

The Postures of Wabi-Sabi as Perpetuated on Ibuse Masuji's *Carp*

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Abstract

This paper provides a template for preparing papers for electronic production Literature is inseparable from the culture of its intrinsic and extrinsic meanings. It is proved on wabi-sabi, as finding simple perfectness in imperfectness, which has been embraced by Japanese people since 13th century. *Carp* is a short story by Ibuse Masuji that underlines uneasiness to let go a deceased person that has been befriended with for a long time. The fish of carp is a symbol of despair, but then it changes to a hope when the main character makes up his mind to be sincere in allowing his deceased friend to go. Then, how is wabi-sabi perpetuated on Ibuse Masuji's *Carp*? Through qualitative method on cultural studies, this paper highlights condition of wabi-sabi as underlined in that story. Perfectness could not be found if any imperfectness is not well-appreciated. Any happiness could not be found if sadness is still held tightly. Appreciating death means knowing how valuable life is. The fish in this story is not merely an animal, but symbol of belonging that should be let go as the real owners has passed away too. In conclusion, wabi-sabi is exposed in this short story to tell how death is about imperfectness, but the freedom beyond any life is the perfection itself.

Keywords:

carp; ibuse masuji; perfectness; simplicity; wabi; sabi

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of *wabi-sabi* (侘寂) in Japanese language relates to *wabi* that means spiritual loneliness and *sabi* that refers to condition of metal rust (Adek et al., 2020; Yurt & Basarir, 2020). Then, that idea indicates philosophical idea of beauty of imperfection, age, and natural textures. It is closely related to Zen teaching in which its main purpose is to reach enlightenment. There are three realities of *wabi-sabi*; nothing sustains, finishes, and is perfect in this profane world (Mori, 2019; Yurt & Basarir, 2020). Therefore, paying attention to imperfection is an ideal way to understand perfectness.

Carp is a short story by Ibuse Masuji released in 1926. Translated from *koi* fish in Japanese language, this story speaks about the main character that was given a carp

from his close friend, Aoki (Masuji, 2002). The carp was released in a pond of Aoki's mistress house. Six years later, Aoki passed away and the main character has to take the carp from the pond. Aoki's mistress gave permit to fish the carp, he caught the fish, then released it in the pool of Waseda University where they both studied together. Time goes by and the main character has to let go of the carp as he has to be earnest to let go Aoki who has passed away (Masuji, 2002).

Then, how is *wabi-sabi* perpetuated on Ibuse Masuji's *Carp*? This paper highlights condition of *wabi-sabi* in condition of being left by a close friend. Appreciating death means knowing how life is actually so valuable. *Wabi-sabi* is exposed to tell how death is about imperfectness, but the freedom beyond any life is the perfection itself (Devi et al., 2021; Fazri et al., 2020). By

indicating first person point of view, the story of letting go someone is matter of aesthetic of appreciating the most imperfect and even unknown condition of all, that is death.

METHOD

By using qualitative method, certain concepts and written data are analyzed to answer the question in this paper. Written through description, online and offline scripts are used to explain correlations between Ibuse Masuji's *Carp* and *wabi-sabi* alongside with literary concepts and cultural ideas. Online and offline scripts are derived from books and journals to understand shown matters. The data analysis includes attaining sources, reading sources carefully, comparing with other issues, quoting into paper, and writing down in references lists. The research data comes from both Ibuse Masuji's story and concept of *wabi-sabi*. Each of them is read then broken down into its every particular element. The following analyses then include how the symbol of carp in Masuji's story is direct reflection of *wabi-sabi*. Here, Masuji's short story is the object while *wabi-sabi* is a tool to analyze. More elaborations related to opposite analysis are also provided in addition furthermore.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

What is Left in Death on Masuji's *Carp*

The story of *Carp* is a drawing of close relations between the main character, his deceased best friend Nampachi Aoki, and the carp itself (Masuji, 2002). There is also a woman as Aoki's mistress who takes care of the carp after he is gone. The carp is a fish of

gratitude as a symbol of friendship. The carp fish or *koi* in Japanese word is understood as idealization of feeling towards friendship. This is seen in the quotation in how the main character is troubled by the fish but keep it in his mind as Aoki's goodwill;

