USAGE OF FUNERARY SYMBOLS
IN MASUJI IBUSE’S BLACK RAIN
AND KENZABURO OE’S THE SILENT CRY

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C50/CE/14396/2009

A RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF
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2017.

April 2017
DECLARATION
I declare that this project is my own original work and that it has not been presented for a degree or any other award in any other university.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my beloved parents: Daniel Nderitu Waiganjo and Esther Mwiwaki Karoki who supported my studies morally and materially.
Operational Definition of Terms

Funerary symbols- objects, characters or signs which appear or which are simply taken as being representatives of the actual physical death, unhappiness, gloom or suffering in a piece of art or in a given community.

Radiation Disease – a form of illness that followed the dropping of atomic bomb. The disease was gotten from coming into direct contact with substances of the contents of the bomb or coming into physical contact with the victims of the atomic bomb among other ways. In the selected texts the disease is characterized by abscesses. Other terms used to refer to the same disease are radiation illness and radiation infection.

Death- the termination or extinction of something, for example life, joy or simply absence of the effect of something. In this study, physical death may not necessarily mean death and may not be an end in itself.

Nirvana- a state of completion as regards joy and happiness. Also great pleasure

Seppuku- Japanese ritualistic suicide

Kimono - a Japanese traditional cloth

Semiosis- the process of meaning-making

Symbolic- a mode in which the signifier does not resemble the signified but which is arbitrary or purely conventional- so that the relationship must be learnt
ABSTRACT

This research work is based on the study of the primary texts; Masuji Ibuse’s *Black Rain* (1970) and Kenzaburo Oe’s *The Silent Cry* (1967). It seeks to examine how the funerary symbols appear, are employed and their significance in the two selected novels. The research also looks at the influence that funerary symbols have on plot, characterization and themes in the texts. A writer uses one form of communication over another in his or her work for a reason. An interrogation of available scholarship on Japanese writers indicates that the area covered by this research has not been exhausted. It is hoped that this study and its findings contribute in addressing this research paucity and invokes further research. The research design used in this study is descriptive. Since this is a library based research, the primary texts were read alongside other critical works deemed relevant for the findings of the research. The results from the primary data were then analyzed to arrive at the final findings. This study was conducted within the guidelines of two theoretical frameworks: Semiotics Literary theory and Psychoanalytic literary theory. Semiotics literary approach is instrumental when it comes to analyzing the communication modes embraced by the two authors. Psychoanalysis is useful in analyzing the funerary symbols employed by the selected authors.
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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction and background to the study

In the year 1889, Japan formed a parliamentary government under a monarchy. The country has been involved in several wars which include the war with China (1894-1895), with Russia (1904-1905), the First World War (1914-1918) and the Second World War (1939-1945) in which Japan conceded defeat on Sunday 2nd of September, 1945. This was after the United States of America dropped atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. After this defeat, Japan regained full sovereignty in 1952. The archipelago of Japan has faced many challenges over the years. These include wars, economic depression, tsunami and earthquakes.

This history of war in Japan is reflected, not only in history books but also in its Literature. As a result of the conflicts and other hardships encountered by the people, the Japanese literary writers also began to reflect these facts in their works. This Literature, which is based on war issues, is widely characterized by the usage of symbolism. The selected symbols and texts by the authors isolated for this research is just an example of this literary state.

Japanese Literature

Japanese Literature dates back to the prehistoric oral tradition and was only written when the Chinese introduced a writing system in early 18th century. According to Frellesvig Bjarike (2013), the Chinese government embarked on Kojiki and NihonShoki which were completed in 712AD and 720AD respectively. Kojiki was a collection of Japanese legends, myths and other stories; Nihon Shoki was a chronological record of history. The compilation of history, geography and folklore (fudoki) of the various regions was also done, beginning in 713.
According to Educational Outreach Department Japan Society (2012), Japan has gone through different literary periods which include Classical and Heian period (700-1185), Medieval and Tokugawa periods (1185-1868), Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries, and Late 20th Century. Among the literary writers who have so far won the Nobel Prize for Literature are Kawabata Yasunari and Kenzaburo Oe in 1968 and 1994 respectively. Tanizaki Jun’ichiro, Mishima Yukio, Abe Kobo and Inove Yasushi are among the Japanese literary writers whose works have been translated into many other languages of the world. Murakami Ryu (won the Akutagawa Prize), Haruki Murakami and Yoshimoto Banana are some of the post war generation of Japanese writers whose works have also been very popular and translated into many other languages.

The Second World War and its aftermath has been largely covered by Japanese writers. As a result, funerary symbols that are common in Japanese societies are employed as important literary devices in their works. The individual authors have used other objects that can be qualified as being funerary symbols from their representational nature. A study of Japanese literary texts shows a close link between their writing and factual information as reflected in history books or their own personal lives too. This bolsters the mimetic principle that literature is indeed an actual mirror of an author’s society.

Quite a number of Japanese writers have based their works on war experiences and hence employed funerary symbols as a strategy of coping with losses incurred. These include:
Hayashi Fumiko, Mishina Yukio, Kenzaburo Oe, Murakami Ryo, Masuji Ibuse, Yamada Eimi and Yokomizo Seishi.

Symbols are part of literary style and authors rely on style to effectively deliver their message to the readers. Symbolism even calls upon the keenness of the reader. This is because symbols do not communicate through their surface meanings. This requires an understanding of the community from which the symbol is taken in order to clearly understand them. This study investigates funerary symbols in the selected works of two of these post war authors, holding the belief that Japanese Literature is an important area in contemporary Weltliteratur.

1.2 Statement of the problem

This history of war in Japan is reflected not only in history books but also in Literature. Writers have based their works on war experiences, and hence employed funerary symbols, as a strategy of coping with losses incurred. Symbols are part of literary style and authors rely on style to effectively deliver their message to the readers. Yet, researches conducted on the selected works for this study appear to have shunned the role played by funerary symbolism despite their being a prominent feature in the fiction of the selected writers and others. This research investigates the usage of funerary symbols in Masuji Ibuse’s *Black Rain* and Kenzaburo Oe’s *The Silent Cry* as an attempt to contribute to the rectification of this paucity.

1.3 Research questions

This investigation proposes to find answers to the following questions:
i. What are the funerary symbols used in Masuji Ibuse’s *Black Rain* (1970) and Kenzaburo Oe’s *The Silent Cry* (1967)?

ii. In which way do funerary symbols help in revealing society’s socio-political and cultural realities?

iii. How are funerary symbols used by the authors to advance literary concerns and structural unity of these texts?

### 1.4 Research objectives

This study aims at:

i. identifying funerary symbols in the selected works as literary tools.

ii. examining how funerary symbols reveal society’s social, political and cultural realities in the communities of the narrators.

iii. establishing the likely contribution of funerary symbols on the texts’ literary concerns and the structural unity of the selected works.

### 1.5 Research assumptions

The research makes the following assumptions

i. There is wide use of funerary symbols in Masuji Ibuse’s *Black Rain* (1970) and Kenzaburo Oe’s *The Silent Cry* (1967) and there is need for them to be explained.

ii. Funerary symbols are instrumental in the understanding of society’s set up; social, political and cultural.

iii. An understanding of the authors’ literary concerns and structural unity of the texts in the selected works is enabled by the usage of funerary symbols.
1.6 Justification of the study

Expressively, Literature usually operates beyond the surface meaning of a language. This is why it is important to underscore the role of style in a literary work. The literary works under interrogation in this research work are characterized by wide usage of symbols. This area, however, has not been covered extensively by research previously carried out on the chosen works. This research thrives on the belief that by interrogating the usage of funerary symbols, the novels under study will be much more understandable. The choice of the texts for this research was mainly guided by the issue of quality (they have won global prestigious literary prizes), relevance of the works and the extensive use of symbols in them.

The selected authors do not only have a wide readership of their works, they have also been acknowledged by being awarded prestigious and much coveted literary prizes. Masuji Ibuse was awarded the Naoki prize for Literature and Noma Prize for Literature. Black Rain (1970) also won him ‘Order of Cultural Merit’ which is the highest literary honour given in Japan. Kenzaburo Oe was in 1994 awarded The Nobel Prize in Literature; he was also to be awarded Order of Cultural Merit, a literary Prize in Japan, but he declined because of the ideological differences between him, the emperor and his government (Cameron 2).

1.7 Scope and delimitations

Kenzaburo Oe and Masuji Ibuse have written many works. In this research, however, we proposed to limit ourselves to only two texts, The Silent Cry (1967) by Kenzaburo Oe and Black Rain (1970) by Masuji Ibuse. Besides limiting the study to the two texts, this research was also confined to the topic of funerary symbols in only one genre; the novel. Critical works
and other works constructively leading to the attainment of the proposal of this study were also looked into. This study was restricted to the descriptive design, semiotic literary criticism and psychoanalysis theories.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This research study was guided by two theories - psychoanalytic theory and Semiotics. Psychoanalytic theory was first developed by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Freud admitted being largely speculative as he initially developed the theory. Over time, the theory has been developed by his succeeding scholars like Carl Jung and Jacques Lacan. Freud noted that all human beings are faced with psychological problems in their day to day life. These difficulties influence people without their own knowledge or without even noticing that the difficulties have control over their lives. This is what Freud termed as the unconscious. This concept of semiotic theory was very critical in this study because the study holds symbols, especially funerary symbols as a thing that has to do with the man’s difficulties and their influence over him. To understand a funerary symbol, one has to attempt and understand the experiences of a people.

In this study, funerary symbols are treated as an expression of the unconscious - the fears of men, which come out from the repression of the life’s difficulties only that the symbols appear in a much more acceptable form.

Wright, Elizabeth (1984), sees psychoanalysis as a process in which the unconscious is understood. She singles out dreams, jokes, ‘Freudian slips’, children’s play and affective
relationships formed out of past experiences (because every experience is stored in the mind) as some of the ways in which psychoanalysis is undertaken. Wright’s observation was used as a guiding factor in the identification and analysis of symbols in this research undertaking.

According to Tyson (1950) psychoanalysis teaches that people keep looking at the past experiences because the outcome of this past causes them fear, wounds and guilt over things that people did not deal with. Past events could leave one with a permanent scar. This aspect in psychoanalysis helps a reader greatly in understanding why Masuji Ibuse concentrated his writing of *Black Rain* on the experiences of a world war. It also helps in the understanding of the characters in the two texts.

Freud goes ahead to explain the different ways in which death drive (thanatos) occurs. Most notably, the founder of the theory agrees that death can be manifested in form of physical destruction or psychological destruction. This view of death from a psychological point of view was useful in dealing with funerary symbols which relate directly to death.

Freud held the belief that people or individuals fear to show much affection and love towards others for fear of intimacy. They feel that they will get hurt and develop scars when the bond of affection is broken through the physical death. This belief was vital as we interacted with characters in the texts and found out more about their behaviours and funerary symbols. We relied on this belief in establishing, for instance, why some characters are callous in the texts.
Semiotics theory was founded by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and philosopher Charles Sanders Pierce. Among the early renowned authors on semiotics were Algirdas Julius Greimas, Vladmir Proff and Viktor Shklovsky. These critics main interest in their works was a formal analysis of literary forms in a way that would look like a literary syntax. It is based on the usages of signs and symbols as elements of language and other means of communication. According to semiotics, signs (symbols) take forms of words, images, sounds, gestures and even objects. In this approach signs provide an avenue through which meanings are built. This principle was relevant in the identification of what was considered as a symbol and what was not included in the research work. In the theory meanings need to be actively interpreted.

Semiotics is used in literature to look at the process of producing meaning in a text through the use of structures of interdependent signs and symbols. It, therefore, puts into consideration the relationships among signs (syntax), relationships between the signs and objects signified (semantics) and relationship between the signs identified and their interpreters (pragmatics). This research adhered to the strains of this argument in order to meaningfully interpret and arrive at the desired results.

Saussure (Holdcraft, 1991) divides a symbol into two parts; a ‘signifier’ and the ‘signified’. The signifier, he explains as that form that is taken by the sign while the ‘signified’ is the represented concept. According to Saussure, it is from the way signs relate and contrast with other signs that they get their meaning and are understood. This concept of semiotics was a guiding factor in this research because it helped in viewing the two concepts of a symbol.
Pierce argues that people always think in sign and that things considered as being signs only get intrinsic meaning and are signs when meaning is attached to them. Pierce’s argument shows the place and relevance of symbols are in every language and community of a people. A people’s language normally gets extra meanings attached to their words. This is one of the endeavors of this undertaking. Sturrock (1986) says that it is the language used by people that determines reality; it is not the reality that determines the language. This argument was useful because it is clear that one can use the language of a people to understand them further. This case applies to symbols and signs.

Barthes (1999) argues that objects and events have always meant more than what they are. He says they always add meaning to themselves as they undergo what he calls ‘systems of representation’. In this research objects and events were looked at keenly in order to find out whether they could be having extended meanings.

Barthes (1967) singles out images, gestures, musical sounds and objects as being part of what makes a system of signification. Barthes observation was used as a guiding factor in identifying symbols and classifying them accordingly.

Emanuel, Paulo advocates for relating semiotic ideas, as argued by Barthes, with Sigmund Freud’s arguments in Psychoanalysis in order to understand how signs can be used to bring out the inner desires of individuals.
1.9 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this section we review the literary study on symbolism. We start by looking at symbols in general and the views of some scholars on the subject. We shall then look at literature related to the funerary symbols. The last subsection will centre on the literary research carried out on the works of Kenzaburo Oe and Masuji Ibuse. In the review of the available literature, this literature review is divided into three sections. First it interrogates symbols, secondly it samples a number of critical works, and lastly it looks at critical works on Kenzaburo Oe and Masuji Ibuse.

1.9.1 Symbols

Magaga (1982) in his book, People and Communication in Kenya, argues that the desire in people to attach symbolic meanings to objects, animals, people and other things goes back to the prehistoric period. He observes that in this way some people are capable of communicating in better ways because they are naturally endowed in the art of communication. This is the case even in literary texts. This research looks into the works selected and identifies ‘things’ that are given symbolic representation.

Rasmussen (1971) views a symbol as a sign resulting from an experience which has a unique form that is taken by the particular sign. He observes that symbolic language does not grow out of nothing but develops from various experiences that people go through in their day to day lives. Rasmussen describes a symbol as something that has double intentionality and which is constituted in a way that is aimed at having a representational interpretation. This work seeks to
establish the ordinary meaning of the identified object and the implied meaning by the author, although meanings of symbols may differ from one community to another and even from one individual to the other, depending on the experiences in each setting.

Thomas (1970) posits that symbols have the power to enhance the being of man and to create a healthy existence and open up one’s mind. He describes symbolic language as one that greatly improves the quality of life and should not be taken literally; it helps in enabling a comparison. This study shares in the view of Thomas. The role of symbols in a community cannot be underestimated as they contribute greatly towards defining a community.

Bochat (2008) argues that atomic bombs have acquired symbolic meanings, not only in Japan but universally. He terms them as symbols of extreme collateral damage and targeting of civilians. Bochat’s reasoning is not necessarily held by this research. It is, however, agreed that atomic bombs are well known world over and have taken varied but related symbolic meanings in different parts of the world.

1.9.2 Literature on Funerary Symbols

A lot of literature has been written on funerary related issues in Japan and Asia in general. These range from personal experiences of authors to fictional works. Ikeda (1988) argues that each and every human being goes through sickness and body weakness and that nobody can live forever. Therefore, death is a reality. He identifies four common types of sufferings. These are: birth and the suffering that a child undergoes, illness, old age and its suffering and eventually the suffering of death. According to Ikeda, birth and death are totally inescapable
forces to all. Ikeda concludes by terming birth and death as states that lead to attainment of nirvana. Ikeda’s argument was vital to the successful completion of this study. He contributes a lot to the understanding of death and how it is perceived in the Japanese community.

In a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) radio programme that reviews literary works (the World Book Club programme) by Harriet Gilbert, Nawal El Saadawi, a renowned Egyptian writer, views death as a positive thing that ought to be longed for and be seen to inspire hope in people. Nawal El Saadawi tells her host:

I lost my sense of death because my name was on the death list for years and as a physician (as a doctor) I face death every day. So death is part of life. We are brought up to fear death as something totally different from life though death is part of life and this is very positive. It is beautiful, most people who died in front of me smiled when they died, they smiled, they were happy. But because you cannot control people and oppress them without fear, so we are afraid of death! This is part of religion, part of politics. So we shouldn’t be afraid of death, it is part of life. And all my life I lived in danger, from my childhood I lived in danger, and now I am 78 and I didn’t die and I will not die.

