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Symbolism in *The Setting Sun* by Osamu Dazai 1947

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved parents the first and biggest supporters and to my precious grandfather, “peace be upon him” the one who asked about the work even during his last days.

Of course I do not forget the rest of the family my only sister and brothers, and my best friends.

A special dedication to my husband who helped me the most to make this work done and my little darling, dear my son.

Acknowledgment

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, and prayers and peace be upon our noble

Prophet

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hoping that He would guide me for further progress and perseverance for success.

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Abstract

The study attempts to investigate symbolism in the second most famous novel of Osamu Dazai, *The Setting Sun* (1947). He is telling the story of a small family that contains the narrator Kazuko her younger brother Naoji and their parents and what happened with them after the Second World War. I aim through my research paper to draw the attention to this rich literature and give an idea to reading lovers and those who are interested in Japanese culture the chance to know more about it in an academic way. This study is divided into three chapter : the first chapter is a literature review on symbolism, the second one is an overview about the novel *The Setting Sun* and the third is the analysis of the used symbolism in the novel. The author used symbols to convey a hidden messages to a certain class in their society. The analysis of symbolism in the novel shows that this literary work is more likely to be a fictional autobiography of the writer rather than being a narrative work. Most of the events included by Osamu Dazai are a real experience and actually happened with him. He expressed his inner thoughts, beliefs and philosophy through the character Kazuko and his feeling and real self through Naoji aiming to send his voice to the world in order to get some help with his pain but he ended up losing himself.

Key words: Symbolism, aristocracy, tragedy, Japanese literature, Japanese Culture.

ملخص

هذه الدراسة تسعى الى تحري استخدام الرمزية الموجودة في رواية *الشمس الغاربة* (1947) للكاتب الياباني أساموا دازاي, و التي تحكي قصة عائلة يابانية صغيرة مكونة من كازوكو الراوية و اخوها ناوجي و والديها و كيف تغيرت حياتهم بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية. أهدف من خلال هذا البحث الى لفت النظر الى الادب الياباني القيم بحيث يكون محط اهتمام لعشاق المطالعة و الاشخاص المهتمين بالثقافة اليابانية العريقة بشكل عام. هذه الدراسة ستنقسم الى ثلاث فصول, حيث سنتناول في الفصل الاول المراجعة الادبية للرمزية و الفصل الثاني سيكون عبارة عن نظرة شاملة لرواية *الشمس الغاربة* (1947), اما الثالث سيحتوي تحليل الدلالات الرمزية المستخدمة من طرف الكاتب. مع التعمق في اسلوب الكاتب ارى انه قد لجأ الى استخدام الرمزية من اجل مخاطبة فئة معينة من المجتمع ثم انه يروي حياته الواقعية مع استخدامه لبصمته ككاتب موهوب لإضفاء بعض من الخيال عليها و كان ذلك من اجل ان يستغيث بالأشخاص الذين من حوله لإنقاذه في مسعاه لإنهاء حياته و لكن للأسف انتهى به الامر منتحرا.

الكلمات المفتاحية : الرمزية, الارستقراطية, المأساة, الادب الياباني, الثقافة اليابانية.

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General introduction

This research paper is a stylistic study that aims to interpret the novel of *The Setting Sun* by the Japanese writer Osamu Dazai which was published for the first time in 1947. The novel has a grim grey theme that make the readers feel sad but in a positive way which make them more captive to the story. It reflects an interesting side of Japan in the shifting period of post-war where people were still confused and lost while looking for their real identity. The study is about analyzing the use of symbolism in the chosen novel, and that last is going to be divided into three chapters. The first chapter is literature review on symbolism. The second chapter provides an overview on the novel, the summary, the author background and it's major characters and themes. Moving forward to chapter three the heart of the subject matter the analysis of symbolism in the novel.

Accordingly, in my research paper I will look for an answer to the following questions:

- ❖ What are the symbols used in *The Setting Sun (1947)*?
- ❖ What does these symbols mean in the Japanese culture?
- ❖ What meaning does the writer want to convey through these symbols?
- ❖ What is the relationship between the symbols and the author's background ?

The used methodology in this research is simple. First, decoding the used symbols through going back to its meaning in the Japanese culture and what the author wanted to convey through its use. Second, taking a look at the author's background to see how far is the novel close to his real life and his own philosophy. Third and last, comparing the findings in both of the author's background and the novel's events to prove the relationship between them.

In this study I aim to draw the attention through this novel to Japanese rich literature in order to give a chance to other researchers to discover more about it. In other hand, I would like to extend the searching space as there are only few who worked on Japanese literature in our department and show them that it is important to take different cultures literature as a case of study. I am motivated by the fact that Japanese culture has become widely spread around the world and people especially the researchers see that it has become a valued and an interesting corpus that it should be studied.

Chapter One :

A Literature Review on Symbolism

Introduction

In this chapter, I will tackle the definition and meaning of symbolism shedding light on how symbolism has been used through history. Moreover, I will discuss multiple definitions of symbolism as a device in literature by different critics. In addition, types of symbolism and its features. Also, I will take a look on the concept of symbolism in other art aspects besides literature and at the end of this chapter I will try to match this theory with our study.