“すでに十幾年前から私はいっぴきの鯉になまやされて来た。学生時代に友人青木南八(先年死去)が彼の満腔の厚意から私にこれをくれたものであるが、この鯉は余程遠い在所の池から獲て来たものであると期るとき青木南八は私に告げた。”

“*Sudeni toikunenmae kara watashi ha ippiki no koi ni namayasarete kita. Gakuseijidai ni yuujin aoki nanpachi (sennenshikyo) ga kareno mankou koui kara watashi ni kore wo kureta mono dearu ga, kono koi ha yohodo tooi zaisho ike kara etekita monodearu to ki no toki aoki nanpachi ha watashi ni tsugeta.*”

“For more than a dozen years past, I have been troubled by a carp. The carp was given to me in my student days by a friend, Nampachi Aoki (deceased some years ago), as a mark of his unbounded goodwill. He told me that he had caught it far away, in a pond in the country near his home.” (Masuji, 2002).

The carp works as a glue for both of them. The main character is happy when he receives it and really swears to never kill it;

“私は彼の厚意を謝して、今後決してこの白色の鯉を殺しはしないことを誓った。そして私と彼とは物尺を出して来て、この魚の長さを計ったり、放魚する場所について語りあつたりした。”

“*Watashi wa kare no koui wo shashite, kongo kesshite kono shiroiro no koi wo koroshihashinai koto wo chikatta soshite watashi to kare to wa mono*

shaku wo dashite kite, kono sakana no nagasa wo hakattari, hougyo suru basho ni tsuite gakari attari shita."

"As a sign of gratitude for his goodwill, I swore that I would never kill the white carp. Enthusiastically, I fetched a ruler and measured its length, and discussed with him where I should keep it." (Masuji, 2002).

He keeps taking care of the fish as he takes care of the friend himself. He keeps feeding it even if it is winter. The cold weather does not stop him to take care of the fish. Even he is happy to know that the fish is alright by not looking thinner at all, then he cleans the fish to put it back to the pond in the boarding house again;

"漸く八日目に、私は春蚕のさなぎ虫で、目的の鯉を釣りあげることができた。鯉は白色のま少しも痩せてはるなかった。けれど鰭の先に透明な寄生虫を宿らせてるた。私は注意深く虫を除いてから、洗面器に冷水を充たして其の中に鯉を入れた。そして其の上を無花果の葉でもって覆った。"

"Youyaku youka me ni, watashi wa haru kaiko no sanagi mushi de, mokuteki no koi wo tsuri ageru koto ga dekita. Koi wa shiroiro noma sukoshi mo yaseteharunakatta. Keredo hire no saki ni toumeina kiseichuu wo yadoraseteruta. Watashi wa chuui fukaku mushi wo nozoite kara, senmenki ni rensui wo mitashite ki no nakani koi wo ireta."

"At last, on the eighth day, I hooked the carp I wanted, using a silkworm grub. The carp was still as white as ever, and no thinner. But there were transparent parasites lodged on the tips of its fins. Carefully I removed them, then filled a metal basin with cold water and put the carp in it. I covered it with a fig leaf" (Masuji, 2002)

There is kind of jealousy when the carp would like to be put in Aoki's mistress pond. The main character becomes so obsessed with the fish. He wants the fish to be his as always. That specific deed comes up since he would like to keep his promise to Aoki. That is seen in the quotation;

"私は鯉を池に放つ前に、仮令この魚は彼の愛人の所有にかかる池に棲まはせたとにしても、魚の所有権は必ず私の方にあることを力説した。私のこの言葉を寧ろ青木南八は、彼に対しての追従だと思つたらしく、彼は疎ましい顔色をした。何となれば私はこの魚を大事にすることを、嘗て彼に誓つたことがあったからである。"

"Watashi wa koi wo ike ni hanatsu maeni, tatoi kono sakana wa kareno koibito no shoyuu ni karu ike ni sumahasetanishitemo, sakana no shoyuu ken wa kanarazu watashi no houga ni aru koto wo rikisetsushita. Watashi no kotoba wo mushiro aoki nanpachi wa, kareni taishiteno tsuijuu dato omottarashiku, kare wa utomashii kaoiro wo shita. Nanto nareba watashi wa kono sakana wo daijini suru koto wo, katsu te kare ni chikatta koto ga atta kara de aru."

