

**DYNAMICS OF FICTIONAL ART OF YOKO OGAWA:
A CRITICAL STUDY**

(Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the award of Master of
Philosophy in English)



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SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled **DYNAMICS OF FICTIONAL ART OF YOKO OGAWA: A CRITICAL STUDY** submitted to the Nagaland University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in English is a bonafide record of research work done by Mr. Semhayi Sapuh under my supervision and that it has not been previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or other title or recognition.

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation entitled, *Dynamics of Fictional Art of Yoko Ogawa: A Critical Study*, explores the various possibilities and outcomes one can study about Yoko Ogawa's fictional art. Yoko Ogawa's fictional space is a space comprising multiple issues and aspects underlying today's contemporary Japanese society. Yoko Ogawa is well aware of all the social and political injustices operating in her society. Yoko Ogawa's fictional space is to show the other side of the contemporary lifestyle. She faithfully portrays the contemporary Japanese society, socially, politically and culturally. Her fictional space is a space devoted to the understanding of her culture to finding ways of eradicating such arising issues in contemporary Japanese society. One of the objectives of the dissertation is to locate the cultural complicacies in a changing culture and to extrapolate the ways which these issues can be sought through its literary representations.

Contemporary Japanese society is marked by individual struggle and alienation. The idea of shared spaces and its contested dimension in literary representation towards a better understanding of an evolving culture, has become a form of expressing the complicacies and the paradoxes that is visible in the Japanese society. And whereas, that space can be either excruciating, pleasurable, disturbing or even celebratory, etc., literary scholarship is keen to recognise and validate the embodied and emotional aspects of its representation prevalent within such discourses. The dissertation critically explores Yoko Ogawa's fictional art to show how it is like to live in a shared space of struggle and alienation devoid of connections and human understanding. The idea of shared spaces of struggle and alienation in Yoko Ogawa's fictional art are studied under two sections: at individual or personal level, and at community level. At individual level, the character's inability to communicate his/her mental conflicts and frustration with companions often results in this struggle and alienation within the shared spaces are analysed. Yoko Ogawa's fictional characters often find themselves

absorbed within the realm of their own psychological conflicts and finds it unable to reach for the goal that has been set before them. At community level, it is the societal norms and expectations set by the society that has pushed characters to suffer detachment and isolation. The psychological complexities which often results in a character's transgression as an act against of defiance and thereby challenging the status quo are analysed.

Dark Romanticism, which became a new mode of narration in contemporary Japanese society can be seen in the writings of contemporary Japanese fiction writer, Yoko Ogawa. A literary projection of the darker aspects of human life, which is the projection of social reality, characterised Dark Romanticism. Dark Romanticism is marked by persistent flaws, fatal destructions, human fallibility as well as psychological effects of guilt and sin. Dark Romanticism exists within society, in art and in literature. However, in Dark Romanticism the projection of an unhealthy and disgusting plot in a literary space has always been viewed as a defence of its suppression or oppression which cannot be defined in an existing society. It is undeniably true that in whichever form and shape the art exist, a literary projection is the projection of those voices that has long been overlooked by society. Dark Romanticism, which has evolved out of this context, sought to present its arguments in a controversial manner that goes against tradition, culture, religion and society. The core and underlying elements of Dark Romanticism lies on the projection of a unhealthy scene that which is often presented in a non-conventional manner, breaking the societal expectations and norms imposed by the society. An outstanding literary projection that one may find within this genre, is the focus on "the decay and decadence, dilapidation and the ruins of buildings as well as the human being, both mentally and physically" (Donath 11). One such characteristic that we seldom find in Yoko Ogawa's writings, is the persistent efforts in trying to keep the readers intact with the horror and brutality of humankind. The ability to sin and the character's willingness to look for an alternative, often in a bizarre and grotesque invention,

looms over Yoko Ogawa's artistic vision. Yoko Ogawa as a dark romantic author fits the genre with fidelity and perfection, in that she constantly reintroduces the dark romantic elements every after paragraph with new innovation and technique.

Contemporary Japanese writers such as Yoko Ogawa is one among the other contemporaries who carries inner strength in depicting the darker aspects of human life. Yoko Ogawa's writing conveys a very unconventional attitude and discontentment towards life and society. Human fallibility, sufferings, pain, fascination of death, personal torments, self-destruction, psychological effects of guilt, sin, etc. which are normally associated with these Dark Romantic writers, are all visible within the fictional writings of Yoko Ogawa. Death forms an epitome that which characterised Dark Romanticism from any other genre, and Yoko Ogawa's fictional space is a space of physical death and decay for various causes. In Yoko Ogawa's fictional works, there are at least one or two characters who encounters death or atleast talks about death, both within and outside family. By bringing the element of death, Yoko Ogawa intended to show the core ideology of death, how it functions in a society and how it continues to shape the ideology of its people. Yoko Ogawa's writings are also characterised by the characters and narrators whose identity remain anonymous. Except in one or two of her fictions, most of her narrator remains nameless and are identified by its social profession. This signals the callousness of the social order, thereby presenting the dark side of human agony. In Yoko Ogawa's fictional world, it is not just the characters who undergoes such trials and tribulations, but readers are also left in a state of physical and mental unrest. It is not just her characters that have gone through such phases in life, but humans in general have suffered defeat such ordeals and, therefore, one could empathise with it. Dark romanticism, in this sense, exists within any society and within any shared arena. And no matter how hard any individual or any fictional character strive to do away with it, Yoko Ogawa shows the nature of dark romanticism within any shared arena. The belief that

humans are prone to sin and suffering and that pain forms an integral part of men's life, are portrayed with utmost exhilaration in Dark Romanticism.

The continual fight for equal human rights and freedom has been a much discussed and debated issue in contemporary writings. However, it never seemed to conclude with a concrete solution. Women are being oppressed and suppressed in multiple ways. Women are also being denied space in various walks of life. The socio-political and cultural issue concerning women has often been sidelined and women are the ones who suffer the most when it comes to inequality and injustice. However, with the emergence of the literary space, women are able to bring these issues to the forefront and express the social injustices in a more elaborate and proper manner, whether they are being heard or not. In that, literary space becomes a space of expressing the differences and negotiating the debates especially for women, when the socio-political orders function to undermine the arising issues. Throughout the history, there is nothing more revolutionary than a literary space in projecting the indifferences and its fight for recognition, be it social, political, cultural or religious issues. Literary scholarship is keen to recognise and validate that lived and shared experiences through its projection and portrayal. Yoko Ogawa is one among the contemporaries who is vocal in depicting women's issues and concerns. In fact, the contemporary women writers, like, Yoko Ogawa, expressed their anger and frustration even more profoundly than the writers of the earlier period.

Yoko Ogawa is one of the other contemporaries who project the socio-political and cultural issues concerning women in her fictional art. Ogawa shows the position of women in her society and shows how women are often relegated and neglected under the dominant forces of male-centric set-up. Although, Yoko Ogawa has never identified herself as a feminist or a feminist writer, however, her literary space is a space of concern for women's issues and its subordination faced within the male-centric world. The concern she has for women shows not

just her rising consciousness about the women's position in her society, but also shows her influences and her brought up. The concern that women should not be confined within the dominant forces of patriarchy, which is often depicted in almost all her fictional art, shows her knowledge and understanding of her culture and society. The concern that women should have their own space and identity in all walks of life, as portrayed in her fictional space, shows the need of the Japanese society, especially women to come out of their comfort zone and find place in society. In depicting the socio-political and cultural issues which are often inflicted upon women, Yoko Ogawa hopes that this will, in turn, lead to the rising consciousness among people and pave way for the contemporaries to speak out the injustices played out against women.

The fictional world of Yoko Ogawa presents a huge portrait of the contemporary Japanese society, from individual to family issue, and from socio-political and cultural issue. Yoko Ogawa believes that literary representation best depicts its society: didactically and realistically. In that, Yoko Ogawa re-examines her society and she faithfully portrays the contemporary Japanese society in various aspects of life. Her fictional representation shows the common issues that are visible in the contemporary writings. It can be generally understood in terms of representing the contemporary Japanese writings. Dark Romantic element of death revolves around the fictional world of Yoko Ogawa and Kenzaburo Oe. Yoko Ogawa and Kenzaburo Oe are two among the two contemporaries who convey a very dark awareness of life and society. The physical death of the characters form an integral part of their fictional narration. The idea that these contemporary writers are trying to convey through the dark element of death, is to show how death is perceived in Japanese society. The induction of the dark romantic element, such as, death as part of their fictional narration characterised Ogawa and Oe as Japanese fiction writers from other contemporaries. For Oe

and Ogawa, the absence of the character's physical self (that is, death) does not simply imply the end of something, however, it implies an increasingly haunting experience for the living.

Contemporary Japanese writers, such as, Yoko Ogawa and Kazuo Ishiguro are among the contemporaries who rely on the use of memory in their fictional narration. The use of memory technique, to create a new sense of identity and to emerge into new self, forms an integral part of their fictional narration. In other words, Kazuo Ishiguro and Yoko Ogawa employ the use of memory technique to project the contemporary Japanese society. The common thematic structure that we find in the writings of Ishiguro and Ogawa is the repetitive evocation of nostalgia (memory), as means for continuous evaluation of the character's life. Yoko Ogawa employs the use of memory technique to depict the physical and psychological complexities of the characters and of the socio-political forces of the contemporary society. Kazuo Ishiguro employs as a way to depict the positive possibilities and outlook one can look forward in contemporary Japanese society. Yoko Ogawa and Haruki Murakami are among the contemporaries who writes about the lost souls and the wanderers in search of home, comfort and relief. Murakami and Ogawa are known for the depiction of the contemporary Japanese society. They have showed how the contemporary Japanese society is affected by the socio-political and cultural upheaval, since the post-war Japan, and projects the difficulties of the contemporary society in identity formation. Murakami and Ogawa often placed their characters in the most complex situation, to show how the contemporary Japanese society has regressed over time. However, it is due to their understanding of the complex contemporary culture that they remain undefined by the societal forces in its depictions. Murakami and Ogawa believe that humankind's search for new self should not be defined by outside forces and that the search for freedom should not be destined to be futile. It is for this reason that, the search for new identity and relief of weary soul looms over the writings of Murakami and Ogawa. Yoko Ogawa as a

contemporary Japanese writer can be understood as representing the contemporary Japanese fiction writers. The issues and concerns which are visible in the writings of Yoko Ogawa can be seen in the writings of the contemporaries, such as, Kazuo Ishiguro, Kenzaburo Oe, Haruki Murakami, as also their fictional art.