Nawal El Saadawi’s argument was very useful in this investigation because it was a guiding factor in determining when physical death can be qualified as a funerary symbol and when it can be termed as a positive thing. Nawal El Saadawi’s philosophical declaration that she will
not die gave power to the view held in this research that there are various forms of death. Physical death is only one of the many.

John Galtury and Daisaku Ikeda (1995) see war as a sign of bad things. They hence personally give themselves out to struggle for peace. Ikeda reflects on how the death of his brother in combat caused him pain. Discussing on how some authors wrote as a result of war, Ueda (1996) explains that one author (Ogai) began writing during the Russo-Japanese war as his personal effort to establish peace. Janathan Schnell, an American journalist in Linus Pauling and Daisaku Ikeda (2008), argues philosophically that he sees death as not only being death; but extinction as referring to the dying of death. The observation by Ikeda does not necessarily reflect the views of this research. Though it is true that war is largely negative and destructive, it should be noted that the texts selected in this study are as a result of their content of war and war experiences. We argue that not everything is negative in a war as argued by Ikeda. The objectives of this study differ from those of Ikeda in his works.

One of the three plays written by Kobo Abe (1993) and translated into English by Donald Keene is solely based on the idea of funerary symbols. This is the play “Involuntary Homicide.” Natsume Soseki (v) also wrote a text based on the idea of Emperor Meiji two years before his own death. In the novel, the protagonist’s dilemma is clear as he shows his helplessness in dealing with death. The lead character considers faith, madness and death as the only way to avoid loneliness. This appears to be the author’s own dilemma as he himself dies only two years after the publication of his text. Abe’s works, comments and personal experiences were very important for the success of this research. He portrays funerary symbols
as being very important and as something we encounter in our daily lives. What befalls him in the end of his personal life gives meaning to the objectives of this study.

Mishima (1970) bases most of his texts on funerary issues; these include *Death in Midsummer* and *The Decay of the Angel* (1970). This author incidentally committed *Seppuku* at the age of 45. Seppuku is a Japanese ritualistic suicide. Our research was guided by Mishima’s writings and experiences which show that literature is indeed a reflection of the actual picture of a community. This research, however, looks at the symbols in two selected works of literature.

Melissa (2007) in *The Journal of Japanese Studies* identifies popular literary writers of the post war Japanese literature. These include: Hayashi Fumiko, Kenzaburo Oe, Murakami Ryo, and Yamada Eimi. Bachat, (2008) argues that the Japanese try to cultivate or improve on the memory of the victims of Japanese wars through writings among the other ways. The argument of this research is related to the arguments and writings of Melissa on the view that war builds on funerary symbols by giving more symbols to it. While Wander looks at the memory of war, we looked at funerary symbols.

Kimura (1991) sees death as being an integral part of the cultural traditions of the Japanese people. This is the reason for the existence of many funerary symbols, not only in Japanese literary works but in their real day to day living. To him, death is part of life and its significance cannot be overlooked. Kimura further argues that the main concern of the Japanese is how to maintain the dying rituals than any other. He laments that many Japanese have today lost their deep sense of religion; many of them only rely on religious institutions for
performance of religious symbolic rituals pertaining to death and funerals among other life events. This research differs from the works of Kimura in the areas of concern. It restricts itself to funerary symbols unlike Kimura who looks at religion and rituals of the Japanese people.

Other symbolic events in the lives of the Japanese, especially related to funerals, include the making (preparing) of the deceased, placing of his or her body in a coffin and picking of the cremated bones and their burial. Kimura terms these events as being very symbolic, valued and meaningful in the culture of the Japanese people. The observations made by Kimura on the symbolic events in the lives of the Japanese provided guidance to the interaction with the funerary symbols in this research.

1.9.3 Review on Kenzaburo Oe’s and Masuji Ibuse’s writings

Kenzaburo Oe is a popular Japanese writer from whose works and personal life a lot has been written. He, in turn has written a lot of literature on the writings of other people.

Brueggemann (1958) is among the critical writers who have written on the works of Kenzaburo Oe. Brueggemann concentrates his writing on Oe’s son who is brain damaged. The critical works looks at the son’s achievements as recorded by the author in person in the text. He notes that despite the son’s handicap, he is a gifted composer and a pianist who has two CDs to his credit. Brueggemann’s writing though, deals with a topic that is not related to the issues dealt with in this research. The text that he looks at is also different from the text that this research looks at.
Humphraies (1997) in his text *New Literary History* views Oe as one of the few Japanese writers who do not follow the western cultural ways in a changing Japan. Humphraies accuses some Japanese writers for not reflecting the Japanese setup in not only their writings but also in films. He argues that the two aren’t the same and they should not be linked so much.

Wender (2007) in *The Journal of Japanese Studies* looks at a number of writers in relation to their reflection on sexuality and gender identity and how they relate their works to race. The Japanese authors that Wender looks at include Hayashi Fumiko, Yukio Mishima, Murakami Ryo, Yamada Eimi and Kenzaburo Oe. As mentioned above, Wender deals with things that are quite different from ours. There is, therefore, little similarity between this research and his work.

Dewey (1988) in his study on Holocausts and atomic war in Fiction, brings out Paul Brian’s views on Masuji Ibuse’s *Black Rain* (1970). Brian views *Black Rain* as mainly a form of escapist writing. Brian’s argument is that such writing is a result of one’s failure to come to terms with the reality of war. Dewey’s research is good and was useful in our work as we set out to fulfill the first two objectives of this research. It worked as a guiding factor in the identification of funerary symbols and further discussion on the same.

Marvin Marcus (1998) terms Masuji Ibuse’s *Black Rain* as a ‘Mosaic of journal fragments, letters, and so forth, a technique that allows for multiple points of view and complex temporal shifts’. Marcus’ work is quite different from the one that this research deals with. Marcus’ arguments were however helpful in the understanding of *Black Rain* and identification of
funerary symbols. Marcus’ work was therefore in the realization of the first objective of this study.

Benedict Giamo (2003) in his works on the writings of Masuji Ibuse reflects back to the reality of world war that had devastating effects on Japan in relation to Ibuse’s *Black Rain*. Giamo does not carry out an extensive investigation on the issues dealt with in Ibuse’s *Black Rain*. In fact, he appears to only make a mention of it once in a while.

1.10 **Methodology**

This was a library based research. It required careful reading and analysis of *Black Rain* (1970) and *The Silent Cry* (1967) to gather the relevant information. The collected information was used alongside the information from other sources in order to arrive at a comprehensive result. The other works by the selected authors were also looked into. Critical works on the writings of the two authors were given priority. It was after considering all these works that the results were analyzed. In analyzing and collecting the data required the study was guided by the theories that were settled on.

1.11 **Research design**

This research was a descriptive one. We investigated the manifestations of funerary symbols in *Black Rain* and *The Silent Cry* and then described them. The views of critics and other scholars whose comments could be relevant to this research formed part of the final analysis.
1.12 Conclusion

This chapter has clearly laid the background to the study; the objectives and justification for the research have also been given. A well conducted literature review has been given with the view of shedding more light on the undertakings of the research. The chapter has concluded with the methodology and research design used in the accomplishment of this study.

In the next chapter the research expounds more on the first objective of the study. In the chapter, the various symbols used by the author of *The Silent Cry* (1967) and the author of *Black Rain* (1970), Kenzaburo Oe and Masuji Ibuse, respectively, are identified and explained.
CHAPTER TWO


2.1 Introduction

Chapter two addresses the first objective of the research work. This chapter starts by identifying the funerary symbols employed in the two texts under study in this work comparatively. In the second part of this chapter, the funerary symbols employed in individual texts, but not reflected in the other text, are explained. For the ease of accomplishing this, several ways were employed. The following table was one of the tools used to accomplish this:

Analysis Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Symbol identified</th>
<th>Where identified</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Chapter and pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Black Rain</td>
<td>The Silent Cry</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The selected texts of Kenzaburo Oe and Masuji Ibuse greatly helped in putting their names in the world map as some of the most renowned literary writers the world over.

2.1.1 The silent cry

The Silent Cry (1967) is an award winning text and Kenzaburo Oe’s most read and most popular text. The author himself admits that he has a special preference for the text which he considers to be the best of his works. The text is based on the condition of his first born son
who was born with a disability. The situation of the son disturbed him so much that he was inspired to write the text by the son’s predicament. The work, however, is purely fictional.

The narrator in the text talks about his only child who is badly handicapped and in an institution. The condition of the child seriously deteriorates and so does the marriage relationship between the narrator and his wife. The two never get another child together, and their handicapped child whom they are both ashamed of remains in the institution to the end of the text.

The child, a friend who commits suicide and the only brother the narrator has are the main things that occupy the narrator’s mind. It is this brother, the narrator’s lone brother, that his wife chooses to get into extra-marital sexual affair with. A relationship from which she conceives her second child. As a result of this, the narrator contemplates committing suicide several times.

*The Silent Cry* (1967) helped the author, Kenzaburo Oe, to win the world’s most coveted literary prize, Nobel Prize, in the year 1994. The text remains a major text in the world.

**2.1.2 Black Rain**

Masuji Ibuse is best known for his text, *Black Rain* (1970) that centres on the effects of the Second World War. The text has won him various literary prizes and has been widely read the world over. The author, in the text, tries to recollect the memories of the Second World War.
Through the narrator, Shizuma, we are shown these effects of war on the common man who may not be concerned with the war.

The narrator’s own family is affected as the narrator himself has radiation sickness - although his case is mild, Yasuko- his niece, is rained on and gets black spots from which she later develops full blown radiation sickness and suffers a lot from it. The war, as written by this literary scholar, affects the common man more than it does the leaders and the people who declare and run it within the government.

Through Masuji Ibuse, the reader is provided with an alternative first-hand view, from literary angle – a break from history, of the devastating Second World War. This is detailed and more critical. Through Black Rain (1970), Masuji Ibuse has won for himself Japan’s Naoki literary prize, Noma literary prize and Order of Cultural Merit prize which is the greatest literary prize one can win in Japan.

This chapter identifies the funerary symbols used in each of these texts in the context of the Japanese community and specific contexts in each of the texts. The funerary symbols identified are expounded on. The chapter is pegged on the first objective of the research.

2.2 Characters as funerary symbols

The two authors have employed some of their characters uniquely in order to advance their messages in their texts. Masuji Ibuse employs Yasuko, a young girl of marriageable age who moves to stay with her uncle, as one of the major characters and a funerary symbol. Kenzaburo
Oe on his part in his text *The Silent Cry* (1967) employs Takashi who is a younger brother of the narrator of the story and also a major character as a funerary symbol. Like Yasuko, Takashi also moves from an overseas country to join the narrator’s family in Japan. The two characters move in with the narrators in their respective texts and end up appearing as some of the main human figures employed as funerary symbols.

Yasuko is the niece of the narrator in the narrative, Shigematsu Shizuma, and one of the main characters in Masuji Ibuse’s text, *Black Rain* (1970). She comes to stay with the narrator’s family on the request of the narrator himself. She is, however, said to have got the radiation disease that was the resultant of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Because of this, it becomes hard to find a marriage partner for her. When she starts showing the symptoms for the disease, and later on it develops into a full blown sickness, she causes her hosts a lot of discomfort. Out of fear and embarrassment she had opted to keep her suffering secret. Because of this she becomes a source of suffering, both physical and psychological to those close to her, Shigematsu and his wife Shigeko: For several years past, Shigematsu Shizuma, of the village of Kobatake, had been aware of his niece Yasuko as a weight on his mind (Masuji:9).

In *The Silent Cry* (1967) Takashi who is the only surviving close relative of Mitsusaburo, the narrator, also finds himself in a sickness that he would have wished to keep to himself. He contracts a sexually transmitted disease, from his promiscuity, and suffers as he tries to seek help privately and even to keep the details of how he had contracted it. He is, however, able to get treated for that and to move on with his life. When he moves in with his brother in the
valley, he becomes a burden to him, and other people close to him. This is through his character.

Both Takashi and Yasuko cause their families a lot of discomfort. Upon coming over to Japan and getting a decent welcome, Takashi sets out to outshine his senior brother. He saves the life of a young boy who is stuck in a broken bridge, not out of good will but in an open malicious case of competition with the unsuspecting narrator and brother. He also solely sells off the family land, even though he is the younger brother, without proper consultations with the elder brother and what is more - he cheats his brother out of his fair share. Mitsusaburo, who is also the narrator says this about Takashi:

“…and Takashi had in fact already sold all the Nekodoro’s land and buildings, including Jin’s home. If anything qualified Takashi for the role of evildoer, it was the flaw in his sensibility that allowed him so easily to betray the pitiful plans of a middle-aged woman trapped by her abnormal bulk in this godforsaken valley” (Oe:164).

In an open case of contempt, he agitates Mitsusaburo when he pokes at Mitsusaburo’s suitcase with the toe of the gym shoes he had been wearing for football practice. As she comes to terms with her failing health, Yasuko (Oe:1967) solely decides to write to her suitor and discloses her condition to him. This greatly disappoints her uncle and aunt as she does this without consulting them in any way. Her decision does not only expose her and keep the suitor off, it also dashes her family’s hope of having her establish her own family. The unprecedented turn
of events and the pain her family and she herself are in, is best described in the words of May (2003):

    Young and lovely, she is no longer marriageable; she will perhaps never have children, or if she does they too may be trapped by the less tangible wreckage of the atomic detonation above Hiroshima. After all, buildings and streets can be healed long before human souls and anatomies have even begun to recover.

Both of the two major characters in the texts find themselves in suffering that cannot be kept to themselves, in the end they have to come out openly as they seek assistance. Yasuko’s pain is mainly in the physical while Takashi’s pain is mainly psychological. This means that the suffering of the characters ends up being a concern of the others close to them. When Yasuko realizes that she cannot contain her suffering anymore she moves to her uncle and confronts him with the devastating news on her deteriorating health.

Shizuma finds this news to be very disturbing. He is in the living room when she confronts him with the sad news of her failing health; which includes constant ringing sound in her ears. The effect this has on him is seen from what happens in him; in a moment he thinks he sees the room disappearing and in its place he sees a great mushroom-like cloud in the sky (another funerary symbol). In *The Silent Cry* (1967), Takashi who has kept some secrets on the illicit sexual affair he had with the sister, realizes that he cannot keep that to himself anymore. With the desire to confess and perhaps get relieved, he goes to his brother Mitsusaburo and makes that confession. He tells him of his close relationship with the sister and people’s talk, and how
one thing led to another until he ended up having sex with her (Oe:236). These confessions and revelations end up hurting Shizuma and Mitsusaburo who are the major characters and narrators in the texts.

Yasuko and Takashi in the respective texts try to find their own ways of finding cure to their illnesses, something that could have devastating effects if it were to leak to outsiders. In America, Takashi seeks the assistance of a nurse from a medical office in the hotel he was staying, in order to get medication: “If the trick came to light a young black nurse would get fired and I’d be deported, I imagine.” (Oe:1967). In a private talk between Shigeko and Dr Kajita who treats Yasuko, the doctor informs her that Yasuko had attempted to treat herself. Due to this, in the evening Shigeko calls her husband out of the house and they discuss Yasuko’s case.

It is clear from their talk that the attempts by the girl to treat herself would not be good news at all. If it were to be known by other people, such would really have a damaging effect on their reputation. This is because it would be concluded that the two had neglected her because she suffered an incurable disease (Oe:223). Yasuko’s attempt to find treatment without involving her uncle and aunt is a reflection of the psychological suffering she undergoes on learning of the symptoms of the radiation disease – this is also the case with Takashi in The Silent Cry. Plans are underway to marry Yasuko off and she knows that all these will not materialize if her condition is known to the public. The main problem for her, already, is arranging a marriage for her when there is a rumour that she may be suffering from radiation sickness.
(Lichtenstein:1994). Because of these fears they resolve to keep that information to themselves. Yasuko’s actions and those of Takashi, do not portend well to those who are close to her.

A woman from Ikemoto, whose name is not given, has been used in Black Rain to show the public’s attitude towards the victims of the radiation disease. Shigematsu gets to dislike her because she causes him a lot of emotional pain. The woman does not seem to understand what the victims of the radiation disease go through and why they need to have a different lifestyle. In what appears as sarcasm at its best, she appears to suggest that Shigematsu and Shokichi, who were fishing at the banks of the lake at Agiyama, were just lazy people for not finding something useful and much more demanding to do. Later on Shokichi, while commenting on the woman says, “I’m so eager to give the woman at Ikemoto’s a taste of her own medicine.” (Ibuse:31) This is the same case with what Kenzaburo Oe (1967) writes in his text. While the people are grappling with the radiation disease in Black Rain, the situation in The Silent Cry has to do with the rains and floods.