"Before releasing the carp in the pond, I stressed that although I was putting the carp in a pond that belonged to his mistress the fish itself was still unquestionably mine. Aoki gave me a look of displeasure; he seemed to take what I said as motivated by a mere desire to please. I had pledged to him earlier that I would always treasure the fish." (Masuji, 2002)

When Aoki died, the main character never realizes his disease. The man keeps asking Aoki to walk together and even smokes on his bed. This is to show that the relations are deep as friends between them. Those are indicated in the following;

“それから八年目の初春、青木南八死去した。私は慶彼の病気を見舞ってるたのであるが、彼の病気が重いなぞとは少しも思ってるなかった。寧ろ彼が散歩にもつきあはないのをもどかしく思ったり、彼の枕元で蓑を喫ったりした。”

“Sore kara hachinen me no shoshuun, aoki nanpachi shokyo shita. Watashi wa keikare no byouki wo mimatterutano dearuga, kare no byouki ga omoi nazotoha sukoshimo omotteru nakatta. Mushiro karega sanpo nimo tsuki ahanai no wo modokashiku omottari, kare no makuramoto de tabako wo suttarishita.”

“In the summer, six years later, Nampachi Aoki died. Although I had often visited him on his sickbed, I had had no idea that the illness was serious. In my ignorance, I felt irritated with him when he would not even accompany me on my walks; and I smoked cigarettes by his bed.” (Masuji, 2002)

Days after the funeral ceremony is over, the main character asks Aoki’s mistress for permission to go to her pond to fish the carp. It is little bit insensitive during that mourning time of Aoki as if he does not have any conscience (Ibrahim et al., 2023). However, he still insists to gather the belonging thing inherited by Aoki. This is the reply from the mistress;

“葬があつて間もなく魚を釣るなぞと仰有るのは少し乱暴かとも存じますが、余程お大事なものを拝しますれば、御申越の趣承知いたします。”

“Sou ga atte ma monaku sakana wo tsuru nazoto kouaru no wa sukoshi rampou katomo zonzimasuga, yohodo odajina mono wo haishimasureba, osaruetsu no omomukishochi itashimasu.”

“I find it perhaps a trifle insensitive that you should ask to fish so soon after a funeral, but since you seem to attach extraordinary value to the fish in question, I agree to your request.” (Masuji, 2002)

The fishing process is quite hard for that spring. However, the main character is entertained by the blossoming fruits. It seems that he remembers his best time with Aoki in those past years. He starts to pay attention to the falling leaves and nature itself as Aoki has passed away. Those are involved in the following;

“枇杷の実はずでに黄色に熟してて、新鮮な食慾をそった。私は釣竿を逆さにして枇杷の実をたき落した。ところが鯉は夕暮れ近くなって釣ることができたので、つまり私は随分多くの枇杷の実を無断で食べてしまったわけである。私は鯉を早稲田大学のプールに放った。”

“Biwa no jitsu wa sude ni kiuro ni jukushiterute, shinsen na shokuyoku wo sotta. Watashi wa tsurizao wo sakasanishite biwa no jitsu wo taki otoshita. Tokoto ga koi wa yuugure chikakunatte tsuru kotoga dekita node, tsumari watashi wa zuibun ooku no biwa no jitsu wo mudan de tabete shimatta wake dearu. Watashi wa koi wo waseda daigaku no puuru ni hanatta.”