1.1 Symbolism

It is an organized literary and artistic movement that originated with a group of French poets in the late of the nineteenth century. It was introduced into English-speaking world for the first time during (1865_1945), by Verlaine's friend Arthur Symons. He debates throughout *the symbolism movement in literature* in 1899 that symbolism is the essence of language and literature; For him, our first words were symbolic, and truly imaginative writers have been symbolists.(Symons,1899)

At the late nineteenth century symbolism became a conscious movement, it came as reaction to the exaggerated, descriptive method of naturalism school of Émile Zola and others. Symbolists added purity to the arts, they believe that symbols frees language and literature from the logical sequence or the referential accuracy. Symbolist artists sought to express individual emotional experiences through the subtle and suggestive use of highly symbolized language. This movement had a lasting impact on the new writers of the twentieth century mainly in Europe and USA.

Another definition of Michael Horan who said:

Simply put, a *symbol* is something that stands for something else. *Symbolism*, or the use of symbols, involves using an object, a person, a place, or an action to represent a quality, an attitude, a belief, or a value. Symbolism takes something ordinary or basic and makes it more than what it is in reality. A symbol has both a literal meaning (what it really is) and a symbolic meaning (what it represents).(Horan,p)

He argues that symbolism is using any concrete or abstract thing to express figuratively a hidden meaning Horan suggested a practical way to distinguish symbolic expressions by observing how often the author uses or references a particular object or situation. If he or she repeatedly states something, it is most likely to develop a symbol. To read between the lines in certain textual element that are symbolic, I need to have a look on the social context and cultural background of the text and its writer. Accordingly, the meaning of any used item in symbolism differs from a culture to another depending on the religious beliefs and the social context of each culture. In addition, anything can be used as a symbol; the use is infinite as each feature has a multiple meaning. It is not confined to works of literature: symbols inhabit every corner of our daily life. It is used currently in wide sense as the equivalent of 'sign', and in the strict sense, as in Psycho-analysis.(Ernest 1916)

Generally, in the real life we can find thousand of symbols or signs that represent other things, mentioning colors, flowers, flags, logos, etc. Most of these elements are combined usually to come up with new concepts. For instance, red roses means love and romance as red is the color of blood and heart as well, and roses are to express the pure feelings or the emotions that can not be expressed by words by combining both the meanings we create the concept of love. Another field that symbolism is deeply concerned in is Psycho-analysis: especially dreams and characters analysis. Psycho-analysis use symbol's decoding in order to figure out the defense mechanism of the conscious and the unconscious symbols, the messages that last wants

to send to the surface (the conscious). Hence, the dreams symbolism decoding helps to analyses the characters.

1.2 How symbolism has been used throughout history?

Human beings used symbols in their daily life since ever in order to convey their inner thoughts. The earliest recorded forms of storytelling-cave paintings and hieroglyphics are literal symbols of more complex stories and beliefs. Ancient Greek theater, that is the idea for a great deal of today's narrative art forms, used symbolic props along with phallic gadgets to symbolize Dionysus, the god of fertility. Symbolism remained in huge use at some point of the Middle Ages (nearly continually with spiritual connections) and then, from the Renaissance forward, back in complete pressure to symbolize human goals starting from lust to ambition to heartbreak. William Shakespeare used the sign to represent his inner conscience the blood in the dagger in the play *Macbeth* that symbolizes Duncan's impending murder and the guilt that will plague Macbeth for the rest of the play. Edgar Allen Poe used it to convey fear and death as in the eponymous bird in *The Raven* ; and William Blake used religious symbols (including Jesus himself) to represent human emotions and desires like "*The Everlasting Gospel*".

1.3 Types of symbolism

1.3.1 Religious symbolism

This is the most "accepted" form of symbolism through literary history, as it is sanctioned by religious authorities who had dominance over society since human existence. It goes back to earliest human civilizations some, examples includes: *Paradise Lost* by John Milton, *The Brothers Karamazov* by the Russian author Fyodor Dostoevsky which among its subtle symbolism is a physical representation of the Holy Spirit.

1.3.2 Emotional symbolism

Many writers and poets refer to physical Symbolists such as Stéphane Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine are known for this form of symbolism, as are English writers such as, William Butler Yeats and Seamus Heaney.

1.4 Symbolism as a literary device

It takes many forms in literary works writing style here are some of them:

1.4.1 Metaphor

A metaphor refers to one thing by directly referring to something else. Basically, we compare two different things and show what they have in common. Therefore, while metaphors can provide clarity, they can also show similarities between two things or ideas, despite their obvious differences.

1.4.2 Simile

Rather than implying a comparison like a metaphor, a simile explicitly indicates a comparison between two things. Parables often use the words "like" or "as". The two things you compare to simile are essentially different. Unlike metaphors, similes are a much more direct comparison.

1.4.3 Personification

This type of symbol applies human attributes to non-living and non-human things. For example, anthropomorphism gives human form and sensitivity to various objects such as chairs, nature, books, or abstract concepts such as love and hate. The author uses anthropomorphism to help readers better relate to non-human objects and things.

1.4.4 Allegory

It is a narrative in which characters, events, and places convey a greater message about

real-world concerns and events. In other words, it is a story where most characters and plot developments are a symbol of something else, or the whole story is a symbol of a larger phenomenon in the real world or society. Fables use characters and events to reveal hidden meanings and messages, rather than going straight out and saying it. Fables are essentially an extended use of common metaphors and symbolism.

1.4.5 Archetype

They are story elements that are repeated in a story and symbolize universal things, such as ideas and character types. For example, you can create a character based on a particular quality or characteristic that makes it identifiable to the reader. In the literary world, a prototype is a character, image, or subject that symbolically embodies some universal meaning or human experience.