Yasuko and Takashi bring gloom unto their families in their respective texts in different ways. Yasuko, though, does most of this with good intentions but ends up hurting the ones close to her unknowingly. Takashi, however, goes into an offensive against his brother intentionally. His intention is to blackmail his senior brother and to steal the limelight from him and get all the glory through his doings. Mitsusaburo cannot help noting and feeling that his younger brother is out to demean him before his organization of young men, the footballers. In one of the occasions he replies to Takashi’s question, on whether he knew how to prepare a pheasant, by saying he would try, the youth sigh with disgust as they consider that to be a lowly thing for
a senior member of a family and community. This incident leads Mitsusaburo into believing that the incident had been a set up intended at humiliating him. He is indeed humiliated and his ego hurt: “The young men had been treated to the spectacle of their leader twisting his elder brother round his little finger once again.” (Oe:148)

The onslaught by Takashi continues when he openly gets into a sexual relationship with his brother’s wife. This he does openly, something that greatly disturbs Mitsusaburo. When he discovers this he says this about the incident: “…but Takashi’s arm, which was obviously stretched out to touch my wife’s side beneath the blanket, gave the impression that the two were sleeping quite alone” (Oe:161). The effect on him is immediate. He says, “…I handed the bucket to Jin’s son in front of the main house so that I shouldn’t have to see the people asleep in there again…” (Oe:162)

The period that follows the dropping of the atomic bomb becomes one of pain and lamentations as those people infected with the atomic disease undergo an incomparable pain. It is due to this that the victims of the atomic disease are feared and avoided. The rest of the populace fears Yasuko because they do not know whether she would infect them or have children who would suffer her predicament. These include her fiancé who cuts off his communication with her when he learns that she is suffering from the atomic disease. Takashi is also feared by some of the people who were close to him. He is, however, feared and avoided by people because of his brutal and callous nature. After killing a girl he intended to rape Takashi describes the event in a state that truly shows him to be a dangerous and cold man. He kills her using a stone (Oe:224). Natsumi expresses her fear that a case of murder would not be entirely impossible to
Takashi. After giving his account of the alleged killing, Hoshio is filled with fear of mortal death that he simply cannot sleep. He tells Takashi, “I don’t want to go to sleep, Taka! I feel I might never wake up again.” (Oe:232).

Takashi’s violent nature also deeply affects Mitsusaburo. Takashi is reported to attack a defenseless young man whom they drop from his football group, the feeling of Mitsusaburo as he witnesses this shows what he thought of his brother, “A sense of real physical horror at seeing a close relative in the act of violence thrust down hard and massively into my stomach,” (Oe:177). He eventually begins to lose his sleep after the incident. Takashi also sends a strain of fear in the whole valley when he turns his group of ‘footballers’ into a militaristic group. In order to implicate everybody in the looting that takes place at the supermarket, Takashi directs his young men to ensure that every family in the valley gets involved, by force. (Oe:1967)

When the carefree Natsumi and Takashi get into an illicit sexual affair behind Mitsusaburo’s back, Hoshio; who gets to know of it, feels so bad that he even requests Mitsusaburo whether he can join him in the storehouse where he was staying in his own isolation. He tells Mitsusaburo about it and he too is disturbed by the turn of events (Oe:209). When he later confesses this to his brother, Takashi says this about Hoshio, “After he watched us making love I saw him quietly being sick….” (Oe:221).

Once, Takashi leaves the house at night and moves out into the darkness and snow. Mitsusaburo happens to witness this from the storehouse. He is more disturbed by the fact that Takashi has erected and does not do anything to hide it. Mitsusaburo thinks, “Morally, only a
dog or some such animal would expose its erect penis so frankly and so pathetically with little purpose.” (Oe:147). When Mitsusaburo goes back to sleep, he is disturbed by such thoughts in relation to those of a dog. Takashi is one of the main factors that continuously contribute to Mitsusaburo’s failures.

Yasuko and Takashi clearly portray themselves as funerary symbols within the contexts of the novels. Yasuko, for instance, develops the radiation sickness symptoms after Shizuma but suffers the more. Shigematsu, Shigeko and other people close to her suffer silently as her condition worsens. This is from knowing that they cannot do much to help her. This is the same case with Takashi whose mannerisms leads to his death in the end.

Beside the major characters in the texts, the two selected texts have also employed the images of children as funerary symbols. Mitsusaburo who is the brother to Takashi and the narrator, keeps on being disturbed by the thoughts of his disabled son (Oe:32) whom he had placed in an institution. He opts to keep his child away in an institution with the approval of his wife for the child’s own good and to also avoid further mental torment. He, however, cannot help being revisited by the very child in his dreams (Oe:32)

One of the disturbing things that Shigematsu sees is a child who suckles her mother who is already dead. Not knowing or being in a position to help Shigematsu (Masuji:107) and the others move on. But the memory sticks. The child “…opened the corpse’s dress at the top and
was playing with the breasts.” When they move towards the child she “…clutched tight at both breasts and gazed up at us with apprehensive eyes” (Masuji:107).

Mitsusaburo (Oe:44) tells of the agony his wife and himself go through as their baby undergoes an operation. He himself, not his wife, is called into the operating theatre to give blood transfusions, “…I – not my wife – was summoned three times to the operating theatre to give blood transfusions…” (Oe:44). This is something that torments the narrator continuously. The disabled child causes a lot of change in the relationship between Mitsusaburo and the wife. The wife leaves him for the brother, and at the same time begins to drink. On his part, Mitsusaburo keeps being haunted by the same. In a bus they are travelling in, Mitsusaburo and his wife (Oe:43) see a baby in likely bad health and this incident immediately arouses the bitter memories about their own son. They get bitter as what they would have wished to forget is aroused: “With bloodshot eyes, red like plums, in which the traces of toxicity still lingered, my wife took note of the child. I too found my eyes drawn irresistibly and with loathing toward him. His head and the color of his skin were such as to bring back our worst memories….” (Oe:43)

Jin, another character in The Silent Cry, blames the Koreans who have settled in the valley for most of the misfortunes that befall the valley. She blames them for “…grabbing the valley’s land and money” (Oe:188) and also for causing the death of S. who was a brother to Mitsusaburo. Takashi makes the people to further believe that they are exploited by the Koreans. He spreads this propaganda as he struggles to spread his influence. The effect of Takashi’s propaganda is brought out clearly as even children are seen to take side against the
Koreans as they openly insult and throw snowballs at the manager of a Korean owned supermarket.

A man who travels with Shigematsu (Masuji:274) causes a lot of fear and gloom as he spreads false news concerning the ongoing war between Japan and other powers. The man informs all people who care to listen to him that all men would be castrated if the American forces defeat and occupy Japan; he further says that all the people who were visiting Hiroshima after the dropping of the atomic bomb were dying due to the nature of the bomb. Though Shigematsu was to find later on the news to be mere false propaganda, the man killed people’s spirit and will to fight at a time they needed to focus on war. Mitsusaburo’s wife firmly believes that her husband was to blame for the misfortune of having a deformed child; she blames him for it and denies him his conjugal rights. She, like the man in the trains that Shigematsu uses, advances these false claims. She also believes that Mitsusaburo makes life unbearable not only for her but also for Takashi: “Even when he all but went on his knees and begged you to tell him why you hated him, you wouldn’t say, ‘I don’t hate you’” (Oe: 259)

Mitsusaburo is constantly disturbed by the memory of a close friend of his who committed suicide. These memories linger his mind constantly, he himself contemplates committing suicide as a possible end to his own troubles (Oe:4). Masuji also uses images of dead people as symbols. Shigematsu and his family, in company of other people, while escaping air attacks from foreign forces encounter very many dead bodies, some very devastating, that they seem to lose hope at that point in time. The effects of the dead over the living are clear. Though Japan is not the leading country in suicide cases in the world, suicide cases are not uncommon
In the Korean folk tales, a woman with red eyes - like plums is a character used symbolically. This character is viewed as evil. She represents human beings who eat their colleagues (Oe:26). This tale is brought out through the recollection of Mitsusaburo’s wife who has become a habitual alcoholic and who is drinking to escape the reality of her present situation.

2.3 War

Fear of not knowing what is to happen next is a common thing that keeps recurring in the two texts. This is especially so in Black Rain which lays emphasis on the issue of war. When people see smoke from the city of Hiroshima they get shaken because to them that is an outcome of yet another attack on the people and their property. Smoke and fire have already gained symbolic meanings and these are funerary. One of the characters, Nojima, describes the extraordinary smoke like one from a volcano. He describes the effect of this smoke on himself when he says that “my knees as I squatted there shook so uncontrollably that I pressed them against a rock, heedless of a small white flower clinging to it” (Masuji:22). His conclusion is that a new bomb weapon must have been dropped by the enemy army. The women who are in Nojima’s company deliberately avoid looking towards the city because the sight of the smoke has caused them fear (Masuji:23). The novel has therefore, successfully employed smoke in the text as a funerary symbol. When the pheasants die and have to be burned (Oe:156) it is the smoke that makes people get to know what had happened. The smell that follows is so awful that it arouses memories of a burned black person in Mitsusaburo’s mind (Oe 156). One of the things that denote racial prejudice and bias in the text.
The war that takes place between the opposing world powers is fought in different forms, fire being one of them (Oe:97). Takashi and his group also use fire as a weapon in different instances in *Black Rain*. The bombs dropped on Hiroshima by enemy forces cause fires every now and then. They cause a lot of confusion, displacements, deaths and physical pain: “Indeed, the fires of Hiroshima were spreading wider and wider, and it was only sensible to get out of their way for a while.” (Oe:41). In *The Silent Cry* fire is used to punish or as a tool of *correction*, Mitsusaburo remembers about a case of a photograph of a black person who had been burned by fire (Oe 156). Loosely dangling electric wires in the streets pose a danger of causing fire or of another form: “It occurred to me that they were awfully dangerous” (Masuji 38). The first form of fire in *Black Rain* is the flames that are caused by the dropping of a bomb. The fires appear to destroy what is not destroyed directly by the bomb itself. When Shigematsu doesn’t see Mrs. Takahashi again and he concludes that “I expect she was caught in the flames.” (Masuji:52).

Another fire is the one that destroys Miyaji’s and Shigematsu Shizuma’s property. Miyaji who is in pain of loss comments on the fire: “…the tips of the flames are like snakes- they flicker their tongues in at the windows first, then they crawl right inside.” (Masuji:82) The destructive fire is given animate features to show the almost malicious-like intent as it consumed his wealth and hurt him. Iwatake, Miyoshi and Ito, who are needy, are also forced to flee for safety because of the fire. Iwatake does not only sustain burns but is also forced to leave behind a man in real mortal danger (Masuji:248)
Shigematsu describes hill fires, through which they walk with Yasuko and his wife, as very dangerous (Masuji:57). He, in fact, compares a walk through them to the act of moths playing with a burning lamp at night; a clear indication of the danger they expose themselves to. He declares to a small group of refugees: “Hill fires are dangerous…” (Masuji:57). Fire has been used as a destructive factor in both *The Silent Cry* and *Black Rain*.

The atomic bombs dropped in parts of Japan in *Black Rain* have been used to bring the same effect in their respective texts. The dropping of the atomic bomb by the enemy forces causes a lot of suffering to the people affected. This is both physical and psychological. The destruction caused by the Hiroshima bomb is beyond comprehension. Shigematsu tells how a woman who owned Takahashi Spinning-Comb Works embraces him in fear and tells him: “Whatever can have happened, Mr Shizuma? Such horror!” (Masuji:45). Shigematsu’s own immediate reaction is: “whatever it was- a bomb or whatever- they’ve gone too far. Yes it’s too much!” (Masuji:46). The confusion caused by the attack is quite evident in Shigematsu and the woman. While Shigematsu loses his glasses without noticing it, the woman loses her bag and she too doesn’t notice this immediately. It is only later that she laments “That bag had more than three thousand yen in it. My money and my savings book and my seal” (Masuji:48).

The atomic bomb from then henceforth, serves as a reminder of an ugly past in the lives of the affected characters. People appear to lose hope and live in fear constantly. It is this attack that in the end forces the state to surrender and accept defeat in the war. The atomic bomb becomes the most dreaded thing in the community, just like Takashi is dreaded in the valley in *Black*
Rain. Through his group of youth, Takashi spreads fear through all the residents of the valley – who fear to confront him (Oe:199).

The effects of the atomic bomb go beyond the destruction of human life and property. Shigematsu reports on how it killed the fish, “Even though I knew that fish had skins more sensitive to sound than human beings, a nameless dread still filled me whenever I wondered what type of bomb the ball of fire had been, or what its scientific effects might be.” The bomb also destroys a school leading to many deaths, a student from the Hiroshima Industrial College tells Shigematsu, “more of the others were crushed to death. Some of them were caught underneath but got out injured” (Masuji:89).

The most devastating effect of the atomic bomb is, perhaps, the taking away of sex urge in all it affects; something that does not only threaten marriages but also family continuity. Shigematsu overhears a rumour that “Tamotsu and Rikuo had been saying that those injured by the bomb, even if only slightly hurt had all lost interest in sex” (Masuji:211). Shigematsu Shizuma, whose only injury was a burn on the cheek, realizes that he had also lost all interest in sex. When the manager at Shigematsu’s work place comes to visit him to bid Yasuko and Shigeko bye he tells him gloomily about the bomb: “It gives off a terrific radiation. I myself saw some bricks in the ruins that were all burnt away, with bubbles raised on the surface. The tiles, too, had gone a kind of flame colour. A terrible thing they’ve produced. They say nothing’ll grow in Hiroshima or Nagasaki for another seventy-five years” (Masuji:282)
It is also after the atomic bombs were dropped that Japan finally concedes defeat. This is from a report given by His majesty where he declares that: “The enemy is using a new and savage bomb to kill and maim innocent victims and inflict incalculable damage. Moreover, should hostilities continue any further, the final result would be to bring about not only the annihilation of the Japanese race, but the destruction of the human civilization as a whole…” (Masuji:300).

The atomic bomb has also the effect of inflicting fear among the people as seen from part of the capitulation speech given by the Japanese leader. The atomic bomb and Takashi are among the major funerary symbols used by the authors in Black Rain and The Silent Cry respectively. The resultant effect of the continued attacks by the enemy forces, in Black Rain, is the creation of fear amongst the people. The case is the same in The Silent Cry whenever there is a fight or any other frightening happening. As people flee to safer areas Shigematsu reports that some oil drums were exploding. The intense fear within the people fleeing is shown in Shigematsu’s words when he says that, “As one man, the refugees on the tracks began to run, but almost at once reverted to their former leaden tread, the tread of men utterly exhausted both physically and mentally” (Masuji:56). To this he adds that “At each explosion, the refugees began to run” (Masuji:52). With time the people had come to associate oil drums’ explosions with real danger and disaster. They have to save themselves from imminent threat that comes with every explosion.

A children’s play that Shigematsu (Oe:95) is told about unfortunately ends tragically with the death of one of the actors. The tale causes Mitsusaburo a lot of agony for a long time. About his feeling when he saw that he says, “I was seized with fear, collapsed screaming on the floor,
went into convulsions and lost consciousness. When I came to, I’d already been carried home and grandmother was at my bedside…. (Oe:95). The play enacted by the children is a thing he remembers many more years after. It is a frightening experience.

Wars and fights normally lead to strained relationships amongst members of a society. As people flee from the enemy attacks they get into a lot of confusion and some get separated from their children. A man who loses a child shouts its name in vain (Masuji:58). In The Silent Cry Mitsusaburo shows how war led their father away from them into the war and how this led into his suffering and eventual death (Oe:96). The death causes a further family breakdown when S believes that their mother refuses to divulge more details regarding their father’s death. Thinking that the mother is mentally affected following this death, he sends her to hospital, this action causes irreparable damages to the family relationship.

While concluding her recollection diary on wartime diet, Shigeko makes this declaration in her writing: “I realized too, that war’s a sadistic killer of human beings, young and old, men and women alike” (Masuji:71). She further describes how the city of Hiroshima loses its beauty because of war. Shigematsu, who is the narrator also, makes a comment on war: “I hated war! Who cared, after all, which side won? The only important thing was to end it all soon as possible: rather an unjust peace, than a ‘just’ war!” (Masuji:161)

The war fought between Japan and other powers has a direct impact on citizens, some of who are innocent and not directly involved in any conflict. People who are said to be survivors of the Kojin Unit and who are hosted in a borrowed room are said to be in a lot of suffering as a
direct effect of the war. “Some of these were dying of raw burns, others groaning and excreting blood, and the same, foul odor hung over them all” (Masuji:203). The odor from them is very strong and causes a lot of discomfort to people who inhale it. The raw burns would also cause discomfort to other people.