“The fruit of the loquat tree had already ripened to a golden yellow that inspired a lively appetite. ... With the wrong end of my fishing rod, I knocked down one of the loquats. In fact, since it was getting near dusk when I finally caught the carp, I ended up by helping myself to a considerable number of the fruit. I released the carp in the pool of Waseda University.” (Masuji, 2002)

Months pass by and summer comes. He is still thinking about the carp. He never sees the carp again as it always dives so deep that he thinks that it is already died. One day, he comes by and sees the carp again. He is happy as listed in the following;

“けれど私の白色鯉は深く沈んで、姿を見せはしない。或ひは水底で死んでしまっているのかもわからないのである。或る夜、あまりむし暑いので私は夜明けまで眠れなかった。それ故、朝のすがすがしい空気を吸うと思って、プールのあたり歩きまわった。この時、私の白色の鯉が、まことにめざましくプールの水面近く泳ぎはっているのを発見したのである。私は足音を忍ばせて金網の中に入って行って、仔細に眺めようとして跳込台の上に登った。私の鯉は、与へられただけのプールの広さを巧みにひろびろと扱ひわけて、ここにあつては恰も王者の如泳ぎまわっているたのである。のみならず私の鯉の後には、幾ひきもの鮒と幾十ひきもの鯰と目高とが遅れまいとつき纏つて、私の所有にかかる鯉をどんなに偉く見せたかしれなかったのだ。私はこのすばらしい光景に感動のあまり涙を流しながら、音のしないように注意して跳込台から降りて来た。”

“Keredo watashi no shiroiro koi wa fukaku shizunderute, sugata wo mise wa shinai. aruhi wa minasoko de shinde shimatte miru no kamo wakaranai no dearu. Aru yoru, amari mushi atsui no de watashi wa yoake made nemure nakatta. Sore yue, asa no sugasugashii kuuki wo suu to omotte, puuru no atari arukimahatta. Kono toki, watashi no shiro iro no koi ga, makotoni mezamashiku puuru no suimen chikaku oyogi hatte aru no wo hakken shita no dearu. Watashi wa ashioto wo shinobasete kanaami no nakani haitte itte, shisai ni nagameyou toshite choukomidai no ue ni nobatta. Watashi no koi wa, yoheraretake no puuru no hirosa wo takumi ni hirobiro to atsukai hiwakete, koniatte wa

bikimono haya to medaka toga okuremai tokki mototterute, watashi no yuusho ni karu koi wo donna ni eraku misetakashirenakatta noda. Watashi wa kono subarashii koukei ni kandou no amari namida wo nagashinagara, koe no shinai youni chuui shite choukomedai kara orite kita.”

“But my white carp stayed deep below the water and refused to show itself. For all I knew, it might be lying dead at the bottom. One warm, oppressive night I lay awake till dawn. Then, thinking to get some fresh early morning air, I went and walked near the pool. ... And then I saw it. There it was, my white carp, swimming about in fine fettle near the surface of the pond. Stepping quietly, I went inside the wire netting and got onto the diving board so that I could see every detail.” (Masuji, 2002).

Masuji greatly draws the main character's peace of mind when he sees the carp. The good survival of the fish builds up the main character's consistency to see the carp regularly. It is winter coming again and the main character must face another doubt about the carp again. Those are asserted in the following quotations;

“冷たい季節が来て、プールの水面には木の葉が散った。それから水が張った。それ故、すでに私は鯉の姿をさがすことは断念してゐるのであるが、毎朝プールのはとりへ来てみることは怠らなかつた。”

“Tsumetai kisetsu ga kite, puuru no suimen ni wa ki no ha ga chitta. Sorekara mizu ga hatta. Sore yue, sudeni watashi wa koi no sugara wo sagasu koto wa tannen shiteru tano dearuga, mai asa puuru no wa tori e kitemiru koto wa otoranakatta.”

The cold season came, and the surface of the pool was strewn with fallen leaves. Finally it froze. For that reason, I had already given up any idea of looking for the carp, yet still I did not neglect to come to the pool every morning, just in case.” (Masuji, 2002)

The winter season makes the main character to re-think about the condition of the carp. He could not see the fish under the layered snow on ice. He could only draw a picture of a fish on the ice. In the image, the carp grows healthier as he becomes the main king and predator in the pond. Those are wondered in the following;