1.4.6 Hyperbole

Hyperbole uses exaggeration whether for cartoon or serious purpose, to create or emphasize points. As a metaphor exaggeration should not be taken literally. Like the opposite of understatement, exaggeration is often extravagant and often ridiculous. Exaggeration can not only get your attention, but also provide a contrast between the two things. While many authors use exaggeration in their novels, many people also use exaggeration in everyday language.

1.4.7 Metonymy

Metonymy replaces the name of the entity itself with a word that is closely related to the entity. In other words, you refer to an object by the name of something closely related to it. Writers use metonymy to work on something more poetic or unique. Metonymy also helps to give more complex meanings to other common words and phrases.

1.4.8 Irony

Irony is an idiom that is the opposite of the literal meaning of a word that expresses its intended meaning. There are many types of irony, including dramatic irony and verbal irony.

Irony helps attract readers and adds another layer to the fictional story.

1.5 Using symbolism in writing

Symbols can enhance the writing to a sensual experience. Symbols can give a word a double meaning, both literally and figuratively, allowing writers to say more with less effort.

Symbols can also be like a secret language between the author and the reader. In particular, it can be used as a symbol.

1.5.1 Adding emotion

It added emotional resonance which creates a lasting impression on the reader. For example, in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the guilt-ridden Lady Macbeth is tortured by a spot of blood

on her hands that will not wash clean after she kills King Duncan.

1.5.2 Connecting themes

As an example the color green used in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is a sign of money and materialism that defines life on the North Shore of Long Island.

1.5.3 Defining characters

Symbols can represent character attributes in both, literal and figurative sense. For example, in the Harry Potter series, the scars of Harry's lightning symbolize Lord Voldemort's attempts at life and the love that saved him.

1.5.4 Concealing darker meaning

In the *Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Hester's seemingly wild daughter Pearl symbolizes the sin that led to her conception. Her difficult attitude reveals the secret of her existence-her father is the prominent Rev. Arthur Dimmesdale. Only when Dim's Dale's paternity is revealed will Pearl turn into a positive symbol, the spirit of liberation of nature.

1.6 Symbolism in other art aspects

Though it began as a literary movement it influenced other artists in many fields such as painting, cinema, music, etc.

1.6.1 Symbolism in Painting

Symbolist painters believed that art should reflect emotions or ideas rather than represent the natural world in the objective, quasi-scientific manner incarnate by Realism and Impressionism. Returning to the personal expressiveness advocated by the Romantics in the early nineteenth century, they drive the symbolic value or meaning of a work of art from the reproduction of the viewer's emotional experience through color, line, and composition. In painting symbolism represents the unification of form and emotion, reality and the artist's inner subjectivity. Symbolism in Eastern painting is meant to deepen the experience of a picture's mood and spiritually. Both the execution and also the subject material of Buddhist Chinese and Japanese painting, have a spiritual or metaphysical significance, the artist's intuitive calligraphic brush movement symbolizing mystical empathy with nature and therefore the cyclic landscape and flower subjects expressing belief within the spiritual harmony of natural forms and forces. Much of Indian symbolism is visually emotive. And, although symbolic attributes and color codes identify Indian characters (for example, the four arms of the goddess Kali and therefore the blue skin of the divine lover

Krishna), the formal character and combination of settings generally reflects the narrative's emotional mood (for example, vibrant, dark-blue, cloudy skies and embracing, purple-black glades evoking amorous anticipation and red grounds expressing the passions of affection or war). In western symbolic systems, imagery has precise literary meanings and color codes are intended primarily for narrative or devotional identification. The iconographic programs of the first Christian churches, for instance, laid down complex formulas for the viewpoints, gestures, facial expressions, and positions of arms, hands, and feet for religious figures. An elaborate Ethiopian Christian iconography was followed until recently, and in other places traditional methods of recognizing archangels and saints by their attributes and the symbols of martyrdom they display, distinguishing Saint Peter the black-bearded from Saint Paul the black-bearded, for example, St. Catherine with a wheel and St. Bartholomew with a knife and leather. The significance of images common to several cultures, however, may also be very different: the dragon representing avarice in European medieval allegory symbolizes friendliness in Japanese Zen painting; and the snake, symbol of temptation and eroticism in the West, signifies, by its skin shedding, the renewal of life in East Asian iconography.

1.6.2 Symbolism in Cinema

Symbolism is often referred to as a literary technique. But, it certainly appears in film, drama, plays as well. There are many different ways symbolism can exist in film. In cinema, many things can be symbolic including: an object, color, character, plot, sound, special effect, camera angle, a transition and much more.

1.6.2.a/ Color

Mainly, the use of color in films can have a particular symbolic effect. Taking for example, the color of Captain America's costume, it contains the blue white and red colors of

the US national flag. This represents the US and its value it generally expressed the abstract ideas associated with US patriotism.

1.6.2.b/ Sound

Film producers tends to use sound and music in an unconscious way to affect the viewer. Often, directors attach certain kinds of music to certain characters for example, for poor people's struggles scenes they use sad music to make the observer sympathize with the character as well as for romantic or action scenes it has its own type of music sound.

1.6.2.c/ Character

Usually, characters to convey a symbolic message. A good example of this is the character *Two-Face* in *The Dark Knight* movie, in few words, after his half face was burnt he turned out into a villain. He symbolized the fallen human. Initially, Harvey Dent provided good for the morally corrupt city of Gotham. After the accident he too became even as corrupt because the city does. Moreover, he reflects the human duality of attribute. He represents blurred lines between good and evil.