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I, Semhayi Sapuh, hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **Dynamics of Fictional Art of Yoko Ogawa: A Critical Study**, is a bonafide record of research work done by me, under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Jano S. Liegise, Professor, Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus, Meriema, and it has not been submitted, either in full or in part, to any other university or institution for the award of any degree, diploma or title.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.0. Introduction

The dissertation entitled, *Dynamics of Fictional Art of Yoko Ogawa: A Critical Study*, explores the various possibilities and outcomes one can study about Yoko Ogawa's fictional art. Yoko Ogawa's fictional space is a space comprising multiple issues and aspects underlying today's contemporary Japanese society. Ogawa faithfully portrays the contemporary Japanese society- socially, politically and culturally. Undoubtedly, Yoko Ogawa's fictional world is a world of social reality and the issues depicted are a portrayal of her own society and community. The major goal of this dissertation, is to explore Yoko Ogawa's fictional art and to show how fiction responds to reality and the shared correlation between fiction and reality.

With the changing culture around the world, the contemporary Japanese society seemed to be a hotbed of frustration and alienation in all its shared space. Humans have betrayed their own fellow humans more than they have betrayed any other. We have seen broken relationship in all its shared space. Above all, women are the ones who suffered the most. Arguably, women are never granted enough access to the same status and position as men enjoy in society. Women are being oppressed and suppressed in the name of patriarchy. Yoko Ogawa is well aware of all the social and political injustices operating in her society. Her fictional space is a space devoted to the understanding of her culture to finding ways of eradicating such arising issues in contemporary Japanese society. Yoko Ogawa's fictional space is to show the other side of the contemporary lifestyle. One of the objectives of the dissertation is to locate the cultural complications in a changing culture and to extrapolate the ways which these issues can be sought through its literary representations. The dissertation consists of five chapters and the chapters seek to represent the different thematic elements and art as projected in

Yoko Ogawa's fictional works. The primary sources comprises of Yoko Ogawa's works ranging from fictions to novellas and short stories.

1.1. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

The present research work attempts to achieve the following objectives:

- I. To critically analyse the various major issues and aspects prevailing in today's contemporary Japanese society, in relation to Yoko Ogawa fictional art.
- II. To study Yoko Ogawa's fictional art from feminist perspectives.
- III. To understand the significance, importance and the need for positive shared spaces in contemporary Japanese society.
- IV. To investigate the ideas and elements pertaining Dark Romanticism in the fictional art of Yoko Ogawa.

1.2. A Brief Account About Yoko Ogawa

Yoko Ogawa was born on March 30, 1962 in Okayama, Japan. Much is yet to be known about Yoko Ogawa's upbringing and her early literary influences, however her literary achievements and accolades have traversed beyond the soil of Japan for over decades now. Yoko Ogawa writes both in Japanese and in English and her literary works have been translated into various other foreign languages as well. Yoko Ogawa took literature and creative writing very seriously during her early school, college and university and she has written over twenty novels including novellas, short stories, most of which has been translated into English language. Her writings are mostly drawn from her personal life experiences, from her society and from her occupation. Her fictional works are the caricature of the contemporary Japanese society.

Before Yoko Ogawa established herself as full time author, she worked as a secretary in a medical university, she quit her job after her marriage to a steel company engineer. This further leads her to discovering writing as a new passion and profession eventually. Some of her literary works also reflect her early upbringing. The fact that Yoko Ogawa worked as a secretary in the medical university during the 1980s also shows the influence of the world of medicine, laboratories, clinic, etc. which are reflected in her fictional art. Yoko Ogawa was raised in a very religious family, her parents being members of a religious sect. She was raised into a Japanese religion originating from Shinto faith led by her grandfather, which is further reflected in her fictional art. In this regard, Diana Donath writes:

...influenced by the special circumstances of her upbringing, certain motifs and characters recur in Ogawa's writings, such as persons who are members of a religious sect, or persons who keep praying loudly and thereby disturb others, or the motif of an orphanage run by a sect, and others. (Donath 11)

As a writer, Yoko Ogawa draws her inspiration mostly from her surroundings and from her society. Yet another reason, why her works have been critically acclaimed as masterpieces stems from her concern over the contemporary issues. Her literary works have been consecutively nominated for various prestigious literary awards. In 2020, her most recent translated work, *The Memory Police* was shortlisted for the international Booker Prize for fiction, which shows an overall attention her fictional works have been garnering all these years. She was also awarded with many prestigious awards, both within her country and abroad, for her contribution in the field of literature. She was nominated and awarded for the prestigious Akutagawa Prize for her contribution made in the field of literature. Yoko Ogawa's writings comprises of novels, novellas and short stories. She was also successively published for her well-known shorter pieces such as essays, articles and so on. The dissertation incorporates some of the selected works of Yoko Ogawa ranging from fictions to

novellas and short stories. *The Memory Police* (2019), *Revenge* (2014), *Hotel Iris* (2011), *The Housekeeper and the Professor* (2010) and *The Diving Pool* (2009) are taken as the core sources to explore the author's approach towards life and literature.

1.3. Contemporary Japanese Literary Scene in Brief

The year before 1980 is taken as the transition period to postmodern society in Japanese literary history. The transition period was certainly a period of disparities for the Japanese society. The socio-political and cultural transition which shook the whole of Japan, shows sign of disparities in the contemporary culture. It is for this reason, the contemporary Japanese fiction writers call for the restructuring of the new Japanese society by pointing out the paradoxes of the old belief system. The issues depicted appear different in the writings of the contemporary Japanese fiction writers as compared to their predecessors, which suggests their stoic refusal to submit to the old belief system and cultural practises. The postmodern or contemporary writing, in that sense, is identified as “modernity critique,” for their persistent effort to do away with the previously held beliefs and ethos (Kojin 1).

Transgressive writing, which is characterised by the breaking of societal norms and expectations set by society and accommodating the demands of equality in every aspect, remains as one of the most unique feature in contemporary Japanese fictions. The depiction of transgressive writing in contemporary Japanese fiction, is directed towards defamiliarization of the old values and beliefs, often in an aggressive manner. The transgressive characters found in the writings of the contemporary Japanese fiction writers remind one of the cultural conflicts and the unequal power division in contemporary Japanese society. A new understanding of the Japanese culture or Japanese post-modernity is interpreted through a transgressive mode of narration. There are paradoxes, however, as it is often set against the moral laws and principles. The apparent contradictions in contemporary

Japanese fictions is inseparable as transgressive writings imply the need to find one's own space rather than being defined by the societal laws and orders. Contemporary Japanese fiction writer, Yoko Ogawa, believes that the awareness of the social disorder begins with contradictions. This is made explicit by developing transgressive characters which often go beyond the moral principles and laws.

Contemporary Japanese fictions also begin with the "confessional literary form" to express the discontentment towards the social forces imposed on the Japanese society (Kojin 76). The writings of Yoko Ogawa, Haruki Murakami, Kenzaburo Oe and Kazuo Ishiguro can be deemed as the confessional writers among the contemporary Japanese fiction writers. One concrete manifestation is the induction of the "I" in their writings, to express their inner thoughts through the narrator. The confessional literary form allows the contemporary writers to open up and reveal all that were oppressed and repressed for the last century. The writings of Kazuo Ishiguro and Yoko Ogawa form an epitome of the confessional literary space in Japan.

The very fact that contemporary Japanese writings are directed towards the understanding of the contemporary Japanese culture to redefining this space through transgressive mode, suggests the exuberant growth in its approach towards life and literature. Literature in Japan after 1900, gained greater momentum and visibility, rather than existing as sporadic protrusions. The rising consciousness and the demand of the common readers wanting its life (socio-political and cultural complicacies) to be reflected in art, have pushed the contemporary writers to gain greater visibility. A female writer like, Yoko Ogawa, make her appearance in literary scene with such awareness that the women's issues be depicted literarily, to show the position of the contemporary Japanese women, which is run by the masculine society. Moreover, the writing of Kazuo Ishiguro and Kenzaburo Oe shows the

unequal power division among the contemporary Japanese society. The depth in Japanese literary scene, least to say, begins with the emergence of the contemporary writers.

The deconstruction of the common narrative technique in Japanese literary scene also begins with contemporary Japanese writers. The common literary tradition in Japan, which centered on the linear mode of narration, is questioned by contemporary writers and lay emphasis on non-linear or bilinear mode of narration. For the contemporary writers, time and space remain unconfined in literary projection. Haruki Murakami emerged as a leading figure with the induction of magic realism as part of his narration. The co-mingling of fiction and realism in temporal sequence, blurring the distinction between reality and fantasy, became a dominant structure of literary narration with the contemporary writers in Japan. Haruki Murakami employs this mode of arrangement and challenged the traditional mode of narration which previously was never observed before. This shift in narrative pattern in contemporary writings reconstructed the reasoning ability of the contemporary Japanese society which was never seen before.

The contemporary Japanese writing also served as a cultural connection with the Western countries. Born in Nagasaki, Japan, Kazuo Ishiguro's novels are mostly set in England. This bridged a connection with the other Western countries as well. With a tinge of Japanese culture into different landscape, contemporary writers, like, Kazuo Ishiguro, not only enhance a new mode of literary representation in Japan, but it also establishes a mutual connection with the Western countries, through art and literature. The co-mingling of different fictional characters from different countries in the contemporary writings, create a new sensation in literary taste, unknown prior to contemporary writers. Diversity in contemporary Japanese writings, calls for the nation, to correspond to the integrity and unify them as one. The contemporary Japanese writers brought spontaneity as well as freedom of self-expression into Japanese literature and culture.

What gained contemporary Japanese fictions to greater heights, both within and outside the country is the commendable translation. Contemporary Japanese fictionist wrote both in Japanese and in English. The discovery of a new mode of communicating through translation, from Japanese to English and vice versa and also to many other languages as well, is something commendable in contemporary Japanese literary scene. This was known even before the emergence of the contemporary writers, but it was only after the transition period to post-modernity that translation was taken seriously. Many of the Japanese translated fictions into English, are now seen as dominating the prestigious awards in the field of literature. Yoko Ogawa's *The Memory Police*, which was translated from Japanese into English, by Stephen Snyder in 2019, was shortlisted for the prestigious International Booker Prize in 2020. This shows the growth of the contemporary Japanese fictions through the medium of translation. Translation paved a way for the contemporary Japanese fiction writers for greater visibility and also added a new dimension to the understanding of Japanese culture and society.

1.4. Introduction of the Chapters

Various approaches are applied to delineate the possibilities of looking at the author's approaches to life and literature. The dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is an explication of what this dissertation aims to achieve, in order to provide a clearer framework of the whole argument as presented in the dissertation. The chapter further projects the literary backdrop of the author, her life, her artistry and her place in Japanese literary scene. The chapter also look at the contemporary Japanese literary scene in brief. The chapter further introduces the ideas and concepts incooperated in the following chapters, in order to give an overall survey of the dissertation.