“或る朝、氷の上には薄雪が降った。私は長い竹竿を拾って来て、氷の面に絵を描いてみた。長さ三間以上もあらうといふ魚の絵であって、私の考へでは、これは私の白色の鯉であったのだ。絵が出来上がると、鯉の鼻先に「……………」何か書きつけないかと思ったがそれは止して、今度は鯉の後に多くの鮒や目高とが遅れまいとつき纏ってるところを描き添へた。けれど鮒や目高達の如何に愚で惨めに見えたことが!彼等は鰭なかったり目や口のないものさへあったのだ。私はすっかり満足した。”

“Aru asa, koori no ueni wa usuyuki ga futta. Watashi wa nagai takezao wo hirotte kite, koori no men ni e wo kaite mita. Nagasa mikan ijou mo arau to ifu sakana no e de atte, watashi no kouhei de wa, kore wa watashi no shiroiro no koi deatta no da. E ga deki agaruto, koi no hanasaki ni (……………) nanika kaki tsuketai to omotta ga sore wa yoshite. Kondo wa koi no ato ni ooku no funa ya medaka toga okuremai tokki matotteruru tokoro wo kaki saheta. Keredo funa ya meda katachi no nyo nani gude mijime ni mieta kotoga! Karera wa shonakattari me ya kuchi no naimono saheatta no da. watashi wa sukkari manzokushita.”

“One morning, the ice was covered with a thin layer of snow. I went and picked up a long bamboo pole, and with it drew a picture on the face of the ice. It was a picture of a fish and it must have been close to twenty feet long. In my mind, it was my white carp. When the picture was completed, I thought of writing something by the fish's mouth, but gave up the idea and added instead a large number of roach and killifish swarming after the carp in fear of being left behind. Yet how stupid and insignificant the roach and killifish looked! Some of them lacked fins; others, even, had neither mouth nor eyes. I was utterly content.” (Masuji, 2002).

Interestingly, the story ends with the sentence of the main character's content. It is believable since the fish is the only one left from Aoki's death. He could not postpone death, but he could his best relatives. This is subtlety of ironical problems of everyday life where problems keep incoming but embracing everything is never possible at all (Ibrahim et al., 2023; Millenia et al., 2023). At the end, the main character could not grasp the fish forever. He must let go of it as watching it every day will only make him disturbed and will do not do any good for the fish. As Aoki passed away, he has also to leave the fish alone and let both of them find peace where they really belong to.

Wabi-Sabi, Bitter Reality, and Sweet Perfectness

The concept of *wabi-sabi* shows matter of aesthetics in Japanese perspective. That idea represents beauty in imperfectness (Adek et al., 2020; Mori, 2019). In a way, any kind of beauty is not due to total perfection, but how its impurity shapes that concept. Departed from the idea of loneliness and metal rust, *wabi-sabi* accentuates knowing, understanding, and appreciating to

anything that grows and dies. In other word, *wabi-sabi* point of view finds the lived world that is ultimately about impermanence and imperfection (Treviranus, 2010; Tsaknaki & Fernaeus, 2016).

Wabi-sabi then is indicated not by the essence of things but how its existential aspect matters (Mori, 2019; Powell, 2004; Yurt & Basarir, 2020). The perspective does not want to separately define what is beautiful and even not beautiful. It urges people to find beauty in any kind of thing even if it is no longer beautiful. Implicitly, *wabi-sabi* involves any kind of aspect as beautiful as those reflect further mortality and profanity (Pogosyan, 2017; Tsaknaki & Fernaeus, 2016). As things may get older and even broken, the spirit to find any goodness in its fragility becomes crucial. Indeed, if essence seems so eternal, *wabi-sabi* finds its meaning in ages that is structured in existential worldly time (Fazri et al., 2020; Mori, 2019; Treviranus, 2010).

The feature of *wabi-sabi* does not go beyond this world. The beauty surrounds the world in its imperfectness (Fadiyah et al., 2023; Pogosyan, 2017; Wilkinson, 2022). It does not mean that new things should be broken to find its beauty. This concept would like people to appreciate what they have and how nature may shape it naturally. Human beings do not have to intervene natural beauty (Fadiyah et al., 2023; Pogosyan, 2017; Treviranus, 2010). They only need to pay attention to all natural existence that slowly moves into oldness. This is indeed in line with Zen idea that underlines human's consciousness to take focus on appropriateness in human's surroundings (Juniper, 2003; Treviranus, 2010).