1.6.2.d/ Objects

Sometimes, some objects stands for a specific concept or idea. Using objects as a symbol in films allows to express the inner conflict. By creating a pattern, attaching emotion to an object, this last articulate a character's emotion as it relates to the theme, plot or other characters. Therefore, a character does not clarify their inner feelings the viewer should observe them depending on their relationship with that object. Take for example the film of *Parasite* (2019). At the beginning of the film, the poor Kim friend that brings wealth to family received a gift from a rich friend: which is a "scholar's stone", a kind of charm, that brings

wealth to families. They tried to scam a wealthy family in order to make money and ends their poverty , this scam try almost destroyed the Kim family. The stone was regularly shown to remind the viewer of the human tenacious desire for money. At some point the stone seems as a symbol of hope for wealth but other time feel like a curse and it can be known only by using the knowledge of the overall themes.

1.6.3/e Symbolism in Music

According to Edward Arthur Lippmann:

The complexity of musical symbolism does not end with the various persons concerned; it exists n the symbols themselves, for music involves not only auditory symbols-melody, harmony, rhythm, tone-color, structer, dynamics, and so on-but visual ones also, in its instruments and performers and notation. Many of these symbols are as extended as a whole musical work; others are brief word-painting.(Lippman 1953: 554)

Music is a form of language that uses symbols that represent abstract ideas and, when used in different combinations, convey certain concepts and ideas. (Barrett,2007) claims that musical notation is not the only way in which musical meaning is communicated; Other methods include harmonic structure, the use of dynamics and symbols of expression, since at its core music is about communication (Sawyer, 2007), and musical communication, broadly, can be said to be defined as a process in which meaning is conveyed or received from Person to Person (Juslin, 2007) through the use of punctuation symbols . However, there are two groups of theorists regarding musical meaning, i.e. the absolute; Meaning in music and references. It refers to concepts outside of music. Symbolism could be a representation of a thought or a topic using symbols. they'll be objects, colors, or general expressions. The music itself is symbolic of emotions, good and bad feelings, dreams and messages. It's to convey the precise aiming to the listener and reader. Through symbolism,

a lyricist can depict his thoughts, abstract ideas, situation, event and therefore the current issues prevailing within the society in an exceedingly sugar coated way. Layer by layer, lyricist takes the listener deeper into a person's thoughts. The up and down of notes help to boost symbolism.

Conclusion

As the literary movement of symbolism became wide spread in the world at the beginning of the twentieth century, it affected several aspects of art. However, the most affect one was literature. It freed literature from logic constraints and the natural method of describing reality. Mainly, that is what I will see while going deeply through the novel of "*The Setting Sun*" details.

Chapter Two:

An overview on the novel “*The Setting*

Sun “

Introduction

In this chapter, I will have an overview on the novel, starting from the biography of the author Osamu Dazai, then moving to the summary of the novel. Also, I will introduce the major characters used by the author and introduce them accordingly to their role in the narrator's life.

2.1 The author biography

Osamu Dazai is a Japanese writer, he was born in 1909 of a rich and political family in the north of Japan. His birth name was Shuji Tsushima then he took Osamu Dazai as his pen name. He was an intelligent student who showed a promise of his literary talent since a young age, he even participated in literature magazines, wrote self-published poems and even wrote on the newspaper at Hirosaki university. Shuji did not major in anything related to literature instead, he was majoring in Gidyu in particular, which is a form of puppet theater that stems from Edo period (last years of old Japanese history and the beginning of Meiji period the new history of the country). He had a great start at college until all of sudden his favorite author Ryunosuke Akutagawa committed suicide which led him to take the same path affected by his favorite person. His life became worse as he missed classes and failed in exams. In 1929, while Shuji still studying in university he attempted to suicide for the very first time which led to a series of more suicide attempts. In 1930, he was finally able to graduate from college. In the same year, he moved to Tokyo Imperial University for further studies, he entered the French Literature Department which was aligned with his literary interests. However, he again failed to finish his studies and withdrew from university in 1935 without getting a degree due to his

frequent absence. During this time he was diagnosed with mental health problems for being addicted to morphine and was forced to spend almost two years in and out hospitals. Shuji attempted to suicide for the second time after he knew that his wife that he was expelled from his family for having a relationship with her and married her, she cheated on him with his best friend as she lost hope from him getting cured but he survived again. In the next year he was married to another woman. During the austere years which caused the war with the United States Dazai suffered from the wild dissipation. He was exempted from military service for a chronic chest ailment. Even during the war he was publishing his works facing the struggles of being forced to move from one side of the country to another. In 1947 Osamu Dazai's popularity reached its peak. His first popular work *Villon Wife* 1947 which has been included in *New Directions* 15, and later in the same year, *The Setting Sun*. His second novel, *The Disqualified*, appeared in 1948 and was acclaimed by some critics as being even superior to *The Setting Sun*. He also began the serial publication of another novel with the English title of *Good-bye* 1948. The cumulative effects of dissipation, overwork, and insomnia gave him an appearance of such utter exhaustion as to alarm his friends. Osamu while writing *The Setting Sun* was inspired by a Japanese lady Shizuko Ota, who wrote a diary of events that transcribed in her life after the war. Aside from her being a big fan of Dazai she ended up having a relationship with him which led him to have an illegitimate daughter. After having a daughter out of wedlock, his life deteriorated again and he became an alcoholic and separated his second wife as well as his mistress. Later on he met a girl who worked as a beautician in a salon. The two developed a relationship and started living together. During this time, he wrote the most popular novel of all-time *No Longer Human*, he successfully finished the novel before he successfully committing suicide one last time with this lady, they both drowned themselves in a nearby river from their home.

