendship. For example, in the film, Wei Tong and Wei Wei begin to notarize their simple marriage in a church and Simon invites them to a Chinese restaurant to celebrate the marriage. However, Banquets are held for collective memory, which is important for identity. Food is pivotal in China. Chinese exchange information, share the joy and contact each other through food. Social memory is maintained and propagated through memorial service and body practices. Ritualistic dietary behaviors have become a kind of typical behavior that shape the collective memory.⁴³ Food helps people to create the group cohesion with common memory. People are able to shape taste experience through memory. Ritual activities have become a kind of collective memory of maintaining cultural roots and the sense of belonging. The wedding feast is one of rituals of maintaining and strengthening the identity of a race. In the film, Gao's

parents do not agree with that simple ceremony. With the help of Lao Chen, he offers a wedding feast and all Chinese guests celebrating the marriage. For the same ethnic group in a foreign country, the collective memory of the wedding banquet helps the group to find the identity and the sense of belonging.

The social order creates a series of oppressive expectations that eventually force individuals to obey by repression and deceit, or they will be isolated from the community. The destruction of the authenticity about social conventions has become something that is intolerable. Individuals will be depressed, isolated or destroyed if they do not agree with the group. Lee's films drive people to look at the tension that exists in an open society where the rights of individuals should be protected and kept from collective oppression. Individuals should be against the group persecution of people who object to constructing the social norms of the individual's true expression. Finally, the film calls the audience to rethink their own ideas about the concept of justice and true practice, as they related to social placement and personal identity. Lee raises a conclusion that chaos can only be overcome by the loss and the destruction of authenticity. He neither solves problems in the film nor provides a way to save real identities because he does put the power into a possible future of a utopia. Lee's identity discourse gives the viewers a question as to whether our society can calmly and honestly tolerate a wide range of identities and personal relationships.

Chapter 4: Eat Drink Man Woman

This film is a story about the chef of Taipei, Lao Zhu who raises three daughters independently after the death of his wife. However, the daughters have different personalities. With their growing age, Lao Zhu gradually feels powerless due to the gap between his daughters and himself. He tries his best to maintain the harmony and warmth of the family with excellent cooking skills. Mealtime is a sign of connection and communion within a family or larger groups.⁴⁴ The dinner time becomes the only time to reunite. Family dinner has become private and popular among the middle class after the 19th century. Although Alan argues that older people with a lower social class are fond of traditional family meals.⁴⁵ I tend to support the first one because people with higher social status pay more attention to spiritual harmony than those from the lower classes. *Eat Drink Man Woman* reflects the cultural impingement of traditions and modernity, which may indicate unique Chinese food culture. In the film, characters are entangled in love and family, as well as to meet the delicate balance between emotional needs and to maintain interpersonal harmony. In this family, the dining table is an allowed communication area. The table simply becomes the structure of the story. The development of the film relies on family meals well-prepared again and again by the retired chef Lao Zhu. There are six scenes about the dinner: in the first one, Jia Qian (the second daughter) is willing to move out of the family home. In the second, Jia Qian is ready to accept to work in Amsterdam. For the third scene, Jia Ning reveals her pregnancy and will be away from home. The fourth scene shows the eldest daughter (Jia Zhen) getting married. The fifth dining scene is the most special. Lao Zhu has a family with Jin Rong, who is a good friend of Jia Zhen. For the final scene, Jia Qian is the chef of the family and she invites Lao Zhu to have dinner. Lee relies on the family dinner to build a narrative structure but also make dinner stand out from the original idea of food-sharing with magical meanings. This chapter mainly elaborates on the relationship between human desires, emotional expression and rituals through the household dinner party.