The emphasis of *wabi-sabi* started from 13th century that underlines how loneliness is not outdated, but that is the way in seeing freedom and wisdom as well (Devi et al., 2021; Tsaknaki & Fernaeus, 2016). In this case, any kind of imperfectness crosses line with condition of being not eternal. The idea could arise senses of peace in seeing how things change (Juniper, 2003; Silva, 2013). By accepting facts that things are not meant to be forever, human beings could appreciate every single event that flows in life. Imperfectness and incompleteness are nature of everyday life that must not be denied. It should be accepted with mindful compassion of heart (Cooper, 2013; Juniper, 2003).

Calm mind is the way to practice *wabi-sabi* (Cahyaningati, 2018; Devi et al., 2021; Powell, 2004). Being aware of things that may disturb human's life is needed to be able to appreciate the imperfectness. If things are held for too long, it could become obsession that may destroy mind's peacefulness. Realizing that things may not go as predicted and those may come to an end someday could shape better perspective to accept things that people could not change at all (Kempton, 2018; Williams & Shipley, 2019). *Wabi-sabi* could be reflected further on small and big things. Small things like paying attention to falling old leaves, taking care of old every day tools, and appreciating own flaws could result to peaceful understanding to otherness. Big things like understanding how death ends things, how the world ages through time, and how conflicts may find own settlements could bring in better philosophical understanding to wider ideas (Juniper, 2003; Wilkinson, 2022).

Moreover, postures of *wabi-sabi* are asserted in how to use, to preserve, and to prolong life in its best way (Cahyaningati, 2018; English, 2016). The main emphasis is the own self without using others for own purposes. *Wabi-sabi* pushes people to focus on aesthetical perspectives on what people have rather than to preserve ambition to things that people have not had yet. While ambition conserves perfection to be reached, *wabi-sabi* is otherwise (Williams & Shipley, 2019; Yang, 2021). Finding perfection will only deliver human beings into further temptation that slowly shapes anxiety, depression, and stress to own self. While following any trend is considered normal today, *wabi-sabi* would like people to return to traits of what they have passed before (English, 2016; Maheux, 2016). Trends are unlimited and even infinite, but life is bounded and contextual. Tendencies are not where people really live in, but the world full of imperfection is.

Seeing the perfectness in world full of imperfectness is enlightenment based on what *wabi-sabi* says (Adek et al., 2020; Kempton, 2018). This is matter of ultimate tolerance that needs to be applied in life. By being tolerant to anything, mind will not easily getting disturbed and peace of mind could be attained afterwards. If things are not as they are meant to be, finding ways to fix it is always better than protesting or being angry to other persons (Garcia, 2019; Maheux, 2016). *Wabi-sabi* teaches people to say thanks to all things that people have and do not have. This idea is in line with any religious teaching since be grateful to anything in anytime is advised to appreciate own selves (Cooper, 2013; Wulan, 2021).

Three important aspects of *wabi-sabi* include acceptance, forgiveness, and

mindfulness (Kempton, 2018; Yang, 2021). Those three things start from old things, broken utensils, to the ultimate matter of death itself. Happiness could come when people stop and understand what they have and what they have done before (Garcia, 2019; Williams & Shipley, 2019). Calmness will not arise if people keep pursuing for anything even if he or she knows that he or she will never get it (Wulan, 2021; Yang, 2021). If people could not forgive, they could not let go of things. As a result, own mind is disturbed and others' conditions are annoyed either.

Wabi-sabi does not mean for being melancholic, but to find perfectly imperfect life (Kempton, 2018; Maheux, 2016). It is such warmness in seeing bitter realities widely. By appreciating aging times, human beings could identify their positions in life. Further understandings about life could also be attained since this perspective underlines vitality in life (Cahyaningati, 2018; Rastogi et al., 2021). Indeed, this point of view sees life negatively as things may fade away to its finished line. However, by seeing flaws in many aspects, *wabi-sabi* gives meanings to silence in which is left by common people. Silence is not emptiness but a way to understand values in deep down of human's heart through re-examination of life. In other words, *wabi-sabi* is a way to find any sweet perfectness in any flawed imperfectness (Powell, 2004; Wulan, 2021).