2.2 Synopsis

The story is about an aristocratic Japanese family which contains from father, mother and Kazuko the older sister and Naoji the younger brother whom they suffered through time and lost all of their money and how they dealt with all of this tragedies. After a while from the father's death the mother started to feel depressed and tried to protect her family and home. Naoji was a naughty teenager who used to fall in troubles during his high school and in imitation of a certain novelist, he had taken to drugs but his mother was always the one who sacrificed for two years in order to pay off the huge bill at the pharmacist . Kazuko was totally different from her brother, she tried to align the philosophy of the aristocrats in her life style, way of speaking and dressing. She was so nice to her mom to make her feel better and to take her out of her sadness. Ten years later around the war time, Naoji was required for the military service, he suffered a lot with his addiction to morphine he was spending most of his time in and out of hospitals. He used to read a lot to Mr. Uehara the one who was influenced by. Meanwhile Kazuko also was conscripted during the war and even made to do coolie labor, years later she got married but divorced from her husband after a while without having any children, after her divorce she moved to live with her mother in their large villas in peace but the mother was always worried about her son Naoji as they did not heard from him since he went to the army. Unfortunately, Kazuko's uncle Mr. Wada (her mother's younger brother and the only surviving blood relation) sent them a letter saying that they are out of money and now they are forced to move from their precious house they inherited from their father. It was October when they moved on into a Chinese-style villa in the mountains of a little village in Izu. Kazuko and her mother's life will change into a peaceful life until unexpected things showed up to disturb that peace. One day Kazoku with the neighborhood children burned some snake eggs thinking that it is poisoning but later on she figured out that it is an ordinary snake eggs, she felt guilty

especially when her mom saw her and altered her. For the next ten days, Kazuko felt bad and was thinking all the time about the eggs, she was afraid that a curse might come upon her mother and shorten her life, she was worried the most about her mom without thinking of herself. Ten days later, she unintentionally caused a fire nearby the villa and the reason was that after she removed the unburned sticks of firewood from the furnace, she had left them next to the woodpile, thinking that they were already out. Nobody was hurt. She sincerely apologized to the neighbors and promised to be more careful. She directly linked what happened with the eggs accident and felt terrified, because since that time just bad things happened with her. She tried to protect her mom and make her happy in order to take off the black thoughts in her mind and to stop the guilty feeling she had in her chest. One day, the mother had a hard fever, luckily Mr. Wada was there he brought the village doctor to examine her but her fever did not go down and Mr. Wada was obliged to travel to Tokyo for work so, he gave a 2,000 yen to Kazuko with instructions to telegraph him if it should happen that the mother had to be hospitalized. The doctor came back the next day so Kazuko asked him if her mother needs to go to the hospital but he refused that saying that no need to it and he just gave the mother a “strong injunction”. At the afternoon, the mother felt better and her face turned bright. The mother realized how worried her daughter was so, she told Kazuko that she was so sad for losing the house she lived her most happy moments in so, she could not bare to live in another place. Days passed by it was the beginning of the summer and everything was good they both lived as usual working on the fields, preparing meals, knitting on the porch, reading in the Chinese room (a Chinese-style room in the villa). They again received a letter from Mr. Wada saying that someone who used to work for him just went back from the South Pacific that Naoji was sent to and told him that he is better now and he has recovered and he will comeback soon. The mother health was going worst then before and she grew weaker a day by day, but the idea of

Naoji's comeback made her more happy and excited to see him unlike Kazuko because she is aware of how hard her mother's life will be as Naoji keeps making troubles. Soon afterwards, Naoji just appeared in front the garden. At the same day the mother was tired and had a very strong pain in her tongue that she could not even talk or eat or twist it. Naoji felt so bad for her so he suggested a sort of treatment called the aesthetic treatment (it is prepared by soaking some gauze in Rivanol solution and put it inside a mask). The mask worked on but it was not enough. Kazuko could not do anything but waiting for the results meanwhile, she grabbed some books to read from Naoji's room while thinking of how he could have relived their mother but she could not, then she remembered how bad was her younger brother when he was addicted to drugs, she thought of the money he used to ask from her and her mother and the time she figured out that he is influenced by an author called Mr. Uehara. one day, Naoji asked her again for some money and promised that he will give them back soon she just have to keep it a secret for their mom, he told her to send the money to Mr. Uehara. she decided to meet him and she found out that he is an alcoholic and he used to be addicted to drugs, so she knew why her brother went through the same path. The more she talked to Mr. Uehara she loved fell in love with him six years has passed but, she still remember every single moment. She decided to write a letter to him and ask about him how life is doing with him but something inside her wants him to help her to go out from the sadness. She sent three letters that summer and under each letter she wrote "To Mr. Uehara Jiro. (My Chekhov. M.C.) ". No answer came she waited for so long as she told him about he feelings toward him and everything inside her heart. She could not wait anymore so, decided to travel to Tokyo and meet him, but unexpectedly her mother's temperature went high again and she had a very hard cough. She brought the village doctor and he again told them that there is nothing to worry about but she had a bad feeling about the sudden change of her mother's health, she wrote to her uncle Wada. By October the