The conflict between locals and Korean settlers in *The Silent Cry*, perpetuated by Takashi through his group of youth in the valley, has a lot of effects to people even if it takes the form of a cold war. The Korean supermarket owner faces open hostility from the valley people and they in turn have to pay more for goods, as a way of paying for the loot that had occurred at the supermarket (Oe:250-251). Further impact of war is seen through Hiroshi in *Black Rain* who feels that the doctor who treated his ear did not appreciate his gift of a bottle of sake. He blames war for producing people who are changed, like the doctor: “what is quite sure was that it never did anybody any good” (Masuji:262).

Due to the ongoing war Shigematsu comments that at the time most of the essential things had become so scarce that one needed to have connections to have them, “commodities were so scarce that it was hopeless for anyone without such connections to get hold of food” (Masuji:278). It is because of this effect of the war that Shigeko and Yasuko decide to go to their country home in the hope that things would be better there (Masuji:278). On his part, Shigematsu, after hearing about a woman who sends her son to be trained as a human torpedo, and as he stood before the woman’s body after her death he wonders why she could not have prevented him from joining the training. Shigematsu in the end concludes that war “paralyzes people’s power of judgment” (Masuji:143). He thinks this is what happens to the woman, he is
affected when thinking about this and the “sermon on mortality” comes out only as a faint whisper (Masuji:143). Mrs Ariki who had a closer relationship with the dead woman is affected as seen in the way she thanks Shigematsu, “in a voice charged with emotion,” (Masuji:143). War is to blame for this.

In their movement to safety; Shigematsu, Shigeko and Yasuko come across disturbing things that have to do with death. Things like a dead woman whose hair is caked with blood, most of her body covered in blood and eyes and teeth left open and showing white (Masuji:96). As they pass each of these grotesque sights Yasuko is overcome with emotion as she stares at each and with each she keeps calling into her uncle to see, “Again and again, I had to tell her; ‘It’s not a show. Anyhow, there’s nothing we can do for them, so keep quiet and come on. Keep your eyes on the ground” (Masuji:96). The extent of death is seen in Shigematsu’s description where he says that many were the times they stumbled on dead bodies or fell forward dipping their hands into hot asphalt (Masuji:98). These images of death torment Yasuko for long; it is the same case with Mitsusaburo, in The Silent Cry, who is tormented by the thoughts of a friend who commits suicide throughout the text.

These descriptions serve the purpose of showing the rate at which people died and the risk involved. They also kill the spirit of the living as they see the people who have died and the conditions under which they died. No wonder the people are overcome by sadness. The deaths described in the text are part of the funerary symbols. It is also from these bodies that Shigematsu believes his niece - Yasuko, through physical contact, contracts the radiation disease.
Later on Shigematsu once again takes some time to describe the corpses he, Shigeko and Yasuko come across. The description given serves as a clear indication of the emotional suffering he and others went through. He says, “The bodies were completely naked and scorched black, and the buttocks of each rested in a great pool of feces. Nowhere else had I witnessed such a scene! The hair on their heads and elsewhere was burned away, and it was only by the contours of the breasts, for example- that I could distinguish man and woman. How had they come to meet such a grotesque death?” (Masuji:99)

Still on the same talk of death, the crematorium is reported to be jammed (Masuji:130) and the burning of bodies has to be done anywhere (Masuji:131). These are grave descriptions that fill the characters with fear and a state of hopelessness.

Miyaji’s death is described as one of the most tragic and painful deaths in the text Black Rain, just as the death of Takashi is in The Silent Cry. This is because his death happens after he has lost his property to the flames of fire and gone through a lot of physical bodily pain as a result of the burns he suffers from the fires (Masuji:83). The death affects Shigematsu and through him the reader. The death of Takashi on the other hand happens at a time when he has established himself in the valley and his influence is felt by all through his group of youth.

The narrator describes some of the deaths in a way that can cause fear to the readers and the characters who witness them, they are grotesque. A superintendent- General Otsuka dies in an extremely painful way. He is said to have burned to death. This happens to both the human and
the animals. Just like the other death scenes, these scenes serve only to fill the characters with fear and a state of hopelessness. They are funerary symbols.

In the context of the text the water tank that Shigematsu sees poses a threat to people’s lives. Shigematsu sees three dead women in the water. He is overtaken by the sight and he just cannot take his eyes off the bodies. The description of the corpses is also quite disturbing. From the buttocks of one of the dead bodies in the water tank is “A length of more than three feet of large intestines… it was swollen to about three inches in diameter…” (Masuji:159).

In Nekoya-cho Reception Centre for corpses Shigematsu says he “could see a pile about six feet high of dead bodies.” (Masuji:159) He keeps seeing the decomposing bodies with a cotton towel “but still the stench that came following after me was enough to make my head reel” (Masuji:160). This scene and the stench associated with it is a clear indication that people were dying at an overwhelming rate. This was a disturbing scene to the narrator.

In a similar manner, The Silent Cry has also shown various devastating images that have to do with war. After failing to make a phone call due to the worsening state of snow and communication breakdown, Mitsusaburo sees two mature men who are engaged in a fight. The fight is grotesque because these are elderly men who fight openly before children and women and would not restrain themselves. In the fight one of the men dislodges the other’s tooth and part of his gum. The narrator says that the incident fills women, children and Mitsusaburo himself with a lot of sadness. “I stretched out my hand, picked it up in my fingers, and then flung it down again, my guts gripped in a spasm of revulsion. It was a dislodged tooth and part
of the gum… stole fearful glances at me….” (Oe:167). After witnessing this Mitsusaburo says that, “I was so disturbed….” (Oe:168).

When explaining to Mitsusaburo, Takashi says that “The people who used to get rid of their pent-up aggression by watching or mediating in the kid’s fights and quarrels are busy fighting each other this time,” (Oe:168). The fact that nobody attempts to stop the fights dispels doom and hopelessness. Takashi interprets this as a sign of the valley turning into something worse- a ghetto (Oe:169). The policemen are also kept away by the falling snow. Just like in a ghetto, there is no security and Takashi is training the youth for an insurgency.

Apart from the atomic bomb the enemy forces drop many more bombs, in Black Rain, which affect the people’s livelihoods in various ways. They too are said to be very destructive though not on the same magnitude as the atomic bomb. Shigematsu says that “Kure was raided on June 22nd, then July 1st a great incendiary raid razed the flat, central area of the city to the ground” (Masuji:192). These ones are followed by the dropping of the atomic bomb on August 6th in Hiroshima city.

Following the decision of the government (Black Rain) to have black-out regulations, communication is drastically affected as people are not allowed to use lanterns to light the way at night. Due to this the head of the fire brigade in Kobatake village cannot be contacted when an important decision is to be taken by the headman in the village. The attack in the supermarket in The Silent Cry also disrupts people’s lifestyle for a while as they have to buy
commodities at a higher price. Jean’s health also worsens in an effect that is directly related to the attack.

When the emperor reopens the supermarket that had been closed following a breakdown by Takashi’s youths and the villagers, he increases the prices of commodities by an average of 20% or 30% more than before the loot (Oe:250). This is aimed at compensating for the losses incurred. After this riot and the subsequent closure of the supermarket, Jin “… ate almost nothing now and was rapidly growing thinner” (Oe:251). The riot, hence, ends up having adverse effects on many people long after it occurred.

The smoke that engulfs Shigematsu, Shigeko and Yasuko (in Black Rain) as they move poses a real mortal challenge as it threatens to suffocate them. It can be described as a funerary symbol. Shigematsu says, “The wind gradually dropped, and the smoke ceased moving, which made breathing more and more difficult… once when we were brought to a halt, blinded by the smoke, the smoke and the heat pressed in on us, and breathing would have become unbearably difficult if the wind had not changed just at the moment. Yasuko gave a shrill, suffocated cry, and I had to shout at her ….” (Masuji:98). From the way Shigematsu describes the smoke it is no doubt that it posed a real threat to their lives.

When Yasuko develops the atomic disease Shigematsu cannot help recalling the days when they moved through the hot ashes of the burned city. He knows that this could have been possibly the cause of her infection and the place where she got the disease from. He therefore
blames himself for the turn of events knowing quite clearly that he could have prevented that from happening, “Shigematsu felt very much to blame on this score” (Masuji:236).

The war makes it necessary to give people some military training to enable them defend themselves. This however does not augur well with some people in Black Rain. This is especially when it is the young who have to train the elderly. One of the characters in the text reports that in one of the trainings a man called Nakamura even contemplated committing suicide because he was kicked by some younger person than him, a trainer. The victim feels “like a father being bullied by his own son” (Masuji:241). The elderly people in the valley, in The Silent Cry, also get very uncomfortable when they see Takashi in an effort of trying to get the control of the entire valley for his own selfish gains.

The burns and injuries sustained by Hiroshi are so extensive that they cause the people who are close to him emotional suffering. While talking about his condition, he himself says that his injuries “…consisted almost entirely of burns, on my head, face, neck, wrists, fingers, and even lobes of my ears. The skin was peeling off my wrists; my back, they told me, was like a piece of raw beef, with the ribs all but poking through…” (Masuji:254). As a result of this he suffers a lot. His comments concerning the bomb are that it “had been a power beyond the mind of man to conceive.” (Masuji:254) It is therefore quite clear that this character has been totally incapacitated by forces beyond his control. This is the same case with Mitsusaburo’s son, in The Silent Cry, who is born totally incapacitated and has to be taken to an institution because the parents cannot stand his condition (Oe:32).
Mitsusaburo, the narrator in *The Silent Cry*, blames what he refers to as ‘chunk of stone’ for his loss of sight in the right eye. He tells how at one time he had good sight and how one day as he walked along some street some children threw a stone at him, this stone cost him his right eye which in turn has caused many other undesirable things. He says that he has hurt himself on the right side of his face because of this. Because of the same he confesses that he looks uglier than he did before and that the same eye serves as reminder of this, something he would have wished to forget about. The stone has therefore caused the narrator many other ‘misfortunes’, it is a happening that was beyond him. He blames his lost eye for emphasizing the ugliness he had since his childhood. This is now a constant reminder since it denied him joy “…it was the missing eye that continually dragged it out into the limelight.” Hence, the lost eye continuously haunts Mitsusaburo as it reminds him of his ugliness.

The sad news that the entire population of pupils of the Hiroshima First Middle school had been wiped out in an enemy raid affects everybody who gets to hear of it. The children killed are quite many and innocent. For her part Hiroshi’s wife says that when she got the devastating news “I felt as though my chest would burst- it was so cruel” (Masuji:266). This is a source of pain at the time it happens and the times to follow. A similar case is when the young men who are rearing chicken in the valley, *The Silent Cry*, lose all their chicken to a strange disease. They get affected and are vulnerable to Takashi’s manipulation. Takashi takes advantage of their helplessness and hopelessness to use them in his uprising in the valley.

Takashi’s youth take after an uprising that had taken place earlier on in 1860. This uprising, that Takashi adores, is known for having done many wrong things. They caused havoc in the
area; destroyed property and raped people’s wives and daughters. “They mercilessly cut down people who got into disputes with them, and I’m sure there were some who, finding themselves none too popular with the women made do in the meantime with rape.” (Oe:153) The youths and their uprising were therefore, very unpopular with the locals and the authorities of the day.

The live broadcast by his Highness declaring Japanese acceptance of defeat causes people a lot of sadness, perhaps considering what would happen and does happen in war situations. Shigematsu says:

I walked along the corridor towards the canteen. A stream of workers passed me, their expressions grimmer than I had ever seen them before. Some of the male hands were crying. Some of the girls had covered their faces with work hats. One of a group of several factory girls making their way back to their dormitory had her arm around her companion’s shoulder and was saying soothingly, ‘Don’t cry, dear! There won’t be any more raids now, will there?’ (Masuji:297)

The broadcast by the head of state in which he concedes defeat to enemy powers means that his country falls under the control of enemy powers. This is a hurting broadcast to people who love their country, to see it under such a state. Tears are shed for Japan. Hence, though the broadcast means that there would be no more attacks on the people, it is still a funerary symbol because it does not portend well for Japan.
In *The Silent Cry*, Takashi’s uprising comes to an end with his death through a suicide. This is supposed to be a great relief because just like in *Black Rain* it means that people will not only live but they will live in peace. This, however, cannot be the case because the people of the valley will have to pay for their youth’s misdeeds as the prices at the supermarket are hiked. The family is also greatly affected as they lose yet another family member, a member who takes his own life after selling family property.

Although situations of instability in both texts seem to improve with the ending of the world war and the death of Takashi, in *Black Rain* and *The Silent Cry* respectively, there is fear of returning to the earlier state. A young priest laments that if the attack on the supermarket were to spread then farmers would attack supermarkets all over and “If that happens, the flaws in the economy will show up immediately” (Oe:199). Such acts would affect the economy greatly. Shigematsu on the other hand, in *Black Rain*, still gets a feeling that the world was still in danger of the above (Masuji:204). This shows that the fear resulting from what had happened during the war was still there. In the war an atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 (May: 2003)

### 2.4 Funerary symbols emanating from superstitions

In a train that Shigematsu and other people who are affected by the bomb are traveling, and in the midst of suffering and mourning in the train where one of the women passengers is carrying a dead child, “a kite was wheeling in the air above the wires.” (Masuji:114) The usage of a kite at a time when we are told that most of the passengers are in pain, having been affected by the war, is intended at creating the mood and the prevailing atmosphere. This is a gloomy state of
feeling. Indeed, to the woman passenger who is carrying a dead child, the kite seems to be used to announce or show mourning. Hence the wheeling of the kite is deliberate; it is a funerary symbol within the context of the text.

Most of the victims of the atomic disease are faced with the problem of their hair falling off from their bodies as the disease progresses. With time this has become a way of identifying the victims who would not survive the disease. This is as claimed by some people from whom Hiroshi’s wife learns it. Hiroshi’s wife therefore gets worried when her husband’s hair begins to fall out easily (Masuji:264). Though he survives the disease, this becomes a funerary symbol because such a thing would be enough to set the people who are close to an affected victim into panic and despair. Yasuko’s disease has also developed to a point where her hair falls out easily and her teeth become very lose.

Shigematsu was required to say the sermon of mortality for the dead before they are taken to the crematorium to be cremated. He, however, due to the experiences he has had and out of the effect of hopelessness murmurs it to himself before crossing a river in his movements. He then says that he does this “sooner or later, on this day or the morrow, to me or to my neighbor…so shall the rosy cheeks of morning yield to the skull of eventide. One breath from the wind of change, and the bright eyes shall be closed…” (Masuji:277). The sermon of mortality is a funerary symbol in religion because it would not and it was not supposed to be said if there was no death. When said to the living who are seemingly in good health and not expected to die, it shows the state of hopelessness.
Dreams in the Japanese society portend different issues and can be interpreted differently depending on the nature of the dream. Shigematsu’s sleep is disturbed by a dream in which he sees a one-legged man in a kimono hopping after him with a long spoon over his shoulder. Shigematsu’s dream has to do with the effects of war and because of this he is startled. He wakes up sweating because of the dream (Masuji:286).

A White rainbow crossing the sun horizontally is given a symbolic meaning in the context of Masuji Ibuse’s text *Black Rain* (1970). Shigematsu sees this and when he tells the others about it the manager who had also seen one at an earlier time declares, “It’s an omen…a white rainbow bodes nobody any good.” Another person at a government office concludes on what Shigematsu sees by saying “white rainbow that pierces the sun’ – it was a sign from heaven that armed disturbance was imminent…” (Masuji:293). What follows after the rainbow is that Japan concedes defeat in the war. With this conceding it is highly expected that the Japanese armed forces will be disarmed and that Japan is to be occupied by foreign forces.

The dead body of the brother of the narrator and Takashi, S’, is regarded as representing misfortunes and that is the reason as to why many of the family members and neighbours are said to be scared of having anything to do with it. About it Mitsusaburo says, “It was dusk by the time I got him back to the valley, but none of the adults came out of the houses lining both sides of the road. Even the children only peeped out, and hardly showed themselves. They were scared of having anything to do with the corpse and the misfortune it represented” (Masuji:72).
Mitsusaburo tells how his mother used to fear sharp objects. He dreams seeing her injuring herself deliberately and rejoicing afterwards because she believes that it would lead her into being excused from some taxing labour (Oe:103). Mitsusaburo says, “Every morning I accompanied mother – who just as in my dream was afraid of axes and all sharp instruments….”