Perpetuated Process of Perfectness in *Wabi-Sabi*

How the main character looks at the carp and his deceased friend assert conception of *wabi-sabi*. It starts from how happy he is by accepting the fish from Aoki to his prolonging obsession to the fish itself

(Masuji, 2002). He knows that things may go differently from what he expects. However, he keeps going on. He takes care by keeping the carp then visiting it even though the weather is so cold outside. The main character may not really understand the idea of *wabi-sabi*, but his deeds in keeping promise to his deceased old friend are direct reflections of that point of view (Cahyaningati, 2018; Gallagher, 2020).

The idea of *wabi-sabi* is directly involved in perpetuating process of it (Kempton, 2018; Koren, 1994). The perspective does not come in instant, but identified by the main character in a prolonged time. It is similar to the perfectness he faces that comes not as a cause for him. It tends to be further result of things which he has done before. He may get really obsessed with his friend and the carp. However, what he does is in line with appreciating otherness including things that go aging from time to time.

Once, the main character feels troubled by the carp. However, his feeling is not really disturbed by the fish. He just needs to do some of his time for the carp. Moreover, it is a goodwill from Aoki (Masuji, 2002). Aoki caught the fish by himself then gives it to his best friend. Here, the condition shows *wabi-sabi* as goodwill should be paid more attention in any friendship. Closed relations should be appreciated eternally though time is mortal (Longhurst & Takemasa, 2018; Rastogi et al., 2021). The main character even promised he will never kill the carp. This is an idea that asserts further gratitude of life to Aoki. The main character even cares for the details of the carp by measuring it. That indication would like to underline how life should be apprehended by best acknowledgment. Life is so valuable that includes various living entities

including humans and animals as well (Gallagher, 2020; Rengganis et al., 2023; Wulan, 2021).

About the fish, the main character always takes care for the fish. He does not care about the weather outside. He thinks that finding food and feeding it are not merely hobby but responsibility from a friend to another. When he hooks the carp and takes it out, he still focuses on the condition of the fish. He cleans the parasites and warms the fish (Masuji, 2002). He waits until eighth day in his full patience to come every day to hook the fish to check its condition. This action is actually very rare for someone who takes care for the fish outside his or her home. While at home, everything is taken care of nicely, but he still keeps the fish in a pond outside to make the fish feels more freedom. Pond is indeed much better for a carp than in an aquarium. The main character understands that fish should live in open water. This is also part of *wabi-sabi* in which process of living is appreciated though he knows that the fish may be so old and does not need his presence anymore.

The jealousy to the mistress, that the main character shows, would like to underline his closed relations to Aoki alongside with its belonging. Though it is perceived differently by Aoki, the persistence of the main character is appreciated by his friend (Masuji, 2002). His motivation is full of eagerness to take care of the carp. It symbolizes his good intention to always recognize his friendship with Aoki no matter the time passes by. When Aoki died, the main character did not realize his disease. He keeps coming in and even smokes with him (Masuji, 2002). On a hand, it seems so displeased seeing someone neglects his friend. On the other hand, the main character's intention to always focus on enjoying life should be appreciated. The

main character chooses to be ignorant to enlighten Aoki's life. This is also proof of *wabi-sabi* in which he wants Aoki to walk with him as that is the way their friendship may last.

When the main character asks the mistress about the fish sooner, it becomes frictions to both of them. They still mourn for Aoki's loss of life. However, their actions of responses are quite different (Masuji, 2002). The mistress keeps holding things at home while remembering Aoki. She takes care of the funeral ceremony and accompany Aoki's parents. The main character buys one Aoki's favorite plant. Later, he asks for permission to fish the carp in her pond. Both of their actions are matters of *wabi-sabi*. The mistress accepts condition of Aoki, forgives him and his family, and minds any need for his funeral. She did not forget Aoki, but she keeps him in her mind by taking care of his surroundings. Any lost should be responded not only by mourning, but also appreciating to the loss and what are left by the deceased in reality and in memories (Garcia, 2019; Longhurst & Takemasa, 2018).