fever was gone, and Mr. Wada arranged for an old doctor named Miyake. Dr. Miyake had been an acquaintance of her father's, and the mother looked delighted to see him. After he examined her he called for Kazuko so the mother was worried he told her everything was alright and went out, Kazuko knew that something was ill so she asked is she really alright so he answered that her mother has Tuberculosis (an infectious bacterial disease characterized by the growth of nodules (tubercles) in the tissues, especially the lungs) , this sickness may prove fatal and nothing can be done about it. She felt like everything turned dark but something inside her told her about this bad end, it must be the curse she made upon her mother by burning the snake eggs, that is all what she can think about. Naoji burst into tears he felt guilty about the way he treated her and now he is standing there not able to do anything to help. They hired a nurse for her but nothing has changed the mother had only few days. Luckily, Mr. Wada arrived and was able to see his sister. The mother had a dream about a snake so she told Kazuko to check and really she found the same snake that Kazuko has burned her eggs. Three hours later the mother passed away. Naoji became more depressed and decided to change from being addicted to drugs to become an alcoholic he even sold all of their mother's jewelry styling it "capital" for his publishing venture. while Kazuko decided to travel to Tokyo to meet the man her heart loved. Her desire was to have a child from him that is all what she was thinking of it does not matter whether he loved her or not, he is married or not all she wanted is to have a child, she wanted to raise her child well that he keeps her name even after her death she did not want to die lonely and become forgotten. She make sure that her brother is not alone he was hanging out with a girl from the bar and traveled looking for her love. She went through a lot of struggles but finally, she find his house and met his wife and daughter. The wife thought that Kazuko works with her husband in publishing, she told her that she will find him in the bar. She went to the bar rapidly but she was somehow shocked of how miserable he was. She tried

to have his attention but he was all drunk. Finally, she could have make some move toward him, she had a long conversation she asked him about the letters and figured out that he read them and he just fell for her. He invited her out and went to one of Mr. Uehara's friend's house he was called Mr. Fukui and spend the night there. In the morning Mr. Uehara was not there, she went back to Izu but found that her brother Naoji had committed suicide with the girl he came with that day. It felt like a nightmare everyone is leaving sadly they all had a bad ends she remembered the only happy thing in her brother life which is the lady he loved. Her life was a sort of tragedy so, she wanted to protect the last precious she have her child. She wrote for Mr. Uehara telling him about Naoji' sad end and asking for one last thing which is to protect her child and tell his wife that he is Naoji's child and he has to do this for him. She was somehow afraid from people's old morality. She ended the letter with M.C My Comedian.

2.3 The Major Characters

2.3.1 The mother

She was the last lady in Japan, she is a very calm and beautiful woman. She was always the biggest support to her children . Even after losing her husband she was not able to show her sadness and that her heart is broken in order to protect her children. She always give all what she have and tried to take them out of problems.

2.3.2 Kazuko

He is narrator and story teller. She is the older child in the family and the mother supporter. She was an aristocratic styled girl but later on her way of living completely changed from the way of dressing and speaking to her philosophy in life. She worked in the fields in order to feed herself and her mother forgetting that she is a soft woman.

2.3.3 Naoji

He is the youngest child in the family. He had a sad life full of tragedy. He was obsessed with aristocratic philosophy in life which let him to be a good reader , he used to read a lot and was interested in literary works but, this led him to be more affected by a certain author. Unfortunately, he became addicted to drugs but after his mother's death he decided to stop but he could not so he tried to shift into drinking but again he found himself captive and became an alcoholic. Meanwhile, he published some literary works using his mother's jewelry after she passed away. At the end he had a tragic end as he committed suicide.

2.3.4 Mr. Wada

He is the only surviving blood relation and the younger brother to the mother. He supported his older sister in every hard moment since her husband's death whether materially or morally.

1.3.5 Mr. Uehara

A famous writer and Naoji's favorite author. He affected Naoji greatly neither his sister Kazuko. He was the one who suggested to Naoji the idea of shifting from drugs to alcohol as he was an alcoholic. He even helped him to do that. Later on, Kazuko loved his works then loved him as a person and texted him. He also loved her and had an illegitimate child.

Conclusion

The novel is full of events and stories that happened with the narrator Kazuko and her family members. It has several similarities with the real life of the author Osamu Dazai. Mainly, the grey sad and tragic series of events that happened in his life and in Japanese at that time .

Chapter Three:

Analysis of the Symbols in The Setting

Sun

Introduction

In this chapter we will discuss the main themes in this novel, and interpret the used symbols by the author according to its meaning in the Japanese culture, and what he meant to tell the readers through it.

3.1 The main themes

The Setting Sun deliver a grim theme, as it reflects the Japanese Civilization shift during the period of post-war. Mainly, the major theme is the socioeconomic fall of aristocracy in Japanese history right after the Second World War. The title itself *The Setting Sun* refers to the way Japanese write the name of their country in Kanji (one of its three alphabets), which means “Land of the rising sun” this phrase indicates the end of the glory days of ancient aristocracy and their old families. The luxury life of bourgeoisie came to an end, it turned out into the hard work for living sake. The historical, social and economic change is presented directly and indirectly through the flashbacks of the character Kazuko that tells the stories and the events that happened to her and the family members, starting from the father’s death, the nation-wide economic crisis caused by the war, her divorce from a wealthy man to them losing all of their money and being forced to face the reality and work in the fields in order to have a life. Dazai revealed through the mother’s incompetence, Kazuko’s working difficulties and Naoji’s struggles for survival the classist ideals which claims that the bourgeoisie gained their status and capital by hard working, intelligence, strength and personal superiority while remaining sympathetic toward the upper classes.