Rituals and Harmony

Rituals are helpful for consolidating harmony. In Confucianism, ritualism is a process of inheriting the wisdom of the past to solve the present problem. Table manners do not mean blindness or self-interest, but provide some degree of harmony. Ideally, rituals should be practiced so as to nourish human needs in a way that promote harmonious relationships and organize human desires. This includes the relationships among people and the relationships between humans and nature. Expressions and desires create pressure and rituals create structures that help to solve those pressures in a healthy and stable way. Desire is constantly seeking opportunities to meet people's demand within the field, while the expression provides the possibility. This film relates harmony with cooking because there are many scenes in it that remind the audience of this metaphor. It is said that Lao Zhu usually has a quarrel with his wife in the

kitchen, especially about the weight of ginseng in soup. Their passion for cooking leads to a passionate combination of personalities. Etiquette is formalized. People toast each other and pick up food with each other, which is in line with the Chinese notion of the reunion, such as the weekly dinner. Beautiful dishes with complex procedures could be described as a piece of art. Chef Zhu seems to put his love of family in dishes. Sharing food is a natural habit of Chinese traditional culture, people are all around the table no matter whether enjoying a feast or family gathering. In the film, the whole family sits around a round table and tastes dishes. This could be a way of showing Chinese culture.

The relationship among rituals, and the way to express emotions and desire is complicated. The etiquette may become a suffocating expression or may be forced to form superficial and persistent behaviors that could only provide experience. It maintains the continuity of the surface, at the same time, ignores the issue or situation that is important. This superficial persistence may have achieved some degree of success but fails to solve practical needs and concerns, which leads to a tragic collapse of order. On the negative side, Confucius admits that it is necessary to make the unique ability of all the people in a group contribute to the function of the group; Mencius recognizes the importance of emotional expression as a component of healthy human function; Xuncius considers the importance of guided desires and offers them a ceremonial framework. In turn, we may also use the insights of these thinkers to diagnose problems in the family: Lao Zhu imposes the old ritual in his family; at the same time, his emotional expression is restricted. The weekly family mealtime is a moment to face traditional culture and every time is a new deconstruction. For the daughters, it is more like the shackle of the flesh and mind, as they neither appreciate the care and thoughts of Lao Zhu nor communicate with him. The dinner party just like Lao Zhu's house, is crumbling.

The family of Lao Zhu is able to reflect the Chinese-style family ethics. Fathers have always been the pillars of traditional Chinese families, who have family-centered ethics and behavioral norms and this is an agreed cultural tradition. The traditional family model is three generations together. It starts with the oldest man in the family, including all of its male offspring and their spouses and unmarried female offspring. The highest respected male is the core of the family and the supreme authority. Personal interests must be subjected to the family as the representative of the overall interests of the family. This model attaches importance to intergenerational relations with a strong cohesion and a high degree of stability, strengthening the intergenerational feelings and identity. Internal family conflict happens when individuals break away from the family and contend against the collective will. Then, the family is at risk of falling apart due to personal disengagement. In the film, Lao Zhu's family is facing a dangerous state. The deconstruction of his family is manifested in two aspects: the family model and family ethics. Lao Zhu's family consists of a father and three daughters. This family finally becomes four separate families; two daughters marry independently, and even the father also moves out. Family ethics also experience changes. For the traditional Chinese family ethics concept, Lee recognizes this and rebels. Especially with regard to filial piety, he opposes the traditional feudal family morality whereby the father is affectionate and the son is dutiful. He emphasizes the equality of the father and the son's generation shows love and respect for the father. At the same time, family members are both a part of the family but they are independent. The settlement of family conflicts is the result of coordination and forbearance. Unlike the passive communication of western families, Chinese children always make a concession first. For example, Jia Qian is about to point out his father's cooking problems, but she hesitates to say so. Jia Zhen also stops the quarrel between Jia Qian and Lao Zhu and in this way, the disintegration of the family has been prevented and the emotional connection among generations is maintained.

The importance of weekly mealtime

Culinary behaviors can reflect changes in the family and the emotions of the protagonists. At an ordinary place, a profound truth that common meals could become the custom of life.⁴⁶ family dinner becomes a kind of rituals in *Eat Drink Man Woman*. For the opening scene of the film, Lao Zhu receives a phone call and his first sentence is to ask whether the person who is answering the phone has eaten something. The audience can guess that the person is a woman according to the voice. Lao Zhu suggests her have a simple lunch, which suggests that there will be that there is a feast at