Chapter II entitled, *Of Struggle and Alienation Within Shared Spaces in Yoko Ogawa's Fictional Art*, discusses the idea of shared struggle and alienation faced by the Yoko Ogawa's fictional characters in relation to contemporary Japanese society. The assumptions that humans have lost its connection and values in shared spaces and that an individual's seclusion and alienation are the product of such conditions forms the core idea and element of this chapter. It is quite natural and evident that a family or any other peer group can still surround a person and yet a person experience that sense of seclusion and alienation from their community and society. These issues and complications have often been present in real life experience and literary projections and yet we seldom talk about them or address this concern in a proper platform. Contemporary Japanese writers like, Yoko Ogawa, knows her society and community and the importance of shared spaces in this contemporary society. In that, she addresses the need to do away with the egocentric culture that is driven by selfhood, individuality, materialism, hypocrisies, etc. in relation to contemporary Japanese society. The second chapter intended to show these impairments as witnessed in Yoko Ogawa's fictional space in relation to the contemporary society. Attempts are made to align Yoko Ogawa's fictional depictions with contemporary Japanese society in this particular chapter. Yoko Ogawa's *The Diving Pool* (2009), *The Pregnancy Diary* (2009) and *Hotel Iris* (2011) are taken as the core sources to examine the above mentioned issues and aspects. The chapter is sub-divided into various sections and each section seeks to presents the idea of the shared space of struggle and alienation as evident in Yoko Ogawa's fictional art. The idea of shared spaces of struggle and alienation in Yoko Ogawa's fictional art are studied under two sections: at individual or personal level, and at community level. At individual level, the character's inability to communicate his/her mental conflicts and frustration with companions often results in this struggle and alienation within the shared spaces are analysed. At

community level, the societal norms and expectations set by the society that has pushed characters to suffer detachment and isolation are studied.

Chapter III entitled, *Elements of Dark Romanticism beyond Borders in Yoko Ogawa's Fictional Art*, explores the characteristics of Dark Romanticism that can be studied in the fictional art of Yoko Ogawa. Contemporary Japanese writers such as Yoko Ogawa is one among the other contemporaries who carries inner strength in depicting the darker aspects of human life. Yoko Ogawa's writing conveys a very unconventional attitude and discontentment towards life and society. The third chapter explores the various elements of Dark Romanticism as depicted in Yoko Ogawa's fictional art. The chapter studies the dark romantic features, such as, the dark romantic settings, death as the core element in dark romantic literature, the idea and concept of deformity in dark romantic fiction, impersonality or characterisation in Dark Romanticism and the idea of human fallibility to destroy and harm their fellow human.

Chapter IV entitled, *Transgressive Female Self and the Emerging New Woman in the Fictional Art of Yoko Ogawa* explores the position of women in Yoko Ogawa's fictional art in relation to the contemporary Japanese society. Yoko Ogawa have never identified herself as a feminist writer, however, her fictional portrayal and depictions clearly shows her concern for women of her society. The chapter explores the works of Yoko Ogawa from feminist perspectives and seeks to understand women's issues prevalent in today's contemporary Japanese society. The chapter further looks at what prompted Yoko Ogawa's female characters to redefine the space assigned by their society by developing transgressive characters, to emerging new self or identity. The undefeated and undefined nature of Yoko Ogawa's women characters are analysed from social, political and cultural perspectives.

The concluding chapter (Chapter V) outlined a brief and comparative study of the author with some of her contemporaries, such as, Kazuo Ishiguro, Haruki Murakami and Kenzaburo Oe. The comparative study on the use of memory technique in Kazuo Ishiguro and Yoko Ogawa's fictional art; elements of dark romanticism in Kenzaburo Oe and Yoko Ogawa's fictional art; and the identity issues as seen in Haruki Murakami and Yoko Ogawa's fictional art are analysed to show how Yoko Ogawa can be seen as representing the contemporary Japanese fiction writer. The concluding chapter intended to show how Yoko Ogawa as a contemporary Japanese writer, can be understood as representing the contemporary Japanese fiction writers. The issues and concerns which are visible in the writings of Yoko Ogawa can be seen in the writings of the contemporaries, such as, Kazuo ishiguro, Kenzaburo Oe, Haruki Murakami, as also their fictional art.

With the coming of the literary space and of the rising consciousness of the social reality, contemporary writers depict the social issues that are prevalent in today's contemporary Japanese society. For contemporary writers, literary space is a space of projecting and negotiating issues. The fact that the today's contemporary Japanese society is tormented by many social issues, resulting in identity crisis and other complicacies, compelled contemporary writers to project these issues in a non-conventional manner. The contemporary writers offers contemporary society yet another alternative way of mitigating these socio-political and cultural issues prevalent in today's contemporary Japanese society. Yoko Ogawa as a contemporary Japanese fiction writer offers a huge portrait of the contemporary Japanese society.

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CHAPTER II: OF STRUGGLE AND ALIENATION WITHIN SHARED SPACES IN YOKO OGAWA'S FICTIONAL ART.

2.0. The Idea of Shared Spaces of Struggle and Alienation: A Brief Outline

Shared spaces of struggle and alienation connotes a very contrasting statement or idea when simply read, however, this idea has always been omnipresent in literature and in real life. In literature, shared spaces could be any space shared by the characters necessary for the development of plot. For instance, it could be a home, a community, or any other social arena depending on the situation in which the characters are placed, and the void or emptiness that the characters go through at these shared spaces connotes the idea of the struggle and alienation. It is quite natural and evident that a family or any other peer group can surround a person and yet the person experience that sense of seclusion and alienation. Being with and surrounded by people around does not simply guarantee that sense of belongingness nor physical and mental comfort. It is in fact true that humans have lost connection and attachment more than ever. We have seen broken relationships all around us, both within and outside families or from within a community, between peer groups and so on. The ultimate results that we have witnessed through these clashes are an end to healthy relationships and mutual connections, which further signals the corruption of its society and system, the culture and its ethos, thereby, resulting in transgression as an act of defiance. However, this deviance is not defiance yet, as it is always understood in terms of breaking the moral codes or as going against society and its set up. This chapter is intended to present this very argument through the voice of the Japanese female writer Yoko Ogawa.

The idea of shared spaces and its contested dimension in literary representation towards a better understanding of an evolving culture, has always been omnipresent in literature from antiquity to the contemporary pattern. Citing Post-Colonial and Feminist Theory among

many other instances, the post-colonialist look upon the idea of shared spaces as an act of exclusion from history, time and place, and Feminist Criticism looked upon the idea of shared spaces as an exclusion of women from society- politically, socially, economically, etc. And whereas, that space can be either excruciating, pleasurable, disturbing or even celebratory, etc., literary scholarship is keen to recognise and validate the embodied and emotional aspects of its representation prevalent within such discourses. This chapter shall present the critical analysis of Yoko Ogawa's fictional art to show how it is like to live in a shared space of struggle and alienation devoid of connections and human understanding.

2.1. The Fictional Space of Yoko Ogawa

The idea of shared spaces of struggle and alienation in Yoko Ogawa's fictional art can be studied under two sections: at individual or personal level, and at community level. At individual level, the character's inability to communicate his/her mental conflicts and frustration with companions often results in this struggle and alienation within the shared spaces. In Yoko Ogawa's fictional art, what we discern through our reading is that her characters suffer detachment from the social world in their shared spaces. Yoko Ogawa's fictional characters often find themselves absorbed within the realm of their own psychological conflicts and finds it unable to reach for the goal that has been set before them. The kind of community and its ignorant practices could be one major reason and causation behind this, however, each individual plays a crucial role in contributing to the development of conflicts. Except in one or two of her fictional work, do we find the characters sharing their mental and physical impairments. *The Memory Police*, and *The Housekeeper and the Professor* are to some extent the exception ones. In such novels, we find characters longing to be freed from the bondage and seeking for a community to finding alternative ways that will help set them free. For instances, the Professor in *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, and the narrator/protagonist in *The Memory Police* are examples where we find their longings

and desire to be freed from their mental and psychological impairments. Yoko Ogawa's works such as, *The Diving Pool*, *Pregnancy Diary*, and *Hotel Iris* portray characters which are lost in their own physical and psychological realm unable to reach out to their own community. In these novels, we find that it is the character's insecurity and instability to look out for a community which places them into such mental conflicts and impairments. Having said that, the socio-political forces of the societal set-up in which the characters are placed into, remain equally important to look into as we analyse the characters from individualistic point of view. After all, it is a fact that it is also a community or society which plays a crucial role in contributing to the development of character's instability and insecurity in Yoko Ogawa's fictional world.

At community level, it is the societal norms and expectations set by the society that has pushed characters to suffer detachment and isolation. Lack of communication and meaningful dialogues between characters could be another stern reason behind this inability to cope with the human world of struggle and alienation. And while Ogawa's fictional works are characterised with minimalistic dialogues and conversations between the characters, its focus is on the psychological conflict of the characters to show how the socio-political forces lead her characters to suffer its detachment occurring through shared spaces. For instance, the psychological complexities of the characters in *The Diving Pool*, *Hotel Iris*, and *Pregnancy Diary*, are the result of the societal forces placed upon them. The protagonists in such novel often find themselves engulfed within the realm of their own mental and psychological conflict unable to reach out to their community.

What entail these two features are the psychological complexities which often results in a character's transgression as an act against of defiance and thereby challenging the status quo. This act of transgression as an act of deviance or the search for a new identity in Yoko

Ogawa's fictional art is further discussed in chapter IV where critical analysis of the emerging of new women is carved out.

2.2. Home as an Excruciating Space in *The Diving Pool*.

The Diving Pool is a short novella translated by Stephen Snyder and narrated from a daughter perspective which represents the epitome of the aforementioned issues and aspects. The novella was published in 2009 along with two others, *Pregnancy Diary*, and *Dormitory*. Minimalistic in detail and capturing all aspects, *The Diving Pool* accentuates the importance of the need of positive shared spaces and shows how it is like to live in a social world devoid of mutual connections and communication. The novel altogether is not a catastrophic one and it captures fate of an individual character which occurred at a shared space of home. When the novel, *The Diving Pool*, first begins, we're introduced to the main protagonist, Aya, and her inner state of conflicts, how she felt alienated from home surrounded by her parents and her foster siblings which she cannot consider her own:

I can never simply come home the way other girls do. I find myself reading the Thought for the Week, passing through the gate, entering the Light House-and something always stops me, something always seems out of place... There is always something irreconcilable between the house and me. (Ogawa 8, 9)

The story follows a linear mode of narration and it tells a story of the protagonist Aya. She lives with her parents and foster siblings in an orphanage home called, The Lighthouse, which is run by her parents. The Lighthouse shelters different children from different background sharing common tragic histories- "an alcoholic mother, a homicidal father, parents lost or death or abandonment, and anything at all..." and this is where the complexities of the novel arises (Ogawa 12). And as she tells us, her parents belong to a member of a particular religious sect and she is also "the only child who is not an orphan" at

the Lighthouse (Ogawa 11). However, the fact that Aya cannot consider the Lighthouse as her own home nor her parents and her foster siblings as her own, and most importantly she can never be part of it, made her forlorn and alienated from the rest of her community. By crossing the boundary of home that is normally associated with love, comfort, sacrifices and mutual agreement, what we see towards the end of the story is the transgressive Aya having moved from her innocent state to bullying her foster sister Rie to almost death, during the absence of her parents, as a result of impairments.