3.2 Symbolism in *The Setting Sun*

3.2.1 The snake

The word “snake” was used for the first time in the title of chapter one of the novel. We can tell that it is the beginning of the story, since it showed up the next events were connected to it. The snake showed up for the first time at the last moments of the father's death. Again, during the funeral day there was a snake clinging at all the garden's trees (Azaleas, Kerria roses, Sharon, maple, broom, wisteria, cherry tree) so, Kazuko thought that the snakes that showed up in her father's death crawled from their holes and came to pay her father's spirit homage. In Japanese culture snakes have traditionally been revered as a god, a messenger of a god, or a creature that brings a divine curse when a snake is harmed or a particular natural site is disturbed. These strong beliefs have discouraged people from harming snakes and disturbing certain habitats associated with a snake god. Unfortunately, Kazuko has mistakenly burned the eggs of an ordinary harmless snake thinking that it is a viper eggs. She thought that there's nothing to be upset about as she gave them a regular burial by making a grave marker and saying some prayer while joining hands and knelling down. As her mother saw what she have done, she blamed her about being childish so Kazuko felt guilty and scared thinking that she might have caused an evil curse to fall on her mother. Since that time Kazuko thought that all the bad things which came into their life was directly related to the eggs accident. The snake showed up for the last time in the mother's last day she saw it in a dream so she called Kazuko to check and that was shocking for Kazuko to find out that her mother's dream was true but what makes it more scarier is that it is the mother of the eggs Kazuko has burned that day it became bigger and stronger she realized it in the garden after the eggs incident, the snake was looking for her eggs which made Kazuko feel guilty. This time the snake came not to pay her mother's spirit homage but to tell Kazuko that this is the consequence of her deed as the snake lost her precious eggs Kazuko is lost her mother today she just learned a hard lesson. It is

somehow a hidden message to the powerful people, they should not use their power in the wrong place or they will regret later .

3.2.2 The fire

Fire has always been a symbol of hatred and anger in Japanese culture it is associated with thought, defensiveness, adaptability, flexibility, suppleness, and magnetism. The fire god is revered as a purificatory agent as much as out of fear for his destructiveness. Kazuko felt guilty as she was responsible for starting a fire she thought that she was careless. She mentioned that during the ten days that followed the incident with the snake eggs, one ill-fated thing after another occurred to intensify her mother's unhappiness and shorten her life. As the fire refers to anger and hate so the author wanted to say that the snake God is punishing Kazuko for her heinous act. In other words, if you do something ill, you are going to be punished by the one who is stronger than you that is God. The fire was also a warning for Kazuko to be more careful and think of the consequences before acting. Again, it is a hidden message, carelessness is harmful.

3.2.3 Moonflowers

It is a symbol for the growth potential of soul and personality when facing with challenging and difficult periods in your life. "Moonflower Journal" was written on the cover of Naoji's notebook, it seems to have been kept while Naoji was suffering from narcotic poisoning. When Naoji was addicted to drugs he owed the pharmacist a huge amount of money so he asked his sister for money and promised to stop taking drugs if he paid the pharmacist and he will give her the money back later. She sold her jewelry which led somehow to her divorce because her husband thought that she is having a relationship with someone else and Naoji did not give her the money back instead she heard that he had a killing poisoning from drugs. He felt regretful and expressed that in the journal he mentioned that everything is a lie and the man fake in order

to live , putting the name moonflower to show that he is fighting against himself and the world as well and how much he grew since he explored the meaning of the world. Calamities teach hard lessons and give the chance to grow better. Dazai just expressed himself through the character Naoji. Back to the author's biography we can see that Osamu Dazai's real life is similar to Naoji's even the character and the way of thinking. He wrote almost what happened with him since he became addicted until the testament he wrote before he attempted to suicide. It was a message to the surroundings of the author, he wanted to tell them about his pain and struggles but he could not do that directly so he created the character Naoji. If we focused more in the novel we realize that it is almost identical with the author's real life. As we mentioned before in the author's biography the author wrote *The Setting Sun* inspired by the Japanese lady Shizuko Ota, whom she wrote her diary through and after the war. So, the novel is somehow a fictional autobiography of Osamu Dazai. He tried to tell the world but unfortunately, people did not understand that he is asking for help.

3.2.4 The letters

The letters are a symbol of the outlet it was the only thing that helps Kazuko to go out from her sadness. She wanted to fill her heart and life with the love of Mr. Uehara, the love that she did not receive from her family, and conceives a child in the hope that it will be the first step in a moral revolution. She thought that the meaning of happiness is to make Mr. Uehara love her. He is the man romanticists used to describe in love stories, a brave knight that comes on his white horse and save his princess from her boring and sad life, that was probably her perspective concerning love. She was the biggest support to her mother expecting that her mom will love her more than her naughty brother but, it was only him, the one whom the mother thinks of the most. Kazuko was fed up with being isolated and wanted to live the love she deserves so, the letters was the first step to reach her desires.