night. Lao Zhu teaches her to cook fish and the film does not reveal their relationship. The audience can predict that the relationship between them is in a state of concealment. For the first family dinner party, Lao Zhu cooks the squirrefish and this process implies his cooking skills. Fish is emphasized on the phone and presented on the screen, which leaves an impression on the audience and they may wonder where is the fish mentioned on the phone is. Jin Rong and Shan Shan pay a visit to Lao Zhu's house and Shan Shan says that her mother has burned the fish. Here, the audience may speculate that Jin Rong is the person speaking with Lao Zhu on the phone. Furthermore, from the psychological point of view, fish is used to describe the reproductive organ of women. Lao Zhu also mentions something that we do not say today when should do? That thing is right the sex between Lao Zhu and Jin Rong. For the first banquet, Lao Zhu puts his hand on a chair which could have belonged to his dead wife. Lee stresses the vacancy of this chair so as to make the scene in the center of the camera. Lao Zhu as the backbone of the large kitchen does not work for the wedding of the commander and the viewers may guess there is a breaking news waiting for him. That news may be the romantic affair of Jin Rong and himself and in that case, Jin Rong was invited to the first feast. During the dinner, they talk about aunt Liang who receives criticism because the audience could accept the indecent love affairs of Jin Rong and Lao Zhu if aunt Liang is affable. The weekly dinner party could be seen as a locus of family joy and conflicts.⁴⁷ Coming back to the kitchen, the three daughters have a quarrel with each other about who will be the caretaker for Lao Zhu. Actors' lines and actions, like cleaning leftovers, are full of underlying meanings. On the one hand, they can tell the truth after the ritual of dinner party; on the other hand, at the beginning of the film, the miraculous skills of Lao Zhu are stressed while most of the dishes have already become the odds and ends, which may indicate that he has a lonely and dreary life in old age.

At the second feast, Lao Zhu also cooks the fish. However, this time he hesitates to kill it. He does not beat it but to insert chopsticks into the mouth of the fish. Steamed fish does not look appetizing, which may be a symbol of the secretive sexual desire of the old man. During the date, Jia Ning picks food for his father, which could suggest that she is pregnant or that she has heard of the physical problem of her father. That action may be interpreted as her caring for Lao Zhu. Actually, the fish stands at the plate except for the fish at the second dinner party. In my view, this may be a pornographic male reproductive metaphor, which proves the determination of Lao Zhu to be open about his secret. Aunt Liang smokes and asks whether Lao Zhu would mind. It is noticeable that it is not seeking advice but is a strong suppression, forcing Lao Zhu to obey her rules. Women smoking in China is infrequent because it is usually regarded as a lowbrow behavior. There is another scene in which many cigarette butts increase the sense of disgust of the audience. Aunt Liang blows a smoke ring to Lao Zhu. In fact, Lao Zhu just wants to please the future mother-in-law. The loquacious expressive desire of aunt Liang actually destroys the possibility of the satisfaction. Her constant criticism eventually makes her become a person who people stay away from because people are worried about her selfishness.

Each banquet gives the audience new information. Lao Zhu holds an axe to split the shell and chicken, when Zhou Mingdao comes in the door, Lao Zhu holds that axe, which may be interpreted as Lao Zhu firstly taking no action when Jia Ning is pregnant while this time, he makes a reluctant movement. For the fifth time, Lao Zhu as a master feels flighty and impetuous, which is a sharp contrast to the opening scene. He is hurrying and scurrying. The tableware is classy and the table has become an automatic table. People occupy all chairs, which means that the dreamlover of Lao Zhu is here. Aunt Liang wears a cheongsam; her makeup is not as exaggerated as before. Also, purple clothes indicate a mature, extravagant and solemn atmosphere. She pours wine for Lao Zhu and persuades him to drink less. They look like a loving couple. When Lao Zhu proposes a toast to Jia Qian, the shot suddenly changes. A shaking lens happens, aunt Liang moves out of the frame and Jin Rong enters in. The sudden movement breaks the original model. The male character sits on the left while the female character is on the right. This order conforms to the Chinese customs of "men left women right". The shot starts from Zhou Mingdao and ends in Jia Ning; from the seating order, the audience could interpret that this is the subjective perspective of Jia Qian (as shown below).