The Lighthouse, as the name itself suggests, which is supposed to exude all physical and mental comforts becomes a hotbed of frustration and struggle for Aya and to some of her fellow companions. Despite different tragic experiences the children at the Lighthouse went through at some point in lives, they come to a common bond at this shared space. The Lighthouse could be understood in terms of mutual agreement and respect for each other, however, the whole set up took a divergent route from being what we normally tend to equate with it. Aya holds a disparate notion about the Lighthouse as she grew up to see this whole setup as something irreconcilable. For the protagonist Aya, she had never felt and experience what is like being home and loved by her dear and near ones. Being the only child of her biological parents and being the only child who is not an orphan at the Lighthouse, at least, she expected for a better treatment from the rest of the other children at the Lighthouse. However, all of these seem to be wanting and at times, she wished she were an orphan like all other children, which would eventually make her life easier and less miserable.

The emptiness within the family in this shared space of home, is indicated by her parents' negligence and the lack of concern the protagonist perpetually discerned at this shared space of home. There is not a single episode in the course of the story where Aya's parents expresses their hatred or anger towards their daughter or any other children at the Lighthouse, however, the lack of communication between mother-daughter or father-daughter is quite

evident and indicates how neglected and abandoned Aya can be. Like any of her foster siblings and companions present at the Lighthouse, she felt the emptiness that is present in her family as well. Through this, Yoko Ogawa shows that the mere presence of father-mother figures in a family simply does not make a family whole and complete. Rather than the presence of a mere physical self, what is important is the availability to cater to their children's emotional and physical needs when required. With the postmodern way of living coupled by the modern industrialisation and technological development across the globe, Yoko Ogawa's writings portray the fragmentation of a family unit and an imperfect balance between work and family. Aya's parents being members of a religious sect and who are projected as people who spend half of their lives presiding over religious services and church functions, signals a collapse and an imbalance between profession and a family unit.

The Diving Pool, *Pregnancy Diary* and *Hotel Iris* portrays the family relations and its fragmentary lifestyle of the postmodern Japanese society in particular. Yoko Ogawa shows the implications of the idea of shared spaces of home that can be unhealthy or toxic, too. According to Aya in *The Diving Pool*, "there are so many useless things in this world, but for me, the most useless of all is the Lighthouse" (Ogawa 13). To a larger extent, Yoko Ogawa highlights the idea of shared space of home, which is also not always warm, welcoming or contented, as we normally tend to associate with it. Yoko Ogawa is well aware of the fact that family sharing a space requires everyday sacrifices, adjustment, communication, and exchanges and all of these seemed to be missing from Aya's context in *The Diving Pool*: "I wanted only one thing: to be part of a normal, quiet family" (Ogawa 11).

There is no such villain in the course of the story in *The Diving Pool*. Everyone is a captive of his or her own psychological realm as there is very little dialogue and exchanges between the characters. However, some would view Aya as representing the character of the anti-hero. True, by going against the boundary of home in bullying a year and five months, Rie makes

Aya less emphatic despite the challenges she faced. In bullying Rie, the youngest child at the Lighthouse, to some extent it asserts her own independence and her emotional and psychological turmoil that has been piling up for some time were spewed. Aya by bullying Rie, gained her emotional and physical comfort, which she cannot have with neither of her fellow companions, nor her parents at the Lighthouse. In the words of Aya:

When we grow up, we find ways to hide our anxieties, our loneliness, our fear and sorrow. But children hide nothing, putting everything into their tears, which they spread liberally about for the whole world to see. (Ogawa 26)

The Diving Pool is narrated from a daughter's psychological perspectives and readers are left with little or no option to make an overall conclusion. One can be sure that neither the protagonist nor her parents or any other characters are to be blamed for the protagonist's struggle and alienation from the social world. The idea of shared spaces of struggle can be studied from two standpoints: at individual or personal level and community level. Firstly, at individual level, the protagonist, Aya as an individual being never in any occasion has expressed her inner disgust and frustration, neither to her biological parents nor to any other character in the course of the story. She remained and stayed within herself and for herself. Jun is the only character whom Aya adores dearly and with whom she communicates the most in the course of the story, however, Aya's lack of courage to express her inner disgust and feelings even to her most loved one, makes her life even more miserable.

Throughout an entire episode, Aya neither expounded the secret love she developed for Jun, nor reveal her tribulations to him when they met and sat at the diving pool in a number of occasions. The whole episode is narrated from a protagonist's psychological point and only readers are privy to her inner psychological conflicts and the hatred she had towards her community which reveals Aya to be an individual character with flaws and insecurity.

Particularly, Aya's hatred and anger were mostly shown from her psychological perspectives and only readers are made to know of her inner conflicts. Had Aya been more outgoing in her practical approach, rather than just revolving within her own psychological realm, the narration and whole episode would have shifted entirely to a completely new platform. However, her inability to stand for herself and her insecurity to express her disgust and the feelings she developed for Jun, shows her lack of self-confidence at a personal level. And although she longs to be freed from this bondage of personal inner torments occurring at this shared spaces of home, Aya will never be able to achieve it fully until she expresses her inner anguish or disgust with her companion. Throughout the story, her inner torment revolves within herself, by herself and for herself.

At community level, that sense of familial bonding is absent among the characters. Aya's parents never in any episode bothered to ply to their daughter's emotional and mental needs, nor does the community in which Aya is encumbered with bother to show love and appreciation towards her. Ironically, at the Lighthouse home, Aya is supposed to be surrounded in an environment where love reigns over hate, victory over defeat, and so forth, the Lighthouse being a home for all despite the different tragic histories and events that befell them. However, what we come across is the absence of that sense of community bonding throughout the entire episode. The Lighthouse community is marked by individuality and selfhood in all circumstances at all times. When individuality failed, the Lighthouse community in *The Diving Pool* either remained ignorant or bother less to talk about it. Moreover, there is hardly any possible plot where characters strive to fill the gap and meliorate the impassivity and the usual stoicism in *The Diving Pool*. Lack of conversations and dialogues among the characters and the characters' instability and insecurity to look forward to their companions all form an integral part of the chaos and turbulence prevailing among the characters. Moreover, the fact that almost all the characters and particularly Aya

focus on the psychological realm rather than seeking for a community, makes the novel even more complicated. Consciously or unconsciously, they are all trapped in their own psychological world and none of the characters took active participation in bringing the issues to the forefront.

Jun is one among other characters that one may expect to break off the silences in the course of the novel. Being the central character where the development of plot occurs and being the only person who knows the mental impairments and the complexities, Aya goes through on a daily life basis. Throughout the novel, he either remained silent or bothers not to talk about the psychological complications arising at the Lighthouse. Jun could have helped Aya to materialise her thoughts which has been piling for some time. Jun could have been a comforting soul to Aya when she needed emotional and mental comfort from home. He could have offered Aya that sense of belonging when Aya felt secluded from the community at this shared space of home. However, none of these were seen in the course of the story. The scene where Aya tells Jun about the emptiness of her dietary and appetite evinces no compassionate understanding to her state: “I envy you... You work up an appetite. But I do almost nothing and still eat three meals a day. There’s something pointless about that sort of hunger” (Ogawa 14). At community level, this indicates the habitual callousness developed by the Lighthouse community over the years. Although the author leaves little room for Jun or any other character to express their opinion, one can extrapolate the difficulties of thriving in a community devoid of mutual connections.

Moreover, the fact that Aya adores and admires him secretly, going to the pool daily to see him diving and the fact that he tends to remain indifferent even at this juncture, reveals to us the kind of community at the Lighthouse. Aya desperately prayed “to be bathed in his kindness” (Ogawa 19). Throughout the story, he neither reciprocated Aya’s love nor showed any compassion towards her. Jun’s character represents the Lighthouse community and

shows its working and its whole set up. Ogawa shows that physical dependency is not the only requirement that one requires in the formation of society, and that catering to the emotional and mental conflicts and discerning the indifferences is potent and important in the functioning of a community. It is clear that Yoko Ogawa wants to hint at the emptiness of this community by deterring her characters from complying to the emotional and physical needs. The failure of the characters to mitigate their companion's struggle, signals the collapse of home and comfort. Had the characters in *The Diving Pool* been more compassionate and outgoing in their approaches, having shared and lived the same spaces at the Lighthouse, the narration and the whole episode would have aligned to a completely new stand, where the character's complicacies would be less painful and show what shared spaces of home ought to be.

It is significant to note the absence of a fatherly-motherly figure in the course of the novel. In *The Diving Pool*, Yoko Ogawa insinuates the idea that the presence of a mere father and mother figure in a family does not make a family normal and complete. Ogawa shows that a family or any other community sharing spaces together, requires sacrifices and everyday's adjustment to an individual indifferences that may arise at this shared arena. Yoko Ogawa further shows that intrinsic happiness comes from following a passion. On the other hand, external and complete happiness comes with an individual's adjustment, appreciating individual differences having shared the same spaces. In both of these cases, the lack of validation and partial efforts shown by the characters in *The Diving Pool*, results in the failure of a family unit as a whole. The variation and an imperfect balance between work and family unit also show the laxity in *The Diving Pool*. All throughout the story, Aya only longs to be loved and cared for by her parents and near ones. This void of the familial bonding between Aya and her parents through this shared space of home is quite evident from the line spoken by Aya herself: "I can never hear the words "family" and "home"...When I think to examine

them, though, the words seem hollow, seem to rattle at my feet like empty cans” (Ogawa 10, 11). Through this, Yoko Ogawa questioned the idea of shared spaces of home and to what extent home could be considered a home when all its attributes seemed to fall apart. Ogawa presents to us a completely different standpoint on the idea of home, which we normally tend to associate with it. Ogawa shows the darker views of life through the character of Aya and the relationships she has with her parents and her foster siblings.