The main character also practices *wabi-sabi* when he would like to preserve the fish. He understands that the real owner of the carp is gone and his full responsibility comes to surface for the fish. He must keep happiness for his friendship with Aoki, which is by taking care of the ultimate symbol between them (Masuji, 2002). He keeps being calm in seeing the leaving of Aoki. He knows that being left alone by his friend is kind of bitterness. However, he must accept that situation by not mourning the deceased forever, but by acknowledging any vitality left. For years, their friendship is freshened and lived by

the presence of the fish, so the vital point between them is the fish itself (Masuji, 2002). The main character appreciates aging times, not by mourning the loss of Aoki for a long time, but by keeping what is left from him. The fish ages for years alongside with ongoing friendship with Aoki. When Aoki passed away, the main character is indirectly inherited with the carp. The carp may still contain abundant flaws, but its perfectness in value of friendship is intangible value for both of them.

His appreciation to the places where they had spent time together also indicates *wabi-sabi*. He remembers his deceased friend alongside with the falling leaves and ripened fruit (Masuji, 2002). He knows that things may go away, but the new ones will arise. This is also idea of *wabi-sabi* in which paying attention to movement of small things may bring in enlightenment to bigger ideas (Longhurst & Takemasa, 2018; Silva, 2013). Time goes by and the main character still visits the carp in the pond outside his house. He keeps thinking about the fish, bringing it some worms, and searching it by spectating the pond. When he finds the carp, he feels happy like when he meets Aoki. He ignores any obstacle to see the fish, just like he never hesitates to meet Aoki. When winter comes, he keeps coming to the pond only to find it to be frozen (Masuji, 2002). He knows that the winter will come every year, as life must go on either every time. At last, he draws an image by bamboo pole on the ice. He pictures his and Aoki's beloved carp. The carp is drawn as brave and lives happily. The image is quite unclear, but the imagery in his mind makes him smile. It is since his imagination works further, wider, and deeper to his memories with Aoki.

At last, the main character has to let the carp go. It is similar to how he has to leave Aoki to stay in his new place. Both the fish and Aoki are greatly embraced by him, now he has to detach them from his life. It does not mean that the memories fade away. It only means that the body must keep aging to find its perfection in its imperfectness (Gallagher, 2020; Silva, 2013). Only by then he could find peace to both the fish and Aoki. This is the ultimate *wabi-sabi* practice in this story. The main character accepts death to its worst and finest and let go everything the deceased has left for him. By doing that, he could let go of them. Its intentionality is good to him, to Aoki, and to the fish (Masuji, 2002). He could continue his life by still remembering the other two. Aoki could find more peace there even if he may not accompany him anymore. The carp could also find its best habitat altogether with other fish as its companies and even preys.

This is warmness of understanding the imperfectness that Masuji would like to underline. Death is cold, but understanding the one that passed away could bring warmth to the surroundings (Cooper, 2013; Yurt & Basarir, 2020). It is since the deceased go to the best place by being eternal and leaving this profane life. The deceased becomes sacred as it is also well appreciated in Zen teachings. Death is not merely emptiness, but full of compassion comes from the families left. By keep remembering, meanings are maintained through perpetuated happiness in this imperfect life (Koren, 1994; Rastogi et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

The story of *Carp* shows practice of *wabi-sabi*. It is full of idea of acceptance, forgiveness, and mindfulness. The relations between the main character and his friend, Aoki, are greatly symbolized by the carp itself. The main character keeps taking care of the fish as goodwill for his friend. When Aoki passed away, the main character still visits the fish in the pond outside. As time goes by, he realizes that things must go on alongside with his own life. Aoki's situation must be let go by him. It is similar to the life of the carp that must not be bothered anymore by him. The main character applies *wabi-sabi* to the condition of Aoki and the carp; he embraces them well by appreciating aging times including death and oldness. At last, he has to let go of them since they already found their best places out there.

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