Mitsusaburo complains over Takashi’s idea of playing nembutsu music out of season in order to spread his influence on the people, it was unusual to do this but Takashi does it for selfish reasons (Oe:184). “The Nembutsu music nagged at me unceasingly, torturing my nerves, sapping my mental energy” (Oe:185). He plays the music for wrong reasons. Some of the people like Mitsusaburo are not pleased by this at all. The fact that Takashi uses the music to spread his unpopular agenda in the valley makes the music, as played out of season, a funerary symbol.

A gun in the hands any irresponsible member of the community, and especially Takashi, is a thing that clearly spells danger. This reality is brought out in the text when Takashi in distress fires from his gun (Oe:243) and Mitsusaburo, Gii and Jin’s children are shaken. Even Momoko and Hoshio, who are asleep, turn in their sleep. This is an indication of the danger posed by a gun and by extension the confirmation of the same as a funerary symbol. In the end Takashi shoots himself dead in the family storehouse (243-244).

Chosokabe is an imaginary creature that was believed, by the narrator’s (in The Silent Cry) mother and other people, to be very terrifying because of its gigantic physical size and ability to
be found everywhere in time and space (Oe:42). People believe that this creature is indeed there and that it had the ability to harm them physically. The narrator also says that the mother would use chosokabe stories to scare them whenever the narrator appeared to question her authority.

In some of the Asian communities, including the Japanese, whistling after dark is a highly discouraged thing. In Korean superstitions (seoulistic.com) whistling after sunset was a taboo because it was believed to attract ghosts and snakes into homesteads. In _The Silent Cry_, through Takashi and Mitsusaburo, we get to learn that whistling after it is dark was a highly discouraged thing and as Takashi tells Natsumi the valley folk would get very annoyed. This is because in the village there is a belief that whistling at night would attract a supernatural being from the forest. The narrator says, “…They believe that if you whistle after dark a supernatural creature will come out of the forest. Grandmother used to tell us the Chosokabe would come.” (Oe:59)

Jin’s dreams have a devastating effect on her as they completely deny her peace. When she meets Mitsusaburo, Jin complains of not having a peaceful night, “Nothing but wretched dreams, dreams of being left without a house!” (Oe:62). She gets the nightmares because she learns that there were plans to sell off the family property including her own residence.

Paintings of hell are drawn on the walls of the temple in Kenzaburo Oe’s _The Silent Cry_ (1967). The paintings are meant at trying to reflect how the spiritual world is and indeed hell itself. They are therefore funerary symbols and are meant to be so in the community. Unfortunately they scare many people, especially children. The priest says, “Taka always used to be scared of
the hell picture, even when he was a kid” (Oe:69). The pictures are hence scary to many. They are funerary symbols because of their intended purpose and even what they do besides that.

The text, *Black Rain* (1970), also uses Mitsusaburo’s friend’s writings symbolically. Though the friend’s grandmother had made a promise to pass these writings over to him after the friend’s death, the relatives object and burn the writings instead. In explaining this turn of events Mitsusaburo says that “They’d been afraid- afraid that another monster with crimson-painted head and a cucumber up its rear might leap naked out of the manuscripts and notes he’d left and threaten the world of those who had survived” (Oe:107). It is for the fear and the fact that the writings were thought to have a life of their own, and could influence one, that they were burned.

The unnamed forest spirits are to blame, according to Mitsusaburo, for some misfortunes that befall the people. These misfortunes include persistent floods that ravaged the valley and virulent rice pest (Oe:124). This is in accordance with the superstitions. According to Mitsusaburo’s mother this was a thing believed by many. Mitsusaburo’s mother stands on the threshold and the after effect is that the father does not return, he dies on the journey (Oe:218). Mitsusaburo gets to believe the superstition since his father dies after Mitsusaburo’s mother acted in defiance of the superstition and taboo.

Darkness is used in the text, *The Silent Cry* (1967), to represent evil and hence as a funerary symbol. This is clear from the things that happen in the cover of darkness. From the storeroom Mitsusaburo witnesses very many activities that happen in the night. Takashi claims to have
murdered the girl he had attempted to rape during the night. His own death also happens during the night. Darkness, besides being a natural symbol of doom and evil is also used in the text as a funerary symbol in a special way.

2.5 Effects of war as funerary symbols

Radiation sickness is one of the infections that come with the dropping of atomic bomb in the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Following these attacks the victims develop a strange disease and their bodies weaken greatly, something that in the end results in death as the disease has no cure. The narrator reports about one Asajiro who is a victim, “His symptoms were the same. If he pulled a heavy cart or worked in the fields, he got an ominous rash of small pimples among the hair on his scalp....” This meant that even those with minor infections could not do manual labour. As Shigematsu argues, “But people like us have only to do a bit of hand work and their limbs start to rot on them. The damned disease comes out” (Masuji:28). The suffering of the victims of the atomic disease is also described to be almost unbearable. The sick are further subjected to social rejection as seen through the woman from Ikemoto who subjects Shigematsu and Shokichi to sarcasm, alluding that they are lazy. The victims are further isolated physically upon developing the symptoms of the disease.

The disease is very much feared by the people because of its contagious nature and lack of cure that whoever is said to get it faces isolation and open discrimination from their society. When the family of the young man who wanted to marry Yasuko learns from her that she is sick from the radiation disease and she already shows symptoms of the disease they cut off all communications and break the engagement. She is also isolated physically as she is put in a
room of her own. Besides the open discrimination faced by the victims of the disease, affected people like Shigematsu also suffer unspeakable pain. Because of this, the disease becomes something to be feared by all. It is a funerary symbol because it deprives its victims the acceptance they need, causes them pain and hopelessness as it has no cure. May (2003) while showing the gravity of the sickness says, “... radiation sickness is a bad way to die and indeed not a particularly wonderful way to live.”

When Shigematsu’s family receives a letter enquiring on the health of Yasuko, the effect is clear as Yasuko and Shigeko weep. When Shigematsu finds them sobbing he is deeply saddened by the spectacle and admits that he had written an assuring letter on the condition of Yasuko. It is this that could have triggered the sending of the letter they were now reading. All of them know from within that the letter could not portend anything good for the intended marriage between Yasuko and a young man from the Aonos family.

The atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on August 6th, 1945. As a result of this bombing, the city of Hiroshima also becomes a source of painful reminder of the killings, pain and destruction that come out of the bomb attack that is dropped on the city by enemy forces during the war. From the attack there are fires, people contract a new disease and get displaced and destitute in the same city or in other cities as well. Because of the destruction meted upon the city Shigematsu’s eyes are said to get wet with tears (Masuji:18).

The reader gets to know that the black rain that fell after the atomic bomb is associated with sad things when Shigeko objects to sending the part about it from Yasuko’s diary. This is when
copying her diary to send to the family of her intended suitor. She sees it as something that will create a bad impression. It is hence clear that black rain has assumed a symbolic meaning and when used with reference to anybody it would impact negatively on the person referred to. Shigeko tells her husband “But nowadays everybody knows. If we leave that part in when we send them a copy, mightn’t they get the idea?”

Anybody who is rained on by the black rain gets permanent spots on their bodies. Yasuko is one such a person and regarding this she writes in her diary, “I washed my hands at the ornamental spring, but even rubbing at the marks with soap wouldn’t get them off. They were stuck fast on the skin.” (Masuji:35)

The rain falls after the dropping of the bomb and causes a lot of discomfort and confusion because from it people get marks on their bodies, marks that won’t just be washed off. It is said in the text that “They say it’s the black smoke generated by the explosion. It mingled with water vapour in the sky and got carried down in the rain. The black rain fell mostly in the western districts of the city.” (Masuji:93)

Mrs. Miyaji’s comments on the alteration in the text books leads to her being summoned by the authorities where she is given a warning for saying that there were changes in her child’s book about the ration of rice given. Due to the biting effects of the war going on the authorities are forced to reduce on the ration of food given to people because of the scarcity of the same. They therefore adjust the information in the children’s books. Mrs. Miyaji, however, notes this and speaks about it. It is because such talk could break people’s will to keep on fighting that the
authorities summon her and give her the warning, “Irresponsible talk in wartime is a matter that’s too serious for the ordinary civil or criminal code” (Masuji:66).

Following the dropping of the atomic bomb some of the victims get indelible marks in their bodies. One of these is Yasuko who gets these marks in her hands. Shigematsu tries to help his niece get rid of them but all his efforts are in vain. The marks cause the victims and their relatives a lot of emotional discomfort “…but the marks would not come off. She said they were made by the black rain and they were firmly stuck on the skin. They were not tar, nor black paint, but something of unknown origin” (Masuji:92). The marks remain a painful reminder of the tough past that the characters have been through.

One of the victims of the atomic disease is described to be in great pain as he throws himself about in agony and spews up yellow liquid before he succumbs to his disease. This yellow liquid has been used by Masuji Ibuse (1970) as a funerary symbol that signifies extreme suffering.

Masuji Ibuse (1970) has described the crematorium in a way that creates a disturbing picture in the mind of the reader, at the time of endless deaths. Mutsuki (2008), describes a crematorium as a gateway to the next world and hence both sacred and dangerous. Mitsusaburo gives a detailed description of the crematorium and how it looks with the remains of the burnings of the corpses “I could see bones in most of them, and the skulls especially stood out with strange clarity… some of the skulls gazed fixedly at the sky with empty eye- sockets, others clenched their teeth in angry resentment” (Masuji:138). The effect of this sight on Mitsusaburo himself is
evident in the way he reacts. He is so shaken that he murmurs “sermon on mortality” to himself. This scene remains in his mind for long that he says afterwards that “…in my mind’s eye, like a waking dream, I could still see the tongues of fire at work on the bodies of men” (Masuji:139). He realizes much later that due to the effect this had in his mind he had actually drenched himself.

A janitor reports that there was smoke from all parts of the dried up river bed. “The crematorium was jammed, and there was no time for people to wait their turn,” (Masuji:130). The deaths were too many that “Haste then, was the order of the day. They must be burnt on the river bed, in the hills- anywhere away from human habitation.

Shigematsu also gives a detailed description of the cremation process and skulls which he describes as “the unsheltered ones” (Masuji:138). And as he moves away from the scene he describes that he was “murmuring the ‘sermon of mortality to myself”.

According to John (2012), cremation is normally done in the absence of the relatives and after the process the relatives arrive and pick the ashes and the bones. No bone is left behind. When Shigematsu, therefore, sees so many bones which include skulls he is bound to be disturbed. This scene and the people burning the dead by river beds, serve as a clear sign of the extent of loss on the people affected. This is why Shigematsu utters the sermon to himself, because he cannot see how he will be alive for long.
Mosquitoes are a threat to the health of people and hence they are normally kept away as far as possible. This is still the case in the text, one of the characters, Mr Nakao, tells Shigematsu that the bomb raid brought with it “…a sudden spate of striped mosquitoes” (Masuji:174). People are forced to protect themselves from these insects because they pose a challenge to their wellbeing.

People who are affected by the bomb are said to be surrounded by a bad smell and Shigematsu reports that they could be identified easily because of the most awful smell they produced. This smell causes a lot of discomfort to other people and can rightly be termed as a funerary symbol because the smell is directly related to the war and the atomic bomb. Apart from being a painful reminder of what is happening the smell causes other people a lot of discomfort. Shigematsu says that it was “a most offensive smell…the smell of the victims of the bomb” (Masuji:211). He tells a lady who smells that “you stink to high heaven” (Masuji:212).

Shigematsu says the following concerning a driver of a vehicle they travel in with the wife Shigeko “…we drove to Fuchu sitting by the driver, who had a pad over his mouth and nose to keep out the smell that the bomb victims gave off” (Masuji:262).

A lady given number 47, Tamiyo Oshim, decides to work tirelessly for the welfare of the victims of the war, the husband having been taken prisoner of war in Siberia. This fills her with sad memories and it is due to this that she dedicates herself to what she does for the memory of the husband.
Dr Kajita’s is a doctor who treats Yasuko when she develops the atomic disease, but the doctor’s own father suffers from stroke. The doctor keeps coming to make regular checks on Yasuko as he treats her. His father however gets a stroke and the doctor has to travel to go and attend to his ailing father. This is bad news because it means that Yasuko would not be attended to by a doctor she is used to. The doctor he also recommends, Dr Moriya, is not in very good terms with him. This is as recorded by Shigematsu (Masuji:227).

Yasuko suffers several abscesses which continuously deny her joy and cause her a lot of pain especially at night (Masuji:229) in Kuishiki Hospital where she is admitted, her fever is blamed on these abscesses. It is reported that at night she kneels and sobs because the pain from the abscesses is unbearable (Masuji:232) we are also told that “New ones are forming and old ones breaking all the time” (Masuji:233). Eventually the places where the abscesses are excised “…would not heal. The flesh remained red and puffed up like a split water melon” (Masuji:235). They cause the sick a lot of pain and can therefore be said to be used on purpose by the author as funerary symbols.

Following the continuing war and the ever rising cases of attacks from the enemy forces, the number of the sick is reported to be rising all the time. In one of the reception centres, for instance, where Iwatake is taken the place is said to be over-crowded by the sick that some of them have to be moved to an army branch hospital at Shobara because of the lack of space. Iwatake who has sustained burns from a fire is one of the people who volunteer to be moved (Masuji:249). The rising number of the sick strains the medical services and creates a sense of hopelessness.
Patients groaning at the hospital, when Hiroshi’s wife goes to the hospital where her husband had been moved she gives a grave report of people in extreme pain, pain which also appeared to be collective. It is surprising to see this as she notes that “One thing that struck me as strange was that when one patient groaned all the others would start groaning at the same time. It was an uncaring sound- perhaps I should say it, but it was for all the world like a chorus of frogs starting up in a paddy field” (Masuji:259). This was a clear indication of pain and suffering that was incomprehensible and beyond explanation. The groaning was therefore a funerary symbol on the actual feeling. Iwatake’s face is also said to have swelled to twice its normal size.

In his sickness Hiroshi suffers a lot of pain from an earache in his right ear. This pain is only stopped when an arrogant draft lieutenant called Kutsubara attends to him and the above oily liquid mixed with maggots is removed from his ear. This experience caused him discomfort and suffering.

Iwatake, one of the people who get seriously affected by the atomic disease but survived it, is left with one problem which serves as a painful reminder to him of the dangerous days of pain when the atomic bomb was dropped by the enemy forces. He writes, “The thing that troubles me is the ringing; it persists in my ear day and night, like the tolling of a distant temple bell, warning man of the folly of the bomb…” (Masuji:270). The ringing which is a problem that would not heal after his ear had been infected is a funerary symbol that keeps his mind in constant memory of the sad past.
A bamboo grove in the valley is said to be the greatest and the most realistic reminder of the painful days of the 1860 when there was war. The narrator says this about bamboo grove, “…was the most incontrovertible reminder of the 1860 rising, whose memory, during the war, had been viewed as a slur on all the inhabitants of the valley.” The narrator tells how the area headman and others had been “…ashamed that their ancestors should have cut bamboo for use in a rebellion against the establishment of the day….” (Oe:104).

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter we identified and expounded on the funerary symbols used in *Black Rain* (1970) and *The Silent Cry* (1967). The authors have used a wide range of funerary symbols to present their story. Some of the characters in both books have been used as funerary symbols. The texts have also employed natural factors, superstitions and other creatures as funerary symbols to create an appropriate mood, attitude and atmosphere for their stories. Besides most of the main characters, some of the things identified as funerary symbols include; war, death, crematorium, a pierced rainbow and the radiation disease among others. It has been noted in this chapter that most of the symbols used in the two texts are similar. There are, however, some of the symbols that are unique in one text and not reflected in the other text under study.

The next chapter explores the relationship between funerary symbols and the socio-political and cultural realities.
CHAPTER THREE
FUNERARY SYMBOLS AND SOCIO-POLITICAL AND CULTURAL REALITIES

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the funerary symbols as used in the selected texts were identified and discussed. Common symbols in the texts were first looked at before the symbols used uniquely in individual texts. In this chapter, the symbols identified in the previous chapter will be used to analyze the narrators’ societies, and by extension societies of the authors. Through them the revelations brought out will be discussed. The following tool was instrumental in enabling this:

The realities analysis matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>The Silent Cry (pages)</th>
<th>Black Rain (pages)</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
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The Japanese society, just like all the other communities in the world, has three important setups; political, social and cultural. The community has a way of life that when studied reveals the things that are valued by the people and those frowned upon. Literature provides one of the best forums for learning these. Through the way characters view and relate to each other, what they say and the way the narrator presents his story, these values come out.
This chapter looks at what is revealed by those aspects we consider to be funerary symbols concerning the communities of the narrators and also authors of the selected texts. Literature being a reflection of the actual happenings in the society from which a story is taken, one can internalize the society set up without having to look through history books and news over televisions, radio or newspapers. Through the way characters relate to each other and the way the narrator presents his story the core values and set up of the community can be gotten. This chapter will therefore look at the way funerary symbols are used and through them what we can learn about the society. The chapter is based on the second objective of the research work.