Mother-daughter relationships are portrayed in the most unconventional manner to show the hollowness that is present within the privacy of home in *The Diving Pool*. The abhorrence and difficulties to adjust with her parents that Aya eventually developed, particularly towards her mother, in their shared space of the home, is intended to show the generation gap between the two women figure. In this sense, Aya represent the new emerging women unconfined by time and space, while her mother represents the remnants of the old traditional women confined by the idea of domination and supremacy. Yoko Ogawa highlights how women also plays a crucial role in complicating the women’s issues faced by the women themselves in their shared spaces. She shows that men are not always the perpetrators in the society, particularly in the contemporary Japanese society, and shows how women also contributes to the already existing complexes. In *The Diving Pool*, Aya’s mental and psychological complexity was even made more complicated by the presence of a woman character, that is, her mother. She despises her mother for errant behaviour, but also for her lack of motherly sympathy. In the words of Aya:

My mother was the heartiest, most cheerful person at the Lighthouse. Particularly talkative during dinner, she was not to cast about for topics that would include everyone, preferring to talk about herself and her interests... Her lips were like two maggots that never stopped wringing, and I found myself wanting to squash them between my fingers. (Ogawa 18)

Contrary to her relationship with her mother, there is hardly any possible scene where Aya expressed her inner distaste for her father. But the fact that her father never showed up in any occasion, insinuates the kind of relationship he had with her daughter and her foster children. The lack of conversation between her and her father made Aya even more “disfigured” (Ogawa 11). The idea of the shared spaces of struggle and alienation as portrayed in *The Diving Pool* contains toxic elements that are nonetheless portrayal of the contemporary Japanese society. Yoko Ogawa shows how this toxic element looms over in today’s contemporary society and also shows how and where it began.

2.3. Documenting the Shared Spaces of Struggle and Alienation in *The Pregnancy Diary*: An Introduction.

Since the Meiji Restoration of 1868, which inspired a variety of socio-political and religious reforms, literature in Japan gained greater momentum in depicting the social issues that are true to life and Yoko Ogawa’s fictional art are no exception. Although the Meiji Restoration brought about socio-political changes in all aspects in Japanese society, however, a family unit is one among other factors that never seemed to be stable and dependable. An imperfect balance between work and family unit, a hollow relationship within the family unit and its subsequent detachment from the social world, were all-apparent during the Meiji Restoration to the contemporary pattern which now normalises it. Yoko Ogawa being a mediator of a contemporary Japanese society takes on these issues which are nonetheless the portrayal of her society that heralded them during the bubble of the economy and thereafter. In bringing about the women’s issues that are visible within the comfort of home in all her fictional works, Yoko Ogawa paved the ways for her contemporary to speak out the challenges and disgust that are always present within any shared arena. This section presents some of these issues and aspects as documented in *The Pregnancy Diary*.

Since its first publication in Japanese in 1990, *The Pregnancy Diary* has earned Yoko Ogawa fame and recognition not only within the Japanese literary cannon but worldwide having received the prestigious Akutawaga Prize for fiction. The novel was translated later into English by Stephen Snyder in 2009. The novel documents the bittersweet taste of life to losing individual freedom with maternity and motherhood, but more than these are also about finding spaces for the author own self through an act of diary writing. The novel bears a strongly autobiographical tone in the course of the novel. It is important to note that all the three characters in the novel represent those whom Ogawa shared a close bond in her real life experiences: the narrator as her sister, the pregnant woman as herself and her husband. In the course of the novel, the pregnancy woman represents the author herself, and the daily struggle she goes through each day, represents the author's own personal struggles she went through during her pregnancy. The voice of the narrator (her sister) and what she stands for in the novel also represents the author's message imparted in two voices. Most importantly, it is crucial to note that the novel was written when Yoko Ogawa was bearing with her first child and that her experiences shaped her to document the experiences in the form of the novella.

The Pregnancy Diary presents a completely different standpoint and shows how motherhood and maternity affects the lives of women differently. Although Ogawa agrees that pregnancy suggests continuity, she also shows the darker picture that comes along with pregnancy. What is evocative in the process of the story is that the idea of pregnancy which is seen not as something that is to be celebrated anymore, but one that brings pain and suffering, to the extent of destroying relationships with loved ones sharing the same spaces. *The Pregnancy Diary*, in so many ways suggests the coming of a new era and the discarding of the old traditional beliefs and values. It also shows the reality of the false beliefs especially the issues concerning women, and speaking out the sensitivity that is often conditioned not to be talked about.

2.4. Journaling the Shared Spaces of Struggle and alienation in *The Pregnancy Diary*.

As seen in *The Diving Pool*, Yoko Ogawa's take on the idea of shared spaces of struggle and alienation can be studied at two levels: at individual and at community level. At the individual level, each of the three main characters present in the novel plays a role in contributing to their own struggle and alienation game. The only male character who is to a certain degree an exception, is the narrator's brother-in-law; the reason being that he rarely makes his appearance in the course of the novel. However, his role as a husband and a brother in the novel invites us to question the responsibilities he holds for his companions' struggle and alienation at this shared space of home and hearth. Moreover, the unnamed female narrator who plays an active role in bringing to destruction all shared bonds or relationships within the shared spaces of home, invites us to look at her character from the individual and at the community level. Her reckless and impetuous behaviour which not only affected her own space, but also situate her sister and her newborn baby into fatal destruction at the end of the novel, invites us to recall how each individual also plays a role in contributing to their companion's struggle and alienation in *The Pregnancy Diary*. Lastly, when we look at the unnamed pregnant woman's character and the role she played in the course of the novel, Yoko Ogawa presents this woman character as the victim of the society. She is the victim as she falls prey to her sister (the narrator) who comes from the patriarchal set up. The anger and frustration that the narrator developed while during her stay with her sister (the pregnant woman) and her brother-in-law, is poured on her sister and her newborn baby at the end of the novel. However, having labelled her as the victim of the society, we cannot deny how she also plays a role in contributing to her own cause and her companions. The perpetual complaint she made about her pregnancy issues on a daily basis, and the number of occasion her companions, that is, her sister and her husband, had to adapt themselves to her likings, affected their life and vice versa. But more than this, Yoko Ogawa

also presented this pregnant woman character as the victim of the patriarchal set-up. Her role as a wife at this shared space of home is looked upon solely from the patriarchal point of view. She is presented as any other woman in contemporary Japanese society, that is, to bear and to raise children. And as a way to put an end to all these issues, Ogawa presented her female characters in a very controversial manner, that is, through an act of transgression.

Let us look into the unnamed pregnant woman's husband and the role he played in contributing to his companion's struggle and alienation, which affected their life directly or indirectly. Being the only male character in the family, occupying the role of a husband and a father figure, he invites us to question how far he is responsible for his wife's struggle and alienation at this shared space of home and comfort. He may be granted less space by the author and he may be decisive to remain ignorant all throughout, but we cannot ignore the role assigned to him as a father figure in the novel. Citing instances from the story, there is not an episode in the novel where he showed himself as a fatherly figure in the course of the story. Needless to say, but the fact that his wife "never found a safe, calm shore to rest on," whenever she needed comfort from home, is evident to highlight the negligence of his role as a husband and a father (Ogawa 77).

Citing more instances from the story, his wife visited to Dr. Nikaido or M Clinic for consultation regarding her pregnancy, a number of times but was only accompanied by her sister alone. In all of these occasions, he showed no concern, as if the baby belongs to his wife alone. Through this, Yoko Ogawa stresses on the fact that the presence of a mere father figure within any shared space does not make it whole and complete. As studied in *The Diving Pool*, Yoko Ogawa shows that family sharing a same space requires dedication, sacrifices and mutual care. By this, Yoko Ogawa does not simply imply the physical needs, but also mental, emotional and psychological needs as well. Yoko Ogawa being a feminist in her approach, she examines not just the position of women and its functions in society, but

delves deeper into questioning all its counterparts. In *The Pregnancy Diary*, she questioned and challenged the role played by men in the contemporary Japanese society.

In *The Pregnancy Diary*, the scene where the husband brought home some published articles which he thinks would help them overcome the adversity developed during his wife's pregnancy, shows his negligence or unawareness of the social reality. In the words of our narrator: "My brother-in-law has been bringing home some articles that he thinks will help: "How I Beat Morning Sickness" or "What Fathers Can Do for Morning Sickness"" (Ogawa 72). Instead of helping out with his wife's problems, his ways of dealing and catering to the social and psychological problem within this shared space shows how ignorant and unaware he is of the social reality. Occupying the role of a father figure within any family unit, takes into accountability and responsibility. However, this sort of mutual engagement seemed to be missing in *The Pregnancy Diary*, thereby, contributing to each of the character's struggle. With such negligent responsibilities played out by Ogawa's male character in *The Pregnancy Diary*, it further shows the kind of relationship men has with their family at this shared space of home and hearth. And although the unnamed male character in *The Pregnancy Diary* wanted to be freed from this vicious cycle, he will never be able to attain it fully unless he learns the art of life from practical point of view. Yoko Ogawa stretched this idea in her fictional writings. Through this, Yoko Ogawa also hints the fact that unless one learns to adjust oneself with the social reality, he/she will never be able to live life freely, as life "held no promise of joy themselves" (Ogawa 62).

The only male character in Yoko Ogawa's *The Pregnancy Diary* could also be the most criticised character of all Ogawa's male characters, for valid reasons, as stated. Time and again, when we look at his character and the role he played during his wife's pregnancy, it is hard to ignore the sheer ignorance all throughout the entire scene. Although he could feel his companions' struggles having shared the same space, he showed no compassion towards his

wife throughout the entire episode. The narrator cannot think of her sister and her brother-in-law as husband and wife, or them having a baby of their own:

I've tried to think of the baby as something positive for my sister and her husband, and for me. But I never quite manage. I just can't imagine the look in my brother-in-law's eyes when he holds the baby in his arms, or the whiteness of my sister's breasts when she's nursing it. (Ogawa 101)

The kind of relationship these couples developed as echoed in *The Pregnancy Diary*, is not a new emergent or change that is visible in contemporary Japanese society. Since the Meiji Restoration, life in Japanese society completely took a different turn, although the country saw the rise and development in economic sector. There is hollowness in human relationships and human has deliberately failed to greet one another or acknowledge its presence as portrayed in Ogawa's fictional art. The hollowness in human relationship is even made implicit by our narrator in *The Pregnancy Diary*, as she expressed her discontentment of the kind of relationship her brother-in-law has with her sister, "there was something irritating about the way he kept glancing at her as he spoke" (Ogawa 90). She further goes on to say:

Sometimes I think about my sister's relationship with her husband- particularly about his role in the pregnancy, if he ever had one. When she's having one of her crises, he looks at her timidly and stammers meaningless little phrases meant to comfort her. I knew that he was a bit dull the first I met him. (Ogawa 90)