She acts as the hostess while aunt Liang borrows Shan Shan to ridicule Jia Qian. After that, the next three shots have a similar composition. The characters are a man and a woman; the man is on the right of the frame while the woman is on the left. Then, the audience may infer that Lao Zhu and aunt Liang are a couple. It offers the viewer disruptive information. The final dining scene is a contrast to the first scene; the same location has different feelings. The former is deserted while the latter is alive. Leaves and weeds enhance the seasonal changes and sense of desolation. It is noteworthy that the light changes. The first banquet scene uses a relatively high color temperature lamp; the cold light is objective and there are chairs and balcony lights in the yard; a lively atmosphere. The last scene applies a low color temperature lamp with warm yellow light. The yard is empty and the overall feeling is more dramatic, which may trigger Lao Zhu's expectations of a happy family.

For the final family meals, Jia Qian is the chef. The daughter's version of cooking fish is a vehicle to a necessary renewal of culture through artistic variation and generational change.⁴⁸ She braises the fish - in the beginning, Lao Zhu thinks that it is a pity to braise a fish as it should be steamed in clear soup. She aims to challenge her father. She wears the apron and finally makes her dream come true and the apron may be a symbol of her young dead mother. She realizes her mother's dream. Lao Zhu sits close to Jia Qian while they used to sit facing each other. From the order of this, the viewers can predict that the gap between them has been closed. The harmonious atmosphere does not last a long time, however. The father argues with Jia Qian due to the weight of the ginger in soup. Lao Zhu and his dead wife usually argued with each other because of the weight of ginger and to do with the dining room settings. They could not understand each other. Jia Zhen inherits her mother's sacrifice and forbearance of the family attitude; Jia Qian succeeds the enthusiasm, talent and professional spirit of cooking of her dead mother and Jia Ning has the desire for freedom and escapes the family pressure. The reversal point of this film is that the father is a person who pursues individual happiness and abandons the family harmony while Jia Qian makes the most efforts who ever received a western education. She has a lot of burdens, in terms of emotion, moral, traditions and family honor. This film shows the reshaping of her three reflections under the shock of western and eastern culture.

The diet culture and characters

The way of consuming food could reflect the personality of characters and the relationship among them. Lao Zhu regards cooking as the best way to care for and love others. In the opening scene of killing the fish, washing the chicken and cutting the vegetable, the director uses fast montage editing to emphasize Chinese traditional foodways, Chinese implements, serving dishes and tableware.⁴⁹ That could not only present Chinese cultural heritage but also stress the

thorough preparation of Lao Zhu. He also uses long takes to present the traffic moving through the busy intersections, which implies time passing, modernity and changes that may serve as the sharp contrast of traditional and modern values.⁵⁰ This is shown from the sequent scene in which Lao Zhu enters into the large kitchen. A full-length shot with wide angle depicts the Chinese diet culture and the irreplaceable position of Lao Zhu. Coming back to his family, the daughters do not touch steamed buns with minced crab meat and send them to Jin Rong. The buns are full of a lot of efforts of Lao Zhu, but the daughters fail to understand the value of them. However, Jin Rong squeezes out the soup of the buns and Shan Shan takes cold buns as her breakfast and enjoys them, which may explain why Lao Zhu dares to risk everyone's condemnation of them. Lao Wen (Lao Zhu's friend) defines Lao Zhu as a soft-shelled turtle — he cannot get what he wants and he does not value what he had. His expressive ability is suppressed and his desires are not met. The weekly dinner party is a source of constant trouble. Lao Zhu gets worried about Jia Zhen's marriage, quarrels with Jia Qian and has few cares for Jia Ning. In spite of this, he is still deeply concerned about the daughters, daughters' increasing possibility of getting away from home, which may hinder him as a guardian and in an authoritative role.

With the progress of the film, Lao Zhu's attention shifts from daughters to Shan Shan and Jin Rong. Thanks to the poor cooking skills of Jin Rong, Lao Zhu gradually finds that cooking dishes for Shan Shan satisfies his demand for cooking and providing care. His love is still not being met. Shan Shan also has obvious attitude changes. At first she enjoys cold steam buns without soup, but at the end of the film, she complains about the fish; her desire is also getting larger. This could be seen as a map of the relationship between Lao Zhu and daughters. He does not change but his daughters improve their standards. Refer to the relationship between Jin Rong and Lao Zhu, they reveal the secret in the end. Jia Zhen and Jia Ning move out of the home and Lao Zhu regains the palate, which may infer that he finds the balanced point of the relationship between Jia Qian and himself. Thus, the problems of Lao Zhu could be described from the point of view of desire, expression and rituals. As the audience sees from the three daughters, their relationship influences Lao Zhu. Furthermore, the growth and transformation of daughters provide Lao Zhu with necessary space. In that case, Lao Zhu makes a new arrangement for his own life. In conclusion, his inability to express and even discuss his emotional focus limits his ability to have a truly satisfying relationship.