3.2 Organization and social set-up

In the previous chapter we considered some of the characters as funerary symbols. These included main characters like Yasuko in *Black Rain* and Takashi, Jin and S in *The Silent Cry*. We also established that all the characters considered as funerary symbols lived with other characters in a family institution. It was explained in the previous chapter how a challenge facing any one individual character would be taken as a family issue. The societies brought out in the texts therefore, are founded on families that are strongly bound together; not only by blood ties, but also a major responsibility of easing each other’s difficulties.

According to Imamura (2003) an individual is not very important in Japan; it is the family that forms the basis of a society. It is the familial relationships that determine social integration. Imamura argues further that there are various family forms in Japan with the common one being the agricultural household, also called ie in Japan. This family comprises all the people residing in a household, whether related by blood or not. Hence, family relations extend beyond
the notion of a family; in the western sense. *Black Rain* has used characters like Yasuko and what she goes through in the text to reveal how society values the family ties and to show the bond that does exist between relatives. The author uses the suffering of Yasuko to portray the family as the key foundation for the community. It is indeed clear that in the society, family relations extend beyond the nuclear set-up as Yasuko - who is a relative of Shizuma’s wife - is taken in and accepted as a member of Shizuma’s family. The couple continues to ensure her wellbeing even when sick. At the onset of her illness the family resources are strained and Shizuma’s house is described as one that is clouded with sadness. There are, indeed, times when Shizuma’s wife is driven to tears because of Yasuko.

For their part Yasuko’s immediate relatives get concerned when bombs are dropped in the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. To show how closely knit a family is, two of Yasuko’s close relatives walk long distances in harsh conditions to find out more about them. Yasuko is further described as a weight that is oppressive in the mind of Shizuma. This has to do with many factors which he himself knows he has no power over. He is oppressed by the fact that he cannot bear seeing his niece suffer and die slowly and helplessly. This is because she is infected with the radiation disease; the main killer disease in *Black Rain*. Shizuma’s family is a clear example of the importance of the family institution in the community depicted in the text.

In *The Silent Cry* (1967), Takashi, Mitsusaburo and his wife, Jin, Jin’s husband and their children are all members of one family according to Japan’s ie (Agricultural Household) headed by Mitsusaburo. According to the cultural traditions in the community, it is the eldest member of a family who heads it. This is seen through Jin who comments that, “If S was alive,
he would never have sold the storehouse …But then, what can you expect with Mitsusaburo as head of the family?” (Oe:63) Mitsusaburo was the family head because S had long died. This leadership is held by Mitsusaburo; who traditionally must be involved in all key decisions made. The family head also heads the entire family in ritualistic ceremonies. When the seasons change in the area Mitsusaburo is called upon to fetch water first, “Early on New Year’s Day, even so, my hermit’s existence had been disturbed by Jin and her family. The first intrusion came around dawn, when Jin’s eldest son woke me to say that Jin wanted me, as present head of the Nedokoro family, to go and draw the ‘first water.’…” These incidences, including others identified in the previous chapter, reveal a family as a closely knit entity.

It is also through some of the characters classified as funerary symbols that we get to see the importance of marriage in society. Through Yasuko in Black Rain, the narrator enables us to follow the steps taken, traditionally, before a marriage is contracted. It is through her that marriage is seen to involve an entire family, friends and even the village of the bride and the groom. Marriage is a community affair. The man who is courting Yasuko, and his family, sends some people to her village to gather more information about her. This definitely shows marriage as something that cannot be left to only the bride and the groom. The neighbours who provide information about Yasuko are not related to her, they are however bound by traditions to provide information about her.

Unfortunately for Yasuko, her marriage plans and expectations do not go beyond this point. The much dreaded radiation disease in her has started to show and the neighbours report this to the suitors ‘spies’. Getting concerned about his own safety and that of the children he would
get, the suitor disengages himself and cuts off communication with her. Imamura (2003) argues that the issue of marriage involved families which made decisions on whether it would take place or not. It is because of the seriousness of marriage that the family of the bride and that of the groom intensely investigate each other in an effort aimed at marrying right and protecting the family honour and prestige, Imamura (2003).

In The Silent Cry, Mitsusaburo who is the narrator cannot divorce his wife even after he has discovered that she has cheated on him with his own brother. After the death of Takashi, he takes his wife who is expecting Takashi’s child and life continues “… in the days while Natsumi tried to bring our newly reclaimed son back into our world and simultaneously prepared for the birth of the other child, would mean a life of sweat and grime in Africa” (Oe:274). Mitsusaburo intends to relocate to Africa where he is to take a new job and stay with his family which will now include the handicapped child placed in an institution. This study considered both the child and Mitsusaburo’s wife as human characters appearing as funerary symbols in the text. It is through Yasuko and Natsumi that significance of marriage in society is clearly developed.

The societies brought out in the two texts are presented as being mostly cohesive and harmonious. In Black Rain (1970) this is seen when the society joins hands together to fight against the enemy powers that have engaged their nation in a war. Everyone in the community plays a role; this is through providing relevant information on matters relating to the ongoing war, helping the victims and educating each other on possible ways of ensuring ones safety among others. When an atomic bomb is dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the entire
population pulls together in managing the situation. This is mainly in dealing with the radiation disease which turns out to be the killer disease. Even when it is clear to all that one could easily contract this deadly disease through physical contact with the infected, the characters still work together to manage the situation. Shigematsu does not only nurse Yasuko, he also attends to others as he says the sermon of mortality to the dead.

In *The Silent Cry* (1967), this cohesion is seen through Nekodoro family – the family headed by the narrator. Mitsusaburo is seen as the unifying figure in the extended family. He is also called upon by Jin to provide direction on matters that concern the family; these are matters like selling of family property and fetching first at the onset of a new season. It is on the basis of this that Takashi, who is the narrator’s only living brother, was considered as a funerary symbol. Takashi attempts to break this cohesion when he sells the family storehouse without seeking the consent of Mitsusaburo. He also cheats him out of the revenue raised from the sale. Despite this challenge Mitsusaburo remains as the acknowledged family head and the family continues to live in harmony. Takashi on the other hand is driven into suicide by his own folly.

At a training Centre in *Black Rain*, an elderly man only identified as Nakamura, goes to the extent of contemplating committing suicide because of being disrespected by a much younger person than himself. The seemingly disrespectful youth is the trainer at the centre. This exposes a community where the elderly are treated and shown respect because of their age and wisdom as discussed earlier on. The elderly were considered to be wiser and responsible hence deserving of respect. Imamura (2003), says that apart from heading families, their sons
marriages were recorded by them and they had a right to send away daughters-in-law if they felt dissatisfied by them. To hold such responsibility, one has to be held in high esteem.

Takashi is able to have an influence over the youth of the valley because of the prevailing levels of ignorance, unemployment and poverty. He himself is not properly informed about the history of his grand-father and the other ancestors that he seeks to emulate. When in the end the truth comes out, it is too late as he has already died through suicide. His suicide is mainly motivated by the desire to be a hero like his grand-father’s brother – to be greater and popular in death than in life, a thing that is largely caused by his ignorance regarding the same history. His followers also follow him blindly with an eye on getting something to do and benefitting materially. Ignorance and idleness costs the valley a lot. This is a reflection of the society – the society that is bedeviled by lack of education and unemployment.

3.3 Political realities

In both texts, political leaderships are portrayed as lacking total grip of leadership matters at the grassroots level. In The Silent Cry (1967), Takashi – whom we considered as a funerary symbol, is able to take advantage of the situation and cause havoc in the valley. The police presence is described as being very poor and it is because of this that Takashi is able to mobilize the youth of the valley and temporarily take leadership of the valley. The authorities are taken unawares due to the lack of intelligence agents and the breakdown of both electronic and physical communication. Due to the floods and change of weather, the roads and telephones are rendered totally useless.
In *Black Rain* (1970) rumours abound because of the lack of information that can be relied upon from the state. Most of these are concerned or related to the ongoing war and greatly portray the political leadership as one that has failed in providing adequate leadership and protection to the vulnerable citizens. Through these rumours, it is no doubt that people live in continued fear not knowing when the next attack might take place. This reality is seen in the end when the leadership concedes defeat in the ongoing war and it is only a matter of time before the state falls into the control of enemy powers. The fact that the population appear well informed on how to react in case of an air strike shows a society that has been exposed to conflicts and has learnt to live with it.

A children’s play in *The Silent Cry* (1967) is based on fighting. It is notable that even children in the community pick on such a theme to act on in their childish games. This clearly shows that the reality of instability is clear to all. In the children’s play a boy loses his life tragically. The bamboo grove and the history surrounding it – people of the valley had at one point used bamboos in a conflict-has also the same effect of showing the instability as a perpetual thing.

Despite the challenges that people have gone through, they still remain tolerant to each other’s situations, as seen in *Black Rain*. Though the victims of the bombs are said to have ‘the most awful smell’ they are not discriminated against. Shigematsu reports that while travelling in a public means vehicle he is treated well. The driver of the vehicle only covers his mouth and nose to keep off the smell. The general public also appears to accept the victims, help and treat them well (Masuji:262). This is a reflection of the community of the narrator.
There is, however, a general state of hopelessness that comes out of the war being fought and the effects it has on the general public. This is also reflected in Shigematsu’s dream, the middle aged man who sits next to him in the train, the rumours about the war, and the feeling of the people concerning the dropping of bombs. Political instability, as mentioned earlier, is a perpetual reality in the societies depicted in the texts.

3.4 Cultural values and realities

3.4.1 Age and wisdom

In both *The Silent Cry* (1967) and *Black Rain* (1970) the aged characters distinguish themselves as respectable wise people who are the senior members of the community. In *The Silent Cry*, the narrator reflects his past days as he remembers how he used to practice masturbation, this was a youth. Now that he is advanced in age, Mitsusaburo regrets and considers his past as dishonourable. This change of mind has come with age, he now understands what is right from what is wrong, his wisdom has come with age. Mitsusaburo now views life as sacred, it should therefore not be defiled. When one night Takashi gets out at night, naked and with an erection, Mitsusaburo watching from the storeroom can only compare him to a lowly animal like a dog. This is because Takashi is also a grown up and a grown up should not disgrace himself that much in the society.

Another scene is the one involving two male adults whom Mitsusaburo sees on his way back home after he had failed to make a phone call near the supermarket. The grotesque scene is described as one involving aged men who fight in full view of women and children. When discussing the incident with Takashi it comes out clearly that such people, the elderly, were
supposed to be the voice of reason. Indeed the elderly were expected to mediate and make peace in cases of conflicts in the society. It is the elderly who helped the authorities in ensuring that the society is peaceful and orderly. The act of the elderly fighting openly, like children do, spells doom in the society. It is an effect of the ongoing war in the country. It is, indeed, Mitsusaburo and Shigematsu who head their families in *The Silent Cry* (1967) and *Black Rain* (1970) respectfully. They are family heads, given more responsibility, because they are elderly and wisdom comes with age.

Through the arguments advanced by Takashi, it is clear that this society is socially stratified based on people’s education and economic level. The upper group comprises the educated and the rich while the lower social group is made up of the peasants. It is the upper group that Takashi is most afraid of as he seeks to have control over the valley. He therefore decides to put the group under ‘an extra-sharp eye’ (Oe:196). Knowing this, he moves to involve them actively into his undesirable activities which are geared towards causing an uprising in the valley. The events and happenings like this are only but a reflection of the way people look and perceive the wealthy and educated in the community of the authors’.

A story about the complications that result from a marriage between very close relatives and how the same leads to suicide reveals how incest is understood in the community of the narrators. In a letter, sent between Mitsusaburo’s, in *The Silent Cry* (1967), grand-father and the grand-father’s brother a young man involved in the complications that result from the relationship seems mentally ill or affected and ends up committing suicide. No doubt that his
situation is directly aggravated by the incest acts and these acts are the ones that directly drive him to his suicide.

Takashi confesses and reveals how he took advantage of his sister, having sex with her to the point of conception. Due to the seriousness of the act she has to be forced to abort to conceal everything from the public eye. This also helps in preserving the family prestige and honour, something that is valued in the Japanese society. She also has to lie on the person responsible for the pregnancy because Takashi knows what it means if it is known that he is the one responsible for the pregnancy of his own sister. In Takashi’s case, like in the earlier discussed case, the victim (sister) also ends up committing suicide. As he recounts all he did, Takashi sobs bitterly - a sign of self-pity, remorse, embarrassment and pain that come with incest. He is now mature in his understanding and reasoning and he realizes how deep he wronged and hurt his sister. Like in the earlier cases, Takashi also commits suicide after his confession. These incidences show that incest is a common thing in the society; it is, however, unacceptable and has consequences as seen.

The society depicted in *The Silent Cry* is seen as one that is founded on moral values - a society that frowns upon indecent behaviour. When Takashi gets infected with Gonorrhea he is embarrassed of the disease and tries to conceal it, he also knows that it would not be easy to get treated. He, therefore, has to keep lying as he gets the treatment. Takashi’s sense of guilt, when looked at with his own community in mind, shows the unacceptable irresponsibility that led to that infection. It is from knowing that it is unacceptable that he fails to come out openly on this and others discussed earlier.
When Momoko happens to dress indecently, this is immediately misinterpreted by a young man in Takashi’s group; the young man makes sexual advances at her. This happens because indecent dressing is an uncommon thing. These coupled with the respect accorded to the elders in the community reveals a set up that is founded on strong morals and where respect and dignity are greatly valued.

The act of Takashi having sex with his brother’s wife, Mitsusaburo, draws confusion since it is unacceptable. When revealed even Hoshio who is not related to the offenders feels ashamed and opts to move away from the offenders, to go and stay with Mitsusaburo in the storeroom. Such relationships are totally unacceptable in the very society they happen. It is a clear case of an individual’s moral decay in a morally founded society.

*The Silent Cry* highlights the plight of the physically challenged and the mentally incapacitated people. At the end of the text the society depicted is unequal for the disabled and the disadvantaged. The sidelining of the disabled in the community is clearly seen in the way the disabled are treated by the others. Some of the relationships in the texts between characters are also greatly defined by the presence of a disabled person in the family. When they get a disabled child, the marriage between Mitsusaburo and Natsumi goes through its hard times. The two resolve to put the child in an institution because it is not in their wish to be identified with the disability. This is despite the fact that they do not have any other child and that they are the actual biological parents.
After the birth of the child, Natsumi also, deliberately refuses to have any sexual intercourse with the husband because of the fear of getting another disabled child (Oe:210). This shows that disabled people are not welcome in the community. In this community disability is seen as a curse and an unwelcome menace. Natsumi whose husband is present sidelines her husband and goes ahead to have sexual intercourse with his brother, Takashi, because she thinks the disability comes from Mitsusaburo. The reality brought forth, hence, is that the disabled are not equal partners in their own community.

According to an editorial in a Japanese online newspaper (2012) even today discrimination is still a persistent problem in the Japanese society. The editorial of Japan Times Newspapers (2012) makes reference to a research carried out in Japan in which ninety percent of the respondents still believe that the disabled continue to face discrimination in society.

3.5 **Spiritual realities**

The communities represented in both *The Silent Cry* and *Black Rain* are seen as strongly rooted in the spiritual realms. In fact almost every activity in the communities is defined by superstitions and religion. A much cherished and seasoned night time dance referred to as Nembutsu Dance in *The Silent Cry* is used by the narrator to depict a society in which the dead and the living are in continued communication. The living have also set up special places dedicated to the spiritual world. The paintings of hell are found in such places; it is through these paintings that the living make an attempt at understanding the spiritual world.
When S is killed, many people try to avoid his corpse because they believe that it represented misfortunes. The people actually believe that there are evil spirits that had driven him to his death. To be safe therefore, neighbours keep indoors as S’ body is brought home. This tendency of believing that there must be a supernatural power controlling and affecting people’s lives is clearly brought out in the story of a supernatural being which is not identified by name but which is only said to be in the forest. This being is blamed for most of the evil in the valley (Oe:124).