The complicacy that stems from the absence of the fatherly-motherly figure in *The Diving Pool* is replicated in *The Pregnancy Diary*. In so many ways, it functions as to reinterpret a family unit that is highlighted in *The Diving Pool*, and it is hard for us to ignore the underlying root cause of the disintegration of a family unit. Like Aya, the protagonist in *The Diving Pool*, felt the absence of her father and mother in her life, the pregnant woman,

likewise, felt the need of her husband's support and that sort seemed missing throughout the entire episode. Moreover, the communication gap developed between the couple in the course of the story is hard to ignore. The huge communication gap between the couple, contributes to the idea of shared spaces of struggle and alienation in *The Pregnancy Diary*. There is hardly any scene in the novel where we encounter the husband conversing with his wife and vice versa, through thick and thin. It is for this same reason that a character suffers detachment from society. The narrator in *The Pregnancy Diary* has expressed more fear for this than her sister and her brother-in-law:

I wonder how she broke the news to her husband. I don't really know how they talk about when I'm not around. In fact, I don't really understand couples at all. They seem like some sort of inexplicable gaseous body to me- a shapeless, colorless, unintelligible thing, trapped in a laboratory beaker. (Ogawa 64)

The obscure communication gap that we came across between parents-daughter relations in *The Diving Pool*, is time and again, echoed in *The Pregnancy Diary*. The disintegration of a family unit within the shared spaces of home is very common in Japanese society. It is also hard to ignore the sheer implications Ogawa keeps interpreting in her fictional art about the family unit. Living in community, it is only through communication that can break the barriers and resolve the issues. It is only through communication where obscurity finds its way fitfully to clear all incredulities and confusing. In Yoko Ogawa's fictional world, it is perplexity and dislocation that loom over her characters' mentality and sanity. Undeniably, it is from this very entanglement where Ogawa's characters were unable to reach for a goal that has been set before them. The narrator explicitly gave us a lucid picture of the kind of community Ogawa's characters found themselves in *The Pregnancy Diary*.

I suppose I should be wondering whether it's a boy or a girl, what they'll name it, what sorts of baby clothes to buy... But my sister and her husband never talked about the baby in front of me. They act as if there's no connection between the pregnancy and the fact that there's a baby in her belly. (Ogawa 78)

Ogawa also shows the intricacies that looms over larger part of a contemporary Japanese society even within the domain of home. Argumentatively, the shared spaces of struggle and alienation in *The Pregnancy Diary*, has more to do with the idea of alienation resulting from the physical changes that comes along with pregnancy, but more than these are about women's issues and how often women are neglected from patriarchal set-up. The communication gap between the husband and wife, the failure of an individual and the community as a whole as seen in *The Diving Pool* are some of the very common issues one can extrapolate even in *The Pregnancy Diary*.

2.5. Has Women betrayed themselves in the Contest of Shared Struggle?

The struggle for the recognition of women's rights in every sphere of life continues for a century now, although feminist criticism was not inaugurated until 1960s. What could be the underlying principles behind this force which held back the issues put forth by the feminist writers and many individuals? Could it be because women have betrayed their own sexuality? Or, is it that the male dominant forces have swept away women from supporting and negotiating their own sexes? Yoko Ogawa in all her fictional art has shown both the sides. While she portrayed how women have been denied of social rights in patriarchal set-up, she also shows how women also play an active role in contributing to their own causes. This section particularly focuses on the role played by women for women in the novel *The Pregnancy Diary*.

In Yoko Ogawa's fictional world, women have done more wrongs to women than by men, be it through the shared space of home or any other social arena. The unhealthy relationships between mother-daughter, between sisters and in-laws at the shared space of home are all apparent in Ogawa's fictional world. Citing instances from the novel *The Pregnancy Diary*, Ogawa presents an unnamed narrator as the representative of this class who puts her pregnant sister's life to danger, consciously, by offering her a grapefruit jam, which she knew it would eventually destroy her and her unborn baby. Initially, when the novel opens, at a certain point, one could sense the struggle as they huddled together. Pain and suffering are part of life and the struggles the two women characters go through in *The Pregnancy Diary*. One has to do with pregnancy and the other who has to bear the weight of her sister alongside. In the course of the novel, the narrator, in so many ways, becomes part of her sister's struggles sharing a shared space together. There are instances in the novel where the narrator had to adjust with her sister's lifestyle and even food habits, as her sister finds it disturbing when things are not to her taste and smell. The following conversation between the two sisters indicates the shared struggle and how they value each other more than anything else. The narrator's sister breaks out:

It's not the bacon and eggs. It's the frying pan and the dishes, the soap in the bathroom, the curtains in the bedroom-everything stinks. It's spreading all over the house... I want out go somewhere where nothing smells, like a sterile room in a hospital, where I could pull my guts and wash them clean. (Ogawa 75)

To this, the narrator replied: "From now on, I won't use the kitchen when you're here" (Ogawa 76). In the course of the novel, the narrator despises her brother-in-law for his ignorant behaviour towards her sister's pregnancy and particularly towards her morning sicknesses. Until the later part of the novel, the shared struggle between these two women characters at this shared space of home is conspicuous. As the plot progresses and with the

approaching time of the pregnant sister, this shared struggle turned violent. In other words, the narrator's heinous act played out against her pregnant sister and her unborn baby, can never be comprehended. At this intersection, Yoko Ogawa poised a huge question to all readers, as to who is responsible for the issues women were made to face? Has women betrayed itself in the contest of shared struggle? This continues to remain unanswered.

In the course of the novel, the pregnant sister's errant complaint about her physical discomforts and the morning sicknesses that comes with pregnancy, made her sister almost wanting to leave the house. The narrator knew that her sister would not do well without her assistance, yet she decides to put her life into fatal destruction. Precisely, the fatal destruction the pregnant sister experienced at the end of the novel, with the death of the newly born child has only been played out by the narrator alone. Through this, Yoko Ogawa challenged the idea of shared struggle of women and asks how far to what extent can it be validated?

The human tendency to transgress for a reason and find a new space for oneself, is quite natural in actual experiences and even in literary space. But what remains obscure in tracing the actual intricacies in Yoko Ogawa's fictional narratives is the limited word edition and dialogues throughout her fictional works, which leaves space for her reader for their own interpretation and explication. Ogawa is fascinated by the darker aspects of life and it is very crucial for us to investigate into her character's state at both individual and at community level, to track the obscurities and insecurities, which are quintessential part of her characterisation. These issues are further discussed in chapter III as we delve into the Dark Romantic aspects underlying Yoko Ogawa's fictional world. Having stated some of the central issues as depicted in *The Pregnancy Diary*, it is very crucial for us to look upon the idea of pregnancy and diary writing as the novel's title *The Pregnancy Diary* suggests.

2.6. The Idea of Pregnancy in *The Pregnancy Diary*.

Traditionally, the idea of child bearing and child rearing/raising were looked upon as a natural instinct for women and pregnancy was seen as celebratory both within and outside the family unit as it suggests continuity. However, this concept of the idea of child bearing or child rearing within any shared arena is no longer look upon as something that is to be celebrated or be proud of. Argumentatively, it has to do with the rise of feminism and its concerned issues: the idea of child bearing and child rearing which relegates women to suppression and oppression in patriarchal set up. It is a fact that the lineage of a family unit can only be carried forward through bloodlines. However, today with the rise of many prominent women figure in contemporary society, this idea of child bearing or child rearing is no longer look upon as celebratory as it signals subjugation and to losing one's freedom. The idea of child bearing or pregnancy suggests continuity, but its issues relating to subjugation and domination especially is much discussed. This detrimental effects visible through the patriarchal structure and its hegemonic assertion in contemporary Japanese society, paved ways for women like Yoko Ogawa to stand for the women's cause and find voice through an act of writing. Let us look Yoko Ogawa's take on the idea of pregnancy.

As portrayed in *The Pregnancy Diary*, the idea of pregnancy suggests losing one's own voice to losing relationships within the shared space of home. It also suggests the difficulties to conform to the societal expectations and norms as pregnancy means physical discomfort in all aspects. For instance, in the course of the novel, the pregnant woman, that is the narrator's sister, becomes relatively passive in her day-to-day activities with the physical changes she experienced through pregnancy. With pregnancy, the relationship and communication between herself and her husband become relatively abstruse; with pregnancy, she develops a hostile relationship with her sister too. The weight of the burden the pregnant woman shared with her companions at the shared space of home, leads all the three characters in a state of intolerance in the course of the novel. As an act to put an end to all these intolerances that has

come along with pregnancy, what we see towards the end of the novel is the violent act of the narrator trying to destroy her sister by offering her a grapefruit jam, consciously, knowing that this would destroy her chromosome and her unborn baby:

On the first page, there was a picture of an American grapefruit with a caption in bold print: “Beware of imported fruit! Antifungal PWH is highly carcinogenic and has been shown to destroy human chromosomes!” The caption came back to me now in the kitchen. (Ogawa 94, 95)

The unnamed narrator knew that this would eventually harm her pregnant sister and her unborn baby, but goes on to prepare them into a hot delicacy which her sister gobbles them up immediately, not knowing that this would deteriorate her health and her unborn baby. Through this, Yoko Ogawa highlights the idea of the shared space of home as that which is not always warm and shielded as seen in *The Diving Pool*. It is Yoko Ogawa’s intention to present the ugly side of human life that is always present within any shared space, no matter how connected any sort of relationship may seem to be. Otherwise, the narrator who is living with her pregnant sister and her husband at this shared arena for quite some time, would have eventually discerned with the plight her sister goes through on a daily basis with her pregnancy. Moreover, the fact that she being a woman herself would have understood her more than her husband.

In bringing the idea of pregnancy within the shared space of home in the contemporary Japanese society, Ogawa also shows how this idea of pregnancy issues are the product of the pre-war period during which the idea of patriarchy gets heightened. Yoko Ogawa shows the remnants and effects of the pre-war period which has corrupted and misled the younger generation in all aspects. The narrator’s heinous plots and the subsequent fatal action that follows, concerning the death of the newborn child at the end novel, is projected as an end to

all the impairments that relegate women to suffer in detachment. Discerning the need to do away with the old values and beliefs, Ogawa presents the narrator as a representative of her voice. The heinous act played out by the narrator in *The Pregnancy Diary* against the pregnant woman by offering her the grapefruit jam, which eventually culminates into destroying her newborn child at the end of the novel, acts as a defiance into putting an end to the old traditional beliefs, which sees women for the purpose of procreation alone. In a transgressive manner, the narrator by consciously killing her sister's newborn child at the end of the novel, shows the passing of the old traditional values and beliefs and marching into a new era. By destroying her sister's born child, for many reasons, it puts an end to patriarchy, to subjugation, and to domination. This transgressive female self or the emerging of new self is further discussed in Chapter IV as we critically analyse the search for female identity in Ogawa's select fictional works. Other ways of looking at this idea of pregnancy could be from the author's point of view. It is important to note that Yoko Ogawa wrote *The Pregnancy Diary* when she was bearing her first son and that the idea of child bearing gave her an intimate inspiration to write about motherhood and pregnancy. The issues depicted in the novel may not resonate with the author in all aspects, however, the fact that Yoko Ogawa delineated some of her personal struggles she encountered during her pregnancy is evident in the novel.