The eldest daughter, Jia Zhen, abides by the traditional Chinese rituals and morals. She uses rituals to hide her emotional fragility. She tends to avoid conflict, but when she is constantly being repressed by the father, she also has a critical reaction to his soup and sense of taste. She feels the embarrassed atmosphere in the family but she chooses to bear it for the harmony of the family. After all, she is still dissatisfied with Lao Zhu because of much resentment. In the first family dinner scene, Jia Qian wants to move away. Jia Zhen expects Lao Zhu to blame Jia Qian while he believes that investment is fine. Jia Zhen has grievances because Lao Zhu always spoils Jia Qian. It may contribute to a dispute between Jia Qian and Jia Zhen. It is noticeable that Jia Zhen assumed the responsibility for raising two sisters many years ago. She is not only an older sister but also is forced to be the "mother" of her siblings. For example, only she wears the apron after finishing dinner, which shows that she always does the cleaning work. The tension between her and Jia Qian is obvious, which does not help to solve the long-term confrontation between them. Jia Zhen is not allowed to cook while Jia Qian is free to learn knowledge in the large kitchen. Jia Zhen never cooks. It seems to be a role imposed by the environment. The different households may have mutual opposition because of imbalanced relationships and emotional frustration. When Jia Zhen has confidence of expression, she reaches a balance between rituals and structural needs. She accepts the Western culture as the faith into her life. Although this faith has been localized, after the accumulation of many years and in the last second of her youth, she breaks the shackles of traditional ideas to find her own happiness.

Jia Ning accepts the most thorough thinking of Westernization. She is sophisticated because she chooses the food of the roadside market with Zhong Guolun. Her father is a master of cooking while she prefers to enjoy the small eats because she takes the initiative to show her "easy-going". She aims to narrow the distance between Zhong and herself, which may build a sharp contrast with the unhealthy relationship between Xiao Zhizhi and Zhong. In addition, she opposes Jia Qian to protect Lao Zhu and when she hears of the news that Jia Qian will move away, she just focuses

on a question: who will be left to be the caretaker of the physical and emotional well-being of the old man? She says that she will be left to take good care of her old father while she firstly leaves the house. She works in a fast food restaurant and is a symbol of the western culture that is taking over eastern countries. The western culture also touches the three daughters, who become increasingly independent and alienated from their father. The western culture has not only formed a colonial way of cooking, but also changed the way of people getting along with each other. The conflict between father and children is the conflict between individuals and a family, on a certain level. The family here actually represents the integration of individuals and social forces. Therefore, the performance of intergenerational relations within the family may specifically reflect the profound function of the era and society. The close connection of blood relations, fathers and children, still have irresolvable kinship although they are in a state of conflicts. The two generations not only have ideological sharp conflicts but also have emotional links. The two are tangled together, making the conflict more complicated - the two also have self-contractions (rational and emotional conflicts). There are great differences in thoughts, personalities and emotional characteristics between the two generations. It is easier for peers to understand the differences between contemporary and old traditions between the two generations. For example, the modern expression of Jia Ning and Zhong for romance and desire leads to great possibility. Therefore, it is easy to understand the rebellious actions of Jia Ning under the emphasized personality and free development of social atmosphere.

Jia Qian is a mixture of influences of oriental culture and western culture and is also a cooking master. Jia Qian is banned from entering her father's kitchen and she is badly resentful. This film shows that from the beginning to the end she is never bored with cooking, just like her parents who cook food in an exquisite complex way. Raymond only uses her to obtain sexual satisfaction. When she expresses the upset of losing childhood pleasure, Raymond replies frivolously, completely ignoring her fragility. Jia Qian is a mixture of idealism, pragmatism and sympathy and compassion. Her talent and passion make her have constant disputes with her father. It seems that no quarrels mean no weekly meals. At the first banquet, she points out directly that the ham is metamorphic and the oily smell is pungent, actually meaning that weekly dinner party is outdated. When her father wants to announce a long-awaited event, the taste of the soup makes Jia Qian grimace. The dishes are indicative of the relationships among family members and the heavy flavor is a symbol of sensual passions among them.⁵¹ Raymond dates Jia Qian. She cooks fish with heavy flavor and stimulating chilli bean sauce, which may indicate that Jia Qian and Raymond just have sexual activities. She has a different mental state from Jia Zhen because of her western educational background. She walks in the forefront of the times and feels just like a fish in water in modern society. However, the short-term educational background fails to change her deep-rooted education and she still misses the large kitchen.

The large kitchen indicates despotism

The large kitchen is a manifestation of despotism. It is a forbidden land for the daughters. In the past, Jia Qian could get freedom in this place but finally she is derived out because Lao Zhu wishes her to learn more useful knowledge. However, Jia Qian thinks that her father does not want her to be a chef. In China, people show respect for Confucianism. Traditional Confucian ethics are based on traditional family ethics. In the film, Jia Qian's being expelled by her father could reflect the patriarchal system. The father does not discuss the situation with anyone and pushes Jia Qian out of the large kitchen for her bright future. This point proves the Chinese traditional ethical relationship, in which children must obey orders created by fathers. The large kitchen is the childhood memory of Jia Qian. Lao Zhu said that women fail to be a chef by nature when he brawled with his wife in the past. This statement left a deep impression on Jia Qian and she has initial enthusiasm for cooking as she subconsciously wants to prove herself to her father. She is the daughter who has the most similarity with her dead mother in terms of personalities or appearance. The regret of the dead mother's life is that she did not become a chef. Jia Qian has the talent to cook and is sensitive to her mother's resentment. Then, she sees that goal as her own ambitions. Lao Zhu feels regret after his wife dies.

In the past, he was unable to accept that women could do better than men and believed that a woman could not be

a chef. He changed his mind after the baptism of time and self-reflection. He just tells Jia Qian through actions not to regard fanatical love as a job. Finally, he spends all of his efforts and time on his job with resulting anger and paranoia, which may hurt the family. Then, his painstaking efforts may be thrown away by others, like rubbish. Jia Qian is not only an extension of the mother's life, but also the continuation of her father's life. Lao Zhu just silently conveys the principle that is the essence of his whole life to Jia Qian in this way. He educates Jia Qian for regrets and has another expectation of himself.

The palate is a vehicle to express happiness

The palate is a symbol of happiness and beauty. Lao Zhu regains his sensitive taste, which may be the transition from depression to liberation. The palate has social importance. In the Warring States period, an important relationship existed between the senses and the rest of the world. The senses do not simply convey messages; instead, they play a role through desire. They are eager for some kind of excitement and are actively looking for things that could meet their needs. This leads to the sensory relationship between the senses and the world, in which the senses are sought and the differences are discriminated and reach the end when they are satisfied. However, as the Tao Teh King points out, too much stimulation will damage the senses.⁵² After Lao Zhu's wife dies, the beauty of a family is also buried. Lao Zhu barely supports the family with a father's love and responsibility. He spends every day in guilt and remorse during the sixteen years and he even loses enthusiasm for his lifetime job. He has realized that he is unhealthy, so he tries to emancipate the depressed sexual desire to try to forget the pain of the past. The palate can be divided into outer and inner senses. The outer one is affected by physical things and the inner one by the mind.⁵³ For instance, Lao Zhu suddenly finds that his taste is never far away and the happiness of the family is always here. It exists in the soup cooked by Jia Qian. He finally understands that the sense of taste, the happiness is always guarding his passing wife's soul and the soul is reflected in the same appearance of Jia Qian. The ignored feelings between father and daughters, the forgotten pain and the past needing to be changed both are a part of his own history. It is him who kills the happiness. Actually, it is not a happy ending because his sense of taste may eventually disappear with the old house and the disappearing dinner party. The audience may realize that his palate will soon disappear as soon as possible with the steaming hot drifting.

The new harmony replaces the old situation, in which characters can express their own desires that could come true their desires and allow them to assume new roles and responsibilities. Xunzi believes that once the desire is met in a proper way, then the function of human behaviors can be enhanced in accordance with the god.⁵⁴ The desire of a person is satisfied in a healthy and harmonious way that could provide him/her with an ability to enjoy life. The harmony provides passion with space and the environment to practice in a healthy way, resulting in a rich and fulfilling experience. In the film, the past trauma of Lao Zhu is exposed and the new relationship has formed. Everyone is allowed to enter a new stage of their own lives. Therefore, the desire is not only personal, but also socially-oriented. By understanding the social nature of our thinking, the audiences could be persuaded to express their desires. Thus, the performance of desires in emotional relationships is like the performance of the musicians in the symphony: the structure and the emotions become intact in order to create a perfect experience. This means that it may combine all the elements of a person's life in a holistic way of creating meanings, and the integrity of these meanings will reconcile various melodies of the music together into a sound, making it become the rich feast. Or it can make a personality interaction, in the environment of care and support, to create personal growth and new possibilities.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In general, this project uses the social-cultural meanings of food in Ang Lee's *The Family Trilogy* to indicate the differences between western and eastern cultures. Chapter one shows a detailed introduction to the background of the topic and the second chapter shows how Lee depicts the conflict between Chinese traditions and Western values through the food preference and different lifestyles. Chapter three is about the camaraderie of Simon and Wei Tong as well as

the family conflict in *The Wedding Banquet*. The power of being a chef becomes the status symbol of the real hostess. chapter four presents the conflict between Lao Zhu and daughters through the dining table, which not only pushes the narrative but also is a vehicle for the shock of Western values and Chinese traditions. The fifth chapter is a brief conclusion of this project. Ang Lee's films success in international filmdom and offer Chinese films with the excellent experience. His success lies in the deep integration of Eastern and Western cultures; he constructs films with Western culture and Oriental classical charm by the use of Western film language and classic structures. The eastern and western worlds are integrated by him in specific films in order to achieve a common shock of life communities. People tend to use "moderation" to describe the works of Lee, probably because his films have a neutral beauty. The true positive sense of the moderation is full of activities and changes. The films contain a certain degree of transcendence. His films may have greater success through introspection and reflection. The moderation is a kind of harmonious aesthetics; it is not rigid, decadent and absolute.

From the East, as a Chinese director, Ang Lee has the profound understanding and experience of Chinese traditional cultures. His works present not only an eastern atmosphere but also the broad aesthetic connotation of Chinese traditions mainly from the details and the ending of films. In terms of cultural communication, Lee breaks the siege of Western-style films with the fusion of the eastern and western cultures, which penetrates into specific details and the overall aesthetic style of films. Traditional Chinese culture and modern culture understand each other and ultimately recognize and appreciate each other in the friction, which may reflect the correct trend of globalization. In film text, Lee interprets different cultures from lines, behaviors and lifestyles of characters with his own understanding. Cultural differences are depicted profoundly. Lee solves the cultural conflicts in films in a compromised way that are a resolution for peaceful coexistence. He applies Chinese aesthetic culture to the narrative structure and camera language. In this case, his films are labeled by films with oriental culture. As he has multiple cultural identities, he is able to have a multi-dimensional perspective of cultures, trying to make his films meet the taste of all kinds of audiences. This may be worthy learning for contemporary Chinese films. Chinese films with national culture may be more attractive for international communities and the audiences that need a classic way of speaking and the participation and the creation of Western cultural factors.

Differences between oriental and western cultures are one of the many forms of cross-cultural communication. The communication of food culture exists in daily life and continues to act as a link between different cultures in the process of global economic and cultural integration. Therefore, the comparative study of Chinese and Western food culture is necessary. The study of these differences may help people to enjoy different feelings of different food and enhance the mutual understanding in intercultural communication, which may effectively avoid the misunderstanding between cultural differences, thus, further promoting cultural communication and integration. The trend of globalization has triggered the complementarity and compatibility of diverse food cultures. With the increasing communication of Eastern and Western cultures, Chinese food culture has new features in the collision of the world. For instance, Chinese people begin to focus on nutrition and health are promoting vegetarian food. This may add fresh blood into the Chinese diet culture that learns widely from the strong points of other cultures, constantly improves its development and always maintains a strong vitality.

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