According to Mitsusaburo’s mother, it was believed that if a woman stood in the way of the husband when moving out of the house then a misfortune would befall him. When Mitsusaburo’s mother does this to the husband, he never returns and the family never even gets to see his body. This reaffirms the fears further (Oe:218).

In the train where one of the women passengers is carrying a dead child, a kite is said to be wheeling. From the reaction of the passengers on board, there is no doubt that the wheeling of the kite is understood at the superstitious level (Masuji:156). When Shigematsu sleeps only to be woken up by the cry of an owl, he thinks about it for long because he believes that the shriek has an unpleasant superstitious meaning. In a different incident, Shigematsu is clouded by a mushroom cloud in his mind, after learning about what Yasuko is suffering from. Like in the previous cases, he seems to understand this at the spiritual level – in line with his superstitions (Masuji:219). A white rainbow seen crossing the sun horizontally is even given a meaning - a sign of bad omen. These incidences reveal a society in which superstitions and religious inclinations are part of the members’ day to day activities.
In *Black Rain* (1970), when the number of dead bodies rises and is almost overwhelming, Shigematsu Shizuma – the narrator, takes up the role of a priest and helps in leading funeral ceremonies and saying sermon of mortality to the dead. The significance of this is that the dead cannot be cremated without a religious leader appearing to say the Sermon of mortality. Cremation is one of the most important rites of passage and religion is at the centre of it. This is, therefore, not only a superstitious society but also a deeply religious community.

### 3.6 Conclusion

This chapter was based on the societies depicted in *Black Rain* (1970) and *The Silent Cry* (1967). It has established that these communities have family as their basic and most important unit. Marriage and cohesion are highly valued and respected. Though the societies value work, they are in political turmoil. This study has also established that this is an organized society in which the elderly are respected for their wisdom and are therefore accorded their rightful place in the community. The study has however concluded that political instability and conflicts have interfered with some of these social fabrics.

The next chapter focuses on the contribution of the discussed symbols in the delivery of the authors’ intended messages. The symbols will also be used to discuss the structural unity of each of the texts.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE AESTHETIC AND STRUCTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF FUNERARY SYMBOLS

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the societies presented in the texts were discussed in the light of what was categorized as funerary symbols. The family institution was identified as the basic and most important social organization upon which all the others are founded. In this chapter the identified funerary symbols are discussed in line with the texts’ writings. The contribution of the symbols in the development of the major ideas is reviewed. The chapter also explains the contribution of the symbols to the structural unity of each of the texts. The following table was used to aid this:

**Analysis Matrix: Ideas**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Silent Cry</th>
<th>Major ideas</th>
<th>Funerary symbols and role</th>
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<tr>
<td>Black Rain</td>
<td>Major ideas</td>
<td>Funerary symbols and role</td>
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The two works under study have certain similarities. These similarities are mainly found in the issues addressed, the mood and atmosphere brought out and even in the fact that the texts were written a few years after the Second World War. There are, however, some striking differences in the ideas brought out in the texts. This chapter is based on the third objective of the research
which directed the study to focus on the structural unity and ideas in line with the funerary symbols identified in chapter one.

4.2 Funerary symbols and major ideas in Masuji Ibuse’s *Black Rain* (1970)

4.2.1 Suffering

As the author embarks on telling his story, it becomes obvious that from the nature of the story he tells people would be undergoing hard times. As their nation continues in its protracted war, the population suffers both physically and emotionally. Through the identified funerary symbols like the condition of Yasuko, whose pain is inconceivable to even a third party like the reader, we get to see the magnitude of this. The author leaves no doubt in the minds of his readers that indeed “choices have consequences”. The Japanese, through their government, opt to join and remain at war with other powerful nations, and they pay dearly for this.

Due to change of priorities, all government efforts are directed at winning the war and people are left suffering from lack of adequate food. The narrator reflects how food was rationed during the period the war lasted. People are also forced to eat differently as the food supplied is changed and hence the quality and diet compromised.

When the enemy planes drop the atomic bomb, people’s suffering reaches levels that can hardly be comprehended. People die in big numbers, like never before. Others are burnt to death in their own estates; this is from the fires that result from the bombs. The direct effects of the dropping of the atomic bomb are devastating. The narrator’s description of the crematoriums is intended at showing the extent of lose caused. With the dropping of the bomb and with the intensifying war there is urgent need for more priests to conduct funeral prayers.
The available priests are totally overwhelmed with the ever increasing number of the casualties of the bomb and the ever intensifying war. People who are sick from the radiation disease are said to suffer from unending abscesses, hair falling out and extreme pain among others. They also have to change their lifestyles to be in line with their vulnerable and weakened bodies.

The woman from Ikemoto is used to highlight the fact that these people do not only suffer physically, they also suffer emotionally. She deliberately uses insulting language on Shizuma and the wife and shows her contempt for them as she considers them as lazy people who are evading hard labour. The feeling of rejection that Yasuko is subjected to by her fiancé when he cuts off all communication with her, upon learning of her condition, highlights the extent of emotional suffering in the text. The entire family is affected when they learn this. Things are not any better for them when the radiation disease begins to take a toll on Yasuko’s health. At one point, in the night, Shizuma has to consult with the wife outside their house as Yasuko slept in order to try and prepare public opinion towards Yasuko and the family. The emotional suffering experienced is as much as the physical suffering.

The effects of the ongoing war involving Japan and many other nations are not only meted upon human beings; other creatures also get the pinch of the brutality of human beings. Creatures of the wild and aquatic life are badly affected by the conflict and the dropping of the atomic bomb. At the end of the text, the narrator gives us a picture of the water which is normally bulging with life of different types, but currently hardly with any life. It is evident that most of the creatures have died from the effects of the bomb. Of all the water creatures only baby eels survive, under unclear circumstances, and are symbolically moving upstream.
The narrator says, “… in the water, I could see a procession of baby eels swimming blithely upstream against the current. It was remarkable to watch them: a myriad of tiny eels, still at the larval stage, none of them more than three or four inches in length … I wondered where they had been swimming on august 6, when Hiroshima had been bombed. I squatted down by the edge of the canal and compared their backs, but all I saw was different shades of gray. None of them showed any signs of harm.” (296-297)

The message in the text is so emphatically enabled by the use of some of the things categorized as funerary symbols in chapter one.

4.2.2 Despair

Funerary symbols, as categorized in chapter one, help to show clearly how conflict or world war creates a state of hopelessness. The intensifying conflict means an increase in the number of casualties. People die in large numbers, more than the priests can manage to pray for before they are cremated. This forces the narrator, Shizuma, to learn some basics of priesthood in order to say the “sermon of mortality” upon the dead before cremation takes place. With these increased cases, nobody is sure of living another day, not even Shizuma himself who on several occasions utters the “sermon of mortality” to himself even though it is supposed to be uttered to those already dead.

With the dropping of the bomb, people become more pessimistic. Even government leaders do not see any hope of winning the war. To many, continuing with the war might mean even
worse consequences. The emperor, therefore, concedes defeat in order to save his nation. From the underlying tone of the speech, it is evident that the situation is totally hopeless. He says:

The enemy is using a new and savage bomb to kill and maim innocent victims and inflict incalculable damage. Moreover, should hostilities continue any further, the final result would be to bring about not only the annihilation of the Japanese race, but the destruction of human civilization as a whole… (300)

Unfortunately, for the population, this doesn’t do away with hopelessness. Surrender does not mean that they are free. Surrender means foreign domination; occupation of their land by foreign military forces and dictation by the powers that had bombed them. Most fear that foreign domination could be another nightmare. People actually believe that they will be castrated by the enemy forces.

The worsening condition of Yasuko makes the situation desperate. With every passing day, Shizuma and his wife begin to lose hope of ever saving Yasuko. In the end Shizuma is resigned to fate as he believes that only a miracle can save his niece, “He prophesied to himself, ‘Let a rainbow appear – not a white one, but one of many hues – and Yasuko will be cured.”

4.2.3 Fear

Fear is something that comes with conflict. The narrator, Shizuma, shows how fear creeps in as the war progresses and how fear affects people’s lives. It is because of the fear of being attacked that rumours abound in the city. People behave differently because they do not know
what is to be expected. They can only anticipate the next moves to be taken by the enemy planes.

At a broken bridge there is an overwhelming number of people fleeing supposed attacks, as rumours have it. While at the bridge, some people get hysterical when they see a mushroom-like cloud in the sky. There is intense fear of mortal death as most people believe that the cloud is another bomb from the enemy forces. One of the women hysterically cries, “Hey, you monster of a cloud! Go away! We’re non-belligerents! D’you hear- go away!” (56)

When the emperor delivers a surrender speech on behalf of the Japanese nation, new fear creeps into the people. They begin to think that they will be castrated by the foreign as rumours actually have it.

Shigematsu and the wife, Shigeko, live in consistent fear not knowing whether Yasuko, who suffers from the radiation disease, will get married by her fiancé or not. They also fear for what people would say about how they have attended to her situation. Yasuko, herself, is filled with fear when she learns that she could be sick from the radiation disease. As a result of this she desperately resorts to treating herself in an effort to save herself and keep everything off the scrutinizing public eye.

The emperor, for fear that the war could cause more suffering to his people surrenders and accepts defeat in the ongoing world war. The population sees logic in his argument but with the
ending of these fears, comes new fear for they do not know clearly what foreign domination is likely to mean to the people of Japan.

It is because of the continued air strikes and their devastating effects that Shizuma gives his wife directions on how to take precautions in the case of another air strike. This shows how deep people’s fear is for their lives.

4.2.4 Conflict and war

The Second World War is the central idea of the text *Black Rain* (1970). The author explains how the war was carried out between the two opposing sides that are at war. Because of it the most important things for the survival of people in a nation, like infrastructure and food production, are forgotten. Yasuko is used symbolically to show that when there are conflicts, even the common man in the village gets affected.

Courtesy of the war, people live in fear of losing their lives, property and even independence as a nation. Japanese forces are shown as going out to combat with enemy forces, while there some of their members lose their lives. Through the identified funerary symbols like the atomic bomb, the radiation sickness, crematoriums and others, the text, shows that war can be costly to any nation.
4.3 Funerary symbols and major ideas in Kenzaburo Oe’s *The Silent Cry* (1967)

4.3.1 Sibling rivalry

*The Silent Cry* (1967) presents two brothers, Mitsusaburo and Takashi, who despite being the only surviving siblings cannot agree on even the smallest of issues. Mitsusaburo who seems more reasonable is reserved and his brother takes advantage of his seemingly calm and reasonable nature to arm twist him. He sells their family property including the storehouse to a Chinese investor, emperor, passing less than half of the earnings to his brother Mitsusaburo. But when he forms a group of young men from the valley he turns to the same Mitsusaburo and tricks him into making a contribution towards the running of the group’s activities.

Not only does Takashi do this to Mitsusaburo, he also sleeps with his wife with the full knowledge of Mitsusaburo and in full view of one of his members - Hoshio. He impregnates her and, through his character, pushes his brother out of the main house into the storehouse – where he stays in loneliness. On his part Mitsusaburo disapproves of most of the arguments by his brother. He looks down upon or despises Takashi’s judgment something that seems to make Takashi bitter and lonely. It is this feeling that pushes Takashi into hurting his brother. Mitsusaburo even refuses to reassure Takashi that he loved him and rejects his offer of an eye. Takashi had wanted to offer one of his eyes to his brother as prove that he truly loved and appreciated him. It is this bad blood between Takashi and Mitsusaburo, among other serious blunders and factors, which pushes Takashi into his own suicide. They are in an unhealthy competition and both of them cannot readily accept each other and live in harmony as siblings. Mitsusaburo fails to prevent his brother from committing suicide even when it is clear that he is
a seriously disturbed person. On his part Takashi opts to make grave decisions singly and disregards Mitsusaburo yet the latter is his senior. Mitsusaburo is also the de facto family head.

### 4.3.2 Suffering

The narrator tells of how his wife and he himself had gotten disappointed when they got a severely handicapped child as their first born baby. As a result of this the narrator and his wife suffer psychologically and emotionally as none of them wishes to be identified with a disability. It is in an effort to safeguard their public image that the two decide to put the baby in an institution; they however continue to be haunted by the thoughts of it. Natsumi, the wife, even refuses to have sex with the husband in the fear of having another handicapped child. Concerning this Mitsusaburo says, “…we’d had almost no sexual relations since the baby’s conception, much less since the trauma of its birth – simultaneously overcome by desire, like a passing fever of the blood. Roughly she grasped my penis, which had risen stiff against the resisting stuff of my trousers, then frowned in distress and distaste and, walking with an odd shuffle, disappeared into the bedroom.” (Oe:210) Natsumi reacts like this to her husband’s sexual advances because she continues to suffer psychologically after the birth of the handicapped child.

Mitsusaburo is also haunted by the thoughts of a friend who commits suicide. He too contemplates committing suicide like his friend. While in the storehouse, where he stays for some time, he sees beams and thinks them good enough to be used for the suicide mission. This is in an effort of trying to escape from the reality of life which has not been very good to him.
Takashi lives with the pain of having abused the sister sexually and eventually driving her to her death. One night, he painfully recounts to his brother Mitsusaburo how he would take advantage of her and how this has kept him ‘haunted’ over the years. When the brother fails to sympathize with him and also rejects his offer of the eye Takashi is greatly disturbed as he does not get the comfort he was looking for. Takashi also lived with the painful memories of the deaths of the parents and his brother S.

Jin suffers physically as she increases in weight and body size to worrying and unbelievable proportions. She is reported as the biggest woman in Japan. Her appetite also keeps rising and this strains the family resources. She narrates her story to Mitsusaburo and from her account, this is obviously a woman whose life has taken a turn for the worst.

4.3.3 Hopelessness

Some of the happenings in the text drive characters into a state of despair and eventual state of hopelessness. When Mitsusaburo and the wife get a disabled child, they are so shocked by that fact that they seem to have lost all hope of ever getting a normal child. The wife resorts to drinking and turns to Takashi, her own brother-in-law for sexual satisfaction. She eventually conceives for Takashi. The husband on his part gets even more reserved, a clear sign of someone who is depressed.

The young men rearing chicken lose hope when their chickens die of hunger, cold and sickness. In despair they turn to Takashi who uses them to form a football group and later on uses them to cause an insurrection in the valley.
All attempts to help Jin deal with her situation do not bear fruits. She is, in fact, referred to as the fattest woman in Japan. She is in the end unable to move around and remains in her house throughout with the burden of taking care of her lying to her husband and children. Her situation is a clear picture of people who have given up, she herself has little hope of regaining her health.

The people in the valley are led to believe that their fortunes have been ruined by the emperor, a Chinese investor in the valley. Their act of accepting to take part in the looting clearly shows a state of hopelessness in the people. The civilians have not been able to improve their own standards of living and instead of working towards this end they unjustly load it on an innocent Chinese investor in the valley.

4.3.4 Disability and shame

When Mitsusaburo and the wife get a handicapped child they are so ashamed of him that in the end they decide to send him into an institution where he stays for some years. They also fear having another child lest they get a baby with similar deformities. The author uses the family to show that the disabled are rejected right from home. If the parents behave this way towards their own biological son, then the outsiders are likely to be more hostile. One of the reasons for putting the child in an institution is because the two do not want it known by the public that they have a disabled child. Natsumi is so ashamed of the son that she denies the husband sexual intercourse. At one moment when he desires to have sex with her she literary grasps his manhood and frowns before leaving him in pain. Later as she makes her excuses of how the
memories of the deformed child came back to her, Mitsusaburo says, “But even as I listened to her I could feel, low in my belly, a lingering memory of the pain that a while earlier had taken a vicelike grip on the buried roots of my erect penis that ran from behind the testicles toward the coccyx…." (Oe:210)

4.4 Funerary symbols and structural unity in Masuji Ibuse’s Black Rain (1970)

4.4.1 Characters

The text develops and uses some of the major characters, most of whom are categorized as funerary symbols, to communicate its message and also set the mood and atmosphere. The effect of using some of the major characters as funerary symbols is to ensure that they do appear in the text as many times as would be possible and by doing so they would be pushing forward the plot of the text. Characters like Yasuko, Shigematsu and Takashi are not only the drivers of the message in the text, they are also symbolic in nature. Yasuko is introduced early enough by the narrator as a weight in Shigematsu’s mind (Masuji:9). The reader of the text gets to learn from the onset that there is more to expect from Yasuko, she is a symbolic character. In chapter one of the text both Yasuko and Shigematsu are introduced as victims of the atomic bomb. Shigematsu Shizuma for instance is said to have suffered whenever he exerted himself:

Whenever he applied himself too enthusiastically to working in the fields, he would be overcome by sudden lethargy, and small pimples would appear on his scalp. If he tugged at his hair, it came out, quite painlessly. (14)
Yasuko is also introduced as a person who is of marriageable age, and actually as betrothed to someone. However, she is suffering from the radiation disease and her worsening situation is threatening this engagement. This new development creates another twist into her story. The narrator therefore moves to the next chapters with the story of Yasuko and Shigematsu as the victims of the killer disease. The two characters advance the development of the plot as the narrator sets out to tell his readers how the radiation disease was contracted, the experiences of the victims of this disease and their fate.