2.7. The Idea of Diary Writing in *The Pregnancy Diary*.

The Pregnancy Diary, as mentioned, is written in the form of a diary with a detailed picture of the narrator's family and the struggle they went through each day. M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* defined diary as "a day-to-day record of the events in one's life, written for personal use and satisfaction, with little or no thought of publication" (Abrams and Harpham 30). Following this statement, if a diary is

considered to be a piece solely for personal use only, then, what is Yoko Ogawa's intention in presenting her masterpiece to be read by all?

In *The Pregnancy Diary*, the narrator begins her diary writing on "December 29 (Monday)" confirming her sister's pregnancy when sister is in "the second month already, exactly six weeks" (Ogawa 57, 62). The diary ended in a very unusual way with the death of her sister's newly born child on "August 11 (Tuesday), 38 Weeks + 1 Day" (Ogawa 103). In between, there are a number of events and occasions where the narrator records their experiences of life, their pain, sufferings and gradual detachment from society. By the end of the novel, at least, the characters have recorded all of their experiences, their impairments and disgust, some of which resonates with Aya in *The Diving Pool*. Let us recall some of the intrigues Yoko Ogawa is trying to hint at, through an act of diary writing in *The Pregnancy Diary*.

As diary is a record of personal life events written on a daily basis, Yoko Ogawa firstly invites us to look into her account without vacillation and see the common struggle that is omnipresent within the shared space of home. In presenting her female protagonist scribbling about her personal inner thoughts and disgust and making it known to all, Yoko Ogawa invites us to speculate the position of women within the shared environment of home. Argumentatively, the positions of women in contemporary Japanese society are not always stable as compared to that of men and that women are always made to suffer. In documenting the inner thoughts in the form of a diary, Yoko Ogawa shows the position of women and its subordination that is omnipresent within the shared home.

Furthermore, it also invites us to look into the inner world of women and how they feel about their position in society, particularly contemporary Japanese society. As sensible and evocative the diary is or can be, Yoko Ogawa pleads with us to accept them (women) as the way they are made. Diary, which is often considered a secret piece for any individual and a

friend whom we trust solely, as also the one who keeps all our shared sorrows and happy moments to itself, becomes an outer space of explicating the inner issues open to all. In bringing about this idea of shared struggle in the form of a diary, Ogawa paved way for her contemporary to stand for what they believe to be true and right.

In *Pregnancy Diary*, as the diary represents the record of the daily struggles for the two individual women characters; one crushed by the weight of maternity and womanhood, the other who has to bear the weight of her sister's errant compliant about her pregnancy, it is about finding space for women through literary representation and beyond. Throughout women history, women have always been denied space, either in social sphere or literary space. An act of denying any space for women in the process, becomes an act of denying women rights and asserting its subjugation. In *Pregnancy Diary*, women's issues are addressed as documenting women's issues by the women themselves connotes the idea of finding space through literary representation and addressing women's social issues. An act of writing diary, in turn, also serves as a source of solace and relief through documenting the experiences in a very conversational manner in *The Pregnancy Diary*. Documenting the shared struggles, in the process, not only becomes an act of finding space for women own selves, but also a source of relief and solace from the social world.

2.8. The idea of the Shared Spaces of Struggle and Alienation in *Hotel Iris*.

The idea of the shared spaces of struggle and alienation in *Hotel Iris* is presented as a result of the societal pressure and expectations set by the society. The personal torments and psychological complexities that the characters go through are ragging constraints. As seen in the earlier works of Yoko Ogawa, home and its association are often portrayed as something that is not to eulogize about which is once again echoed in *Hotel Iris*. Yoko Ogawa's

preoccupation with the idea of home and the character's detachment from it, are presented in *Hotel Iris*, but with greater focus on the societal pressures and expectations.

Hotel Iris is a novel of pain, suffering and loss, but more than this, it is also about the search for one's own space to acquiring individual happiness and freedom. Illicit affair and relationship echoes throughout the novel, and it is crucial to note that this occurred due to societal pressure and expectations. In this novel, Yoko Ogawa presents us two main characters who suffered serious detachment and seclusion at this shared space of home. Mari is a 17-year-old high school dropout who works as a general assistant in her mother's run-down hotel at a seaside. In many ways, Mari shares a similar characteristic with Aya, the protagonist in *The Diving Pool*. Both of these characters suffered detachment from their society, as they could not be normally part of their family. In *The Diving Pool*, what we have seen is that the protagonist Aya had never received any love and support from her biological parents which resulted in her personal torment at the shared space of home. Similarly, Mari, the protagonist in *Hotel Iris*, overwhelmed by the house chores assigned to her by her parents at the hotel Iris, gradually resulted in her alienation and seclusion from society. Both these female characters undergo tremendous changes in their life as a result of the kind of treatment meted out from the shared space of home. The issues depicted in *The Diving Pool* is, once again, re-echoed in *Hotel Iris*. In this section, two important characters, Mari and the unnamed Russian translator, will be analysed in order to construe the implication of what the author is trying to present in *Hotel Iris*. Comparisons shall be drawn from the earlier sections in order to explicate the meaning of what this particular chapter aims to draw at.

When we look at the character of Mari and the kind of community she was embedded into, it is the dominant patriarchal structure which gradually resulted in her alienation from the community. The kind of community Mari was embedded into, as we can see, is overpowered by the patriarchal structure where the girl child education may not be necessarily important.

In keeping with this view, Mari's mother took her out of school to help her with the household chores, run the Iris and serve the people whenever it is required. The assigned tasks that Mari has to perform on a daily basis are not that sort of experience that can help her grow and develop her personality. Confined to help, work and serve only within the Iris, it gradually led to her seclusion and alienation from the rest of her community. Mari narrates:

After Grandfather died, Mother made me quit school to help at the hotel. My days begins in the kitchen, getting ready for breakfast. I wash fruit, cut up ham and cheese, and arrange tubs of yogurt in a bowl of ice... I grind the coffee beans and warm the bread. (Ogawa 17)

Through this, Yoko Ogawa highlights the idea of shared spaces of home in Japanese society which becomes a hotbed of struggle and frustration for many individuals. In the case of Mari, as a teenager who holds many promises that are yet to be fulfilled, her dreams have been completely packed up by her dominant mother even without warnings. The idea of women betraying women, as reflected in *The Pregnancy Diary* and *The Diving Pool*, also reappears when we look at the mother-daughter relationship in *Hotel Iris*. It can be agreed that Yoko Ogawa's female characters play a dominant role in contributing to women's struggle and alienation within the shared space of home. Women have played themselves a culpable role, besides patriarchal repressive forces in Yoko Ogawa's fictional art. And as aforementioned in the earlier sections, while analysing her society, Yoko Ogawa did not make it entirely one-sided when she talks about the idea of shared spaces. She also shows how women over a decade now, have also contributed to the problem.

Mari's statement implies an imperfect balance between work and family unit as seen in *The Diving Pool*, thereby, resulting in a character's mental and physical instability through the shared space of home. The importance of competing and building of economy has always

been a prime motive in contemporary Japanese society and this too begins from home. It is not just the dominant patriarchal structure which placed Mari in a state of boredom and gradual alienation from her society. There is a contested power structure of materialism and the desire to find a high place in their society, as exemplified by dropping out Mari from school to help run the Iris to gain economic means. Although Mari is a biological daughter to her parents, she never felt the warmth of home, but was thrown into a position she never wanted to be; to work, to serve and to act according to what had been assigned for her at the hotel Iris.

Domesticity has often been identified with women and this is not unknown in Japanese society. It is truly a dominant patriarchal force which placed women to identify themselves with such assigned roles and norms. These issues never seemed to be fading in contemporary Japanese society even after the emergence of feminist movement and its concerns. In *Hotel Iris*, the scene where the protagonist Mari conversed with the Russian translator about her state, is intended to show the adversities of women. When the Russian translator asks Mari, “Why would a seventeen-year-old girl want to spend her Sunday with an old man like me?” To this, Mari replied, “But if I stayed home, I would just have to work. And who wouldn’t want to go for a walk with someone who’s so pleased by a little wave goodbye?” (Ogawa 23). To find space for her own self even at the cost of losing her dignity, is very apparent in this novel. This quest for her female identity and the emergence of a new individual is further discussed in chapter IV.

Mari’s mother who is mostly concerned with the appearance and outlooks, is radically a realistic portrayal of the materialistic Japanese society. In the novel, she worries more about how they should present themselves before people and cares less about if this will bring them happiness and comfort in their life. Her preoccupation about Mari’s looks and her constant brags about her outlook, show how concerned she is about their status and outlook in the

society. Undeniably, she has little knowledge about how this power structure has placed her daughter into mental instability and psychological problem. The camellia oil, which she uses to comb Mari's hair and the barrette to pin them after combing her hair, are done under the pretext of their outlook. Mari heartily detests not just the brags her mother performs on her daily, but also what she stands for.

The struggle the protagonist Mari goes through each day in trying to keep up with the status her mother has assigned for her at this shared space of home, is discernable. It is difficult for protagonists, like Mari, to fit into such contested power dimensions and fulfilling the expected roles that has been aligned for women in such contested space. Breaking such principles and not conforming to the rules means, violation and consequences of action follows thereafter. In the novel, there is the scene where Mari took the barrette pin out of her hair as it caused her constant pain. That very particular night Mari was sent to bed by her mother without dinner: "I was sent to bed without any dinner that night- the usual punishment since I was little" (Ogawa 16). Shared space of home between Mari and her mother, is an everyday negotiation and struggle and this resulted in Mari's gradual alienation from the comfort of her home.

Similarly, when we look at the unnamed Russian translator's character and the kind of environment he was embedded into, he may be an outcast, however, we cannot shrug off how this particular community has abandoned and secluded him this far. Although he was said to have some immoral reputation which led him to seclude himself from his community and to live in a far island, it is a community which has pushed him to alienate himself with the world. When asked by Mari how he spends his days, he replies, "I spend my days locked away on the island with the translations" (Ogawa 19). We could discern how alienated the Russian translator is from the rest of his community through the above statement. Yoko Ogawa did not give us the full portrait of the Russian translator of what causes him to live in

a far secluded island. In the word of the Russian translator: “I was married once, when I was thirty-five, but my wife died three years later. After that I moved to the island” (Ogawa 26). She simply mentioned that the Russian translator moved to the island after the death of her wife. Yoko Ogawa did not mention anything about the bad reputation he had in killing his wife. This was emphasised only at the latter part of the novel.

Here too, we find writing or scribbling words as an escape from reality when society failed to prorate an individual space and needs, as seen in *The Pregnancy Diary*. For the Russian translator, writing, in the process becomes a source of communicating an irretrievable part of his past with the rest. For him, to write means to forgive his past and to move on in life when his society cannot grant him space to outgrow his wrong deeds. Undoubtedly, for the Russian translator, writing has filled that gap he has been missing from his society. Like the unnamed narrator in *The Pregnancy Diary*, who felt the need to document the shared struggle she experienced with her pregnant sister and her brother-in-law that will eventually helped her ease her mental and psychological process, the Russian translator, too, for some inexpressible reasons, finds writing as a source of solace when his community envenomed him arbitrarily. The darker aspect of the Russian translator’s life and his immoral past records will be studied in Chapter III as we discuss the elements of Dark Romanticism underlying Yoko Ogawa’s fictional space.

2.9. *Hotel Iris*: A Tale of Shared Sorrows and Shared Struggle.

Yoko Ogawa’s *Hotel Iris* is undeniably a tale of shared sorrow and shared struggle between the two main characters Mari and the Russian translator. The societal forces, which pushed these two characters to suffer from psychological conflicts, thereby resulting in their alienation from their society to sharing a bond together towards the end of the novel, could be understood as a tale of shared sorrows and shared struggle. Mari and the unnamed Russian

translator who suffered vigorously at the hands of their own community to finally finding a space together, is truly a portrayal of the need to do away with the societal expectations and norms. When Mari felt the need to connect with the outside world and when the Russian translator felt the need to look for a companion in his life, both of these characters came together as one in negotiating the space that they were denied and to recreate their own. Despite the age gap between the Russian translator and Mari, the fact that they were able to share each other's shared challenges, is truly a portrayal of the need to find one's own space. For Mari, individual freedom and happiness is of utmost importance rather than converging into a single point of vulnerability. While for the Russian translator, the need for transformation in his life came into realisation when his life seemed nothing from the societal perspectives.

The initial relationship between Mari and the Russian translator is justifiable, considering the amount of seclusion they had gone through at the shared space of home and from their community. In Mari's case, from being a school dropout and the struggle she had gone through at the shared space of home, to now finding a new space through her relationship with the Russian translator, is truly for the better. Likewise, the Russian translator living away from his community in a far island locked in his room all day with his translation, to now sharing a bond with Mari as his companion and a friend, is justifiable. The kind of alienation and seclusion they faced from their community, to now creating a new space and arena for their own individual self, is intended to show the sadistic side of human life and the need to do away with it. This new space became some sort of comfort and wholesomeness when the erstwhile space could only grant them sorrows and tribulations. To wholly become a part of this newly created space, in a number of occasions, Mari drafted elaborate lies to her mother at the pretext of doing some other works in order to meet the Russian translator. In the words of Mari: "I was willing to tell any sort of lie to keep my appointment" (Ogawa 70).

When we look at the character of Mari at the beginning of the novel from her innocent state to now emerging into her new self, the transformation is hard to ignore. Their perpetual meeting which began with “a letter from the translator,” is where Mari’s transgression gets generated (Ogawa 59).

As the novel progresses, we see the development of their unorthodox relationship. Sexual gratification and sexual abuse as a means to put an end to all the struggles, can be seen as their relationship developed over time. And as aforementioned, for Mari, this became a sort of asserting and embracing her own new self even if it takes away her morality. The shared relationship between Mari and the Russian translator, as we can see, are marked by sexual aggressiveness, sadistic sexual inclination and physical intimacy. As Mari narrates: “My whole body should have hurt, but I didn’t feel anything. Somehow, my nerves had become hopelessly tangled, so that pain became vaguely pleasurable as it rippled over my skin” (Ogawa 50). By the end of the novel, we see that Mari has already experienced all sorts of physical torture and sexual abuse at the hands of the Russian translator while in her search for individual freedom. Yoko Ogawa challenged this idea of contested shared space while in search for individual freedom and liberation, and shows how this can be validated in contemporary Japanese society.

Yoko Ogawa’s take on the idea of shared spaces contrast the idea of what we normally tend to associate with it: of physical and mental comfort, belongingness, happiness, mutuality and solace. Yoko Ogawa’s concerns over the collapsing family unit in contemporary Japanese society are made explicit in all her contents. Nothing can be more exuberant and applicable than the true portrayal of her society that is escalating and diminishing each day. The fact that Yoko Ogawa continues to express this very concept in her fictional space is to show her discontentment towards her society. It is for this very reason, Yoko Ogawa has always been aligned as a dark romantic writer of the contemporary society, in that she continuously

projects the discomfort, the struggle and torments of the characters. The following chapter discusses these issues and aspects from the dark romantic point of view and it further delineate what prompted the author, Yoko Ogawa to present such grim picture of her society in her fictional spaces.

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III: ELEMENTS OF DARK ROMANTICISM BEYOND BORDERS IN YOKO

OGAWA'S FICTIONAL ART

3.0. On Dark Romanticism and Yoko Ogawa as a Dark Romantic Writer

A literary projection of the darker aspects of human life, which is the projection of social reality, characterised Dark Romanticism. Dark Romanticism is marked by persistent flaws, fatal destructions, human fallibility as well as psychological effects of guilt and sin. Dark Romanticism exists within society, in art and in literature. Even in the smallest details and in its tiniest encounters, dark romanticism finds its way fitfully. However, in Dark Romanticism the projection of an unhealthy and disgusting plot in a literary space has always been viewed as a defence of its suppression or oppression which cannot be defined in an existing society. It is undeniably true that in whichever form and shape the art ceased to exist, a literary projection is the projection of those voices that has long been overlooked by society. Dark Romanticism, which has evolved out of this context, sought to present its arguments in a controversial manner that goes against tradition, culture, religion and society. The core and underlying elements of Dark Romanticism lies on the projection of a unhealthy scene that which is often presented in a non-conventional manner, breaking the societal expectations and norms imposed by the society. An outstanding literary projection that one may find within this genre, is the focus on “the decay and decadence, dilapidation and the ruins of buildings as well as the human being, both mentally and physically” (Donath 11).

In the previous chapter, we've discussed some of these issues which are addressed in an indirect manner directed towards the understanding of the dark romanticism prevailing in Yoko Ogawa's fictional space. This chapter is an elaboration in connection to the previous chapter, however in a more direct and elaborative manner as mentioned. The term 'Dark Romanticism' was first believed to be given by the literary theorist Mario Praz in his book

entitled *The Romantic Agony* published in 1930. The belief that pain and suffering are an integral part of human race and that life holds no promises of joy itself, forms an integral part of every dark romantic literature. In other words, Dark Romanticism as the genre itself suggests, focuses on the cruelty and sufferings, self-destruction and demolition, guilt and sin, personal torments and alienation. It is based on the beliefs and ethos that human beings by birth are prone to sin, and that pain and suffering forms an integral part of human life. The readers of the Dark Romantic literature often find themselves entangled by the author's take on idea of disgust and cruelty normally associated with darker side of human life. In such literary plots, there are little or no hope as it often results in pessimistic attitudes towards life and society. One such characteristic that we seldom find in Yoko Ogawa's writings, is the persistent efforts in trying to keep the readers intact with the horror and brutality of humankind. The ability to sin and the character's willingness to look for an alternative, often in a bizarre and grotesque invention, looms over Yoko Ogawa's artistic vision. Yoko Ogawa as a dark romantic author fits the genre with fidelity and perfection, in that she constantly reintroduces the dark romantic elements every after paragraph with new innovation and technique.

Yoko Ogawa's writings are characterised by the characters and narrators whose identity remain anonymous. Except in one or two of her fictions, most of her narrator remains nameless and are identified by its social profession. This signals the callousness of the social order, thereby presenting the dark side of human agony. For instance, the narrator in *The Memory Police* is identified by her social profession as the novelist, in *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, the protagonist is identified as the Professor, and in *Hotel Iris*, the character with whom the protagonist came into contact with, is identified as the Translator. The fact that Ogawa's protagonists are anonymous and nameless, skirting for an identity, apparently shows the deliberate attempt on the author's part to keep within the genre as well. More than

these, are the psychological complexities and physical deformities of the characters that are often observed in Yoko Ogawa's fictional art. To cite few examples, in *The Memory Police* and *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, Ogawa highlights the losing of the character's memory and the psychological complexities that comes along with the physical changes.

Death forms an epitome that which characterised Dark Romanticism from any other genre, and Yoko Ogawa's fictional space is a space of physical death and decay for various causes. In all of Yoko Ogawa's fictional works, there are at least one or two characters who encounters death or atleast talks about death, both within and outside family. By bringing the element of death, Yoko Ogawa intended to show the core ideology of death, how it functions in a society and how it continues to shape the ideology of its people. For her, death is not just the death or absence of a person, it is much more than this. Moreover, in Dark Romanticism, the settings of the stories are often set in a gloomy environment, where there is decay and decadence, spooky atmosphere, desolate places and from far away town and cities. So also Yoko Ogawa's fictional space is such a space. Seclusion and alienation from society are the hallmark of Yoko Ogawa's fictional space, and Yoko Ogawa portrays the realistic settings of gloom and desolate atmosphere which we find in dark romantic setting. It is hard to ignore the dark romantic elements underlying Yoko Ogawa's fictional space and the implications she is trying to present through her characterisation and portraiture.

Before proceeding into the detail study of the dark romantic elements underlying Yoko Ogawa's fictional art, the genre in general and its relation and connection it has with some of the other genres will be looked into in brief.

3.1. Relation to Romanticism

Dark Romanticism has often been identified as a sub-genre of Romanticism. Romanticism as a part of literary movement which evolved during the closing of the 18th century, saw nature as

an independent entity when man failed to find solace in society. The writers of this era, such as William Wordsworth, John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, etc. to cite a few, no longer viewed society and its civilisation as having the ability to restore hope and humanity. Hence, they turned to nature for a source of inspiration- to instruct, educate and lead mankind when society can no longer instil goodness in all aspects. Aditi Chowdhury and Rita Goswami in their book entitled, *A History of English Literature: Traversing the Centuries*, identified the Romantic writers of this era with the most famous French dictum: Liberty, Equality and Fraternity and notes that:

The clarion call of the French Revolution- ‘Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity’- thrilled the young writers...Rousseau’s doctrine- that man was by nature good, but was corrupted by bad laws and customs, and should therefore be free of them and left to the diktat of his own personality- struck a responsive chord in the hearts of the Romantic writers. (Choudhury and Goswami 185)

Dark Romanticism as a sub-genre of Romanticism emerged out of this