3.2.5 The lady

It was a definition of the lady concept. Kazuko was affected by Rosa Luxemburg's *Introduction to Economics* and the *Selected Works* of Lenin and Kautsky's *Social Revolution*. She tried to find a definition of herself as a lady and that last was the step number one into her own revolution. She has formed a new philosophy in life saying :

However much I may oppose morality, I am powerless to prevent the image floating before my eyes of the wife of the man I love, coolly and quickly hurrying back to his house. Then my thoughts turn destructive. Destruction is tragic and piteous and beautiful. The dream of destroying, building anew, perfecting. Perhaps even, once one has destroyed, the day of perfecting may never come, but in the passion of love I must destroy. I must start a revolution. Rosa gave tragically her undivided love to Marxism. (Dazai, 1947, p.32)

Kazuko thinks that even if she destroyed someone's life and caused them some pain she will never look back, she must go on. Because destroying is the beginning of a new building and perfecting. Even perfection did not come it is still a must to destroy in order to start her revolution. Reaching to her desire matters more than the path she takes she just needs to give all her love such like Rosa Luxemburg did with Marxism. Even it is a boring book to her as someone who do not know a single thing about economics but as she saw Rosa's perspective from a romantic side it will be more interesting.

3.2.6 The outbreak of hostilities

It is the voice inside Kazuko's head that tells her to keep her fighting for love even against the general ethics. After she went to Mr. Uehara's house and met his wife, she felt somehow guilty especially after being helped by her when she faced some problems in her way to the house she said : **"I trembled violently at the thought, only to give it up in sudden dismay when I realized the hypocritical, indescribably unattractive figure I should later make."** (Dazai, 1947. P 111)

She left with a shameful feeling when she realized the hypocritical figure she was. The outbreak of hostilities, another name of the revolution she wants to start. It was the voice inside her mind that motivated her to carry on in the path she drew to herself. This hostile voice made Kazuko another person she said she cannot help it but she loves him even she was aware that he has his own life and his wife and little girl are nice but she cannot help it. She thought that this is her fate God decided for her, man was born for love and revolution so, there is no reason for God to punish her. This was her perspective concerning revolution it was a Love Revolution.

3.2.7 The Testament

It is the most important symbol in the whole novel. It was the distress call of the author to the world, he wanted to draw the attention of his surroundings to the pain and sadness he is experiencing. Dazai was somehow isolated from people, he used to drink most of the time so the only people he used to interact with are those in the bars. He explained everything he lived through Naoji even the testament. In the writer's biography he suffered during his educational journey, he was influenced by his favorite writer so he became addicted to drugs. At the other side Naoji also struggled and became addicted. Another reflect of the author's real life is his relationship with women also, he became alcoholic and he is a writer and a reading lover. Meanwhile, Naoji went exactly through the same series of events and in the end they ended up committing suicide. No one understood Dazai unfortunately and he ended up committing suicide just the way Naoji did even it was super clear that he is reflecting the same life. He mentioned in the testament of Naoji that he has no reason to keep going in life. Back to the novel the mother was also a symbol for the reason of life he wanted to live in order to pay her back but as she passed away there is no reason to live for.

3.2.8 The Victims

Kazuko claimed in her last letter to Mr. Uehara that :

I think that in this first engagement, I have been able to push back the old morality, however little. And I intend to fight a second and a third engagement together with the child who will be born.

To give birth to the child of the man I love, and to raise him, will be the accomplishment of my moral revolution.

Even if you forget me, and even if on account of drink you destroy your life, I believe I shall be able to go on living healthily, for the sake of the accomplishment of my revolution. (Dazai, 1947: pp. 138, 139)

It was a Love Revolution for Kazuko against the old morality just like the sun. She has been able to move in her path a little bit and that was by loving a married man and holding the desire of having a child from him, that last is unexpected totally in the conservative old families. Also, she intend to fight as she thinks that she is and Mr. Uehara the victims of a transitional period of morality. Then, having a child from the man she love no matter what is the first step into victory. Her love is only a used tool in the sake of her revolution success. Mr. Uehara does not matter anymore he was only the one who gave the strength to Kazuko and put this rainbow of revolution inside her breast, she is no longer shameful she just won and that is all what she wanted this is the accomplishment of her **Moral Revolution** the end of her desires this is **The Setting Sun**.

Conclusion

The used symbols in this novel so far represent the real life of the writer Osamu Dazai. He attempted to convey hidden messages to the reader through using some famous symbols in the Japanese culture to approximate the meaning for the reader as well as to show how their beliefs generally were shifted during the post-war period.

General conclusion

The years that followed the war were the turning point in the Japanese history. It is the beginning of a practical and a moral industry. Osamu Dazai, worked on presenting this side of his country being shaped during its transitional period which reinforced the revolution against the old families morality this is the meaning of *The Setting Sun*. Affected by the Western way of thinking mainly the *French Romantic Revolution*, Kazuko the narrator and the protagonist of this novel decided to go on through this path hoping to achieve her desire, which is have a baby from the man she loves by any means as a first step towards victory.

By going back to the biography of the author and comparing his background with the events that happened in the story, we can say that this novel is a diary more than a narrative work. The author intended to express himself through the character of Naoji. They share the same characteristics: both of them were addicted to drugs then turned out into alcoholic, they caused the problems to the family and used both to have a lot of relationships with women; which means that he participated in the novel in order to reveal a hidden secret of him or to pass a message to the world. Actually, the two was a reason of Dazai to put his diary as if it is Naoji's because he wanted to reveal how hard was the long fighting against himself hoping to fix his life and become a good writer. Also, the most important reason, is to ask for help because he could not make it alone.

The Japanese culture and beliefs were perfectly shown over the used symbols by the author, he meant to reflect the sad reality of the people who lost their money and power as a sequence of the war, and how they dealt with the difficulties of rising again after the old morality and the declining aristocracy.

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