With the unfolding of Yasuko’s story, and how she contracts the radiation disease, the unity of the story is kept. The narrator, Shigematsu, ensures that the reader gets to see the torment he and his wife undergo due to Yasuko’s sickness. She tortures them by keeping the symptoms of radiation disease secret, she is even trying to medicate herself. She then loses her courtship and the hope of getting married as her condition worsens, she experiences excruciating physical pain and psychological instability after losing her fiancé. The narrator does not tire to tell about Yasuko and her experiences: he tells us how her life was before she got the radiation disease, how life changes when she suffers from the disease and how it is when her condition takes a turn for the worst. Yasuko’s story is seen from the beginning to the end of the text. This alongside the story of Shigematsu and others that appear briefly (like the woman from Ikemoto) as repetitive facts help a lot in ensuring a related unfolding of the plot and creating the structuring unity of the story.
4.4.2 War and related factors

The narrator has in his work focused on issues relating to a build up to a war and the factors that come with the war systematically in the whole text. Shigematsu, the narrator, cleverly starts by giving the readers the background to the devastating war. He tells of the ever increasing rumours of imminent attacks and the fears that rise with these rumours. People live in fear of being attacked, not knowing when the attack will be- if it will. The planes, clouds and even unusual happenings, like Shigematsu going to work slightly earlier, are causes of alarm. Apart from using these funerary symbols to set up the atmosphere of the story, the narrator also uses them to tie the story together as a unity. The rumours and fears that come up with war are not tied to one chapter, they are a happening that are sustained from the beginning of the text to the very end.

These rumours and fears are cleverly alternated with actual attacks and news of attacks in people’s occupations and at the battlefield. The attacks leading to the dropping of the atomic bombs are given by the narrator. Shigematsu even goes a step further to alert and train the wife on what to do in subsequent attacks. The description of the dropping of the atomic bomb and the effects it has, the confusion it causes and the life after the attack create a vivid picture of a sadistic attacker. The narrator once again ensures the structural unity and plot advancement in the story by telling about the atomic bomb attack and its devastating effects in different chapters. By doing so he keeps the readers’ attention on the main issue he wants to address in his story - the war. War has been manifested in every chapter of the text.
With the continuing war and the death toll ever rising, the people begin to look at many of the things and happenings in the surroundings and to attach war related meanings on them. Shigematsu listens to a kite wheeling critically because he superstitiously believes that the wheeling is connected to the ongoing war (Masuji:114), falling off of hair from people’s bodies becomes a clear indication that a victim of radiation disease would not survive (Masuji:264), the ‘summon of mortality’ gets associated with the war as most of the bodies getting cremated are those of the victims of the ongoing war – direct or indirect victims. These among many other superstitions happen in different chapters as the war continues to take a different and dangerous turn. People look at things and happenings even more superstitiously after the actual dropping of the bomb. With the coming to an end of the war are even more fears and superstitions.

The effects of war earlier on discussed, like black spots in the bodies of people rained on by the black rain, extreme physical and emotional suffering and deaths happen and continues to happen in every chapter as the story unfolds. People continue to die in large numbers while others are getting permanently maimed - something that drives the state into surrendering, in order to prevent further suffering. Shigematsu describes, for instance, how he lost all his interest in sex. Not even with clear provocation from the wife does he get sexually aroused. This means that he unwillingly denies his wife of her conjugal right. The victims of the radiation illness are also said to stink. These effects are clearly described by the narrator in order to create the image of a people hard hit by foreign attacks on their land. The narrator uses these recurrently to create the structural unity of the story and to create the mood of the setting.
4.5 Funerary symbols and structural unity in Kenzaburo Oe’s The Silent Cry (1967)

4.5.1 Characters

The narrator presents his own story alongside that of his younger brother, Takashi. Though these two are siblings, the only ones living, they have irreconcilable differences. Mitsusaburo being the elder brother and the current family head he expects not only to be respected by his younger brother but to also be consulted where important decisions touching on their family have to be made. This should be so traditionally, now that their parents are long dead. According to their traditions, it is Mitsusaburo who becomes the new head of the family. This however does not happen as the younger brother, Takashi decides to pull his brother’s leg and Mitsusaburo gets disturbed by the turn of events. The two brothers keep on undermining each other from one chapter to another up to the time the story of the text comes to an end. Takashi wrongs his brother in different ways and in different chapters in the text, something that enables the narrator to continuously present him as the antagonist. Takashi shows an open interest in Mitsusaburo’s wife and later on confesses having slept with her and impregnating her, he sells family property without consulting Mitsusaburo and even cheats him off the money made, he influences his boys into undermining Mitsusaburo, he causes the death of an innocent young woman and he also confesses to have slept with and led their sister into her own death among many others. This unbecoming behaviour is stretched by the author to appear in different chapters of the book, and indeed throughout the text.

The story and thoughts of Mitsusaburo’s disabled child keep recurring in Mitsusaburo’s mind throughout the story of the text. This is sustained through what he sees and at times in his dreams and conversations with the wife. The effect that this has is a presentation of images of a
badly deformed child in the mind of the reader. This is presented alongside the story of a close friend to the narrator, a friend who commits suicide. The presentation of the above; alongside Jin, Mitsusaburo himself, valley children and people’s views of Koreans among others, ensures a sustained presentation of characters as funerary symbols.

The atmosphere of the text has been developed through the use of such characters which are sustained and consistent throughout the text. Through them the structural unity of the text is achieved.

4.5.2 Conflicts

*The Silent Cry* (1967) exposes several conflicts; these conflicts keep recurring throughout the entire story of the text. The narrator, Mitsusaburo, tells how his father went to fight in another country and ended up dying there. This leaves the narrator and the entire family bitter because the war cost them a father. This is something that is felt through the text because the narrator is forced to take over as the leader of the family. It is because of the death that Takashi is forced to stay with relatives where he ends up abusing his own sister. The family itself faces so many challenges because of the absence of the father. The war in which the narrator’s father dies remains a recurrent concern that is felt throughout.

The narrator also uses other things categorized as funerary symbols like the chunk of stone thrown at him by one of the children who were playing. This stone costs him one eye and gives him a rather grotesque appearance. In a separate case, an earlier uprising which happened in 1860 negatively motivates Takashi into starting an own uprising, it is this uprising that causes
an attack on a supermarket. The author presents these happenings in different areas in the story, covering the entire period of the story; the effect is that the cases present conflicts as a funerary symbol that does nobody any good. These and the description of two elders’ fight, something that Mitsusaburo witnesses, in which one of the elderly people loses a tooth, help in advancing the events of the story and in creating structural unity.

4.5.3 Superstitions

Upon the death of S people keep off when his body is brought. This is because they believe that there was an evil spirit that led to his untimely death. A spirit could affect them if they showed any association with S’ body. In a separate case, the narrator also describes the mother as someone who really feared axes and sharp objects. The author uses these alongside the description of other superstitions to create the structural unity. The other things are the nembutsu music played out of season; the writings left behind by the narrator’s friend who commits suicide; a gun, Taka shoots himself dead; chosokabe, a feared supernatural creature believed to be in existence; Jin’s dreams; paintings of hell and taboos like whistling at night. Through such beliefs, carefully spread out in the entire story, the story is tied together into a common entity.

4.5.4 Diseases and disability

The text has presented the case of a badly deformed child as one of the cases that appear recurrently in the text. Although the narrator and the wife place this child in an institution, he keeps reminding the reader that he has a deformed child and that the issue disturbs him psychologically. At the end of the text the narrator emphatically brings back the issue of the
child who had been clearly described at the beginning. This is as the couple decides to relocate to Africa and also to bring their son under their care, from the institution.

The text also uses the cases of Takashi and Jin to achieve structural unity. Takashi is embarrassed when he contracts gonorrhea from his promiscuity. Sexually transmitted infections are considered as a pointer to one’s promiscuity, it is something that disgraces the affected. Knowing this, Takashi therefore attempts to conceal his situation from the public eye. In a related case Jin’s illness causes discomfort, not only to herself but also in the lives of other people. She rapidly adds weight and with time she is described as the country’s biggest woman. Jin strains the family resources as she develops an insatiable appetite for food. These cases of diseases and disability help in tying the story together.

4.5.5 Bad weather
At the beginning of the story, the narrator and the wife are awaiting the arrival of his brother, Takashi, who has been in a foreign country for a while. The arrival of Takashi is however delayed by what the narrator describes as bad weather. The narrator refers to bad weather again when they are at the valley. While there snow falls at a crucial moment, this is when Takashi’s influence on the valley would need to be stopped by the authorities. The snow has however fallen and cut off all forms of communication with the people outside the valley. Hence Takashi carries on with his unpopular mission of attacking the only meaningful investment in the valley – the supermarket. The snow and bad weather also prevents Mitsusaburo from leaving the valley. Through the cases of weather the narrator is able to achieve structural unity.
4.5.6 Alcohol

The cases of alcohol abuse are first brought out through Natsumi, the narrator’s wife. The narrator explains how the wife had resorted to excessive drinking after delivering a deformed child. Natsumi resorts to drinking in an effort of keeping off her son’s disturbing thoughts. The narrator however gets concerned as the wife’s drinking habit worsens. This habit by the wife stretches through the text.

As Takashi struggles to take control of the valley leadership, he manages to convince most of his youth to shun drinking because of its effect of interfering with judgment. Hoshio is one of the characters who stop drinking. The issue of alcohol has been mentioned in the entire text, something which brings the story together as an entity.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the way the identified funerary symbols have helped to achieve structural unity in both Black Rain (1970) and The Silent Cry (1967). The chapter has looked at some of the recurrent issues in the texts and how these issues are cleverly used alongside other things like the setting to tie the stories together.

The next chapter gives a summary of this dissertation and also provides specific conclusions on each of the chapters of this work. It also gives the necessary recommendations for further study.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This research study was an interrogation of two works of art; Kenzaburo Oe’s *The Silent Cry* (1967) and Masuji Ibuse’s *Black Rain* (1970). The selected texts are among the great works by these authors. The authors themselves are among the most acknowledged creative writers from the Asian continent.

In this study we focused on investigating how funerary symbols have been used in the works of fiction of Japan’s Kenzaburo Oe’s *The Silent Cry* (1967) and Masuji Ibuse’s *Black Rain* (1970). The argument of the study was that critics and researchers appeared to shun the significance of symbolism in the selected works of the two Asian writers. This paucity was even more in the usage of a particular class of symbolism; funerary symbolism. This was so even though funerary symbols were very instrumental in passing the arguments of the two scholars in the selected texts. It is with a view of this, therefore, that we set out to undertake a critical, in-depth and analytical analysis of the funerary symbols as used in the identified texts for this research study.

We started by identifying and discussing funerary symbols as used in the two texts. This identification was informed by various factors which included Cultural set-up and the special particular usage of characters and other identified things in the delivery of the content of the texts among others. We then used the identified funerary symbols to interrogate the socio-political and cultural realities in the communities in the selected texts. We then looked at the
aesthetic and structural significance of the symbols in the texts under study. This was important because to understand a work of art one needs to appreciate the manner in which it is presented.

5.2 Specific conclusions on chapters (Research findings)

5.2.1 Chapter one

This chapter started by giving a detailed background to the study of this research. The geographical location and nature of Japan as a country was given. A brief explanation as to why some Japanese works of fiction focus on war was also given. The foundation for the undertaking of the study was laid after looking at some works relevant for the success of this study work. The specific interest and focus of the study was set out in the statement of the problem. It is from this statement of the problem that the three major objectives were derived. These ones were:

i. Identifying funerary symbols as literary tools in the selected works.

ii. Examining how funerary symbols reveal society’s social, political and cultural realities in the communities of the narrators.

iii. Establishing the likely contribution of funerary symbols on the texts’ literary concerns and the structural unity of the selected works.

The dissertation undertaking was justified by pointing out the dearth of critical works on the selected authors’ works. The quality of the texts in this study and their wide readership were also instrumental in their choice. The authors have also won prestigious literary prizes courtesy of the selected texts.
The semiotics literary criticism and psychoanalysis theory were identified as having enabled the successful completion of the study undertaking. The research was wholly library based, aimed at gathering information on the usage of funerary symbols in the primary texts which are; Kenzaburo Oe’s *The Silent Cry* (1967) and Masuji Ibuse’s *Black Rain* (1970). The information collected was supplemented by secondary sources from dissertations, books, projects, theses, periodicals, newspapers and audio podcasts among others obtained from or through Kenyatta University’s Post Modern Library and the Literature Resource Centre. Online materials and information were also enabled at Kenyatta University Post Modern Library.

5.2.2 Chapter Two

This chapter explored the first objective of the research study. We identified and expounded on the funerary symbols employed in each of the texts under this study. It was realized that the two authors have employed a wide variety of funerary symbols in the selected texts. The symbols employed ranged from human beings used in the texts as characters to imagined spiritual beings and some natural phenomena. It was also realized that the funerary symbols used had various meanings in the contexts used. They are very important and contribute a lot to the wholeness of the texts studied in this study.

5.2.3 Chapter Three

The second objective of the study was addressed in this chapter. The funerary symbols identified were used to explore the social, political and cultural set-up of the communities as presented in the stories of the selected texts. Our argument was that one can learn a lot about the communities in which the texts are set by exploring on the funerary symbols used. It was
noted, for instance, that the family was the most important and basic social unit. The communities were also found to be highly spiritual and accord the elderly respect. From the study, it was concluded that the communities are highly organized.

5.2.4 Chapter Four

This chapter put its focus on the third objective of the study. The major ideas in each of the texts were looked at and the way in which funerary symbols helped in advancing these ideas expounded on. In the second part of the chapter we looked at the way the identified funerary symbols have been used to achieve structural unity in each of the selected works. We noted and argued that indeed funerary symbols are recurrent in the texts and that they are vital in enhancing the advancement of the plot of each of the texts.

5.3 Recommendations for further studies

This research study focused on a topic that had not been given much attention by critics. Funerary symbols are just but a component of the larger usage of symbols in literary works. The usage of symbols helps a lot in expanding the imagination and understanding of abstract and unfamiliar phenomena. There are many more components of symbolism that could be looked at by future researchers.

This study therefore helps to bridge the gap on the discussion of symbolism in the works of Masuji Ibuse and Kenzaburo Oe. The current study was, however, carried out and limited to the chosen texts, The Silent Cry (1967) and Black Rain (1970), and the topic identified. The authors have many other texts to their names, some of which are acknowledged the world over, with
many other unique features that can draw attention of interested researchers. Later researchers on the writers may find interest in researching spirituality in the writings of Kenzaburo Oe and Masuji Ibuse. Researchers can also look at the place of ancestors and the dead in the advancement of the plot of their texts. A comparative study in spirituality and the dead in the writers’ works and African indigenous writers could also reveal a lot.

This study was based on the belief that literature is a reflection of the happenings in the society. Some of the Japanese creative writers have therefore correctly written on matters of conflict and wars because this is what affected many people directly or indirectly in Japan. Conflicts and wars also happened to be some of the most memorable things in the country. Researchers attracted in Japanese writings might be interested in finding out whether Japanese creative writers have overcome the realities of war and atomic bombs in other writings where atomic bombs and radiation sickness do not take centre stage.

Literary researchers could also be interested in establishing gender roles during the periods of conflicts and wars. Such a study could reveal a lot of interesting facts. This is also one of the areas that is yet to be exhausted in research.
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Analysis Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Symbol identified</th>
<th>Where identified</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Chapter and pages</th>
<th>notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Black Rain</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Silent Cry</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


APPENDIX II

ANALYSIS MATRIX II

The realities analysis matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>The Silent Cry (pages)</th>
<th>Black Rain (pages)</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX III

PHOTO OF KENZABURO OE

APPENDIX IV

PHOTO OF MASUJI IBUSE

SOURCE: babelio.com/auteur/masuji-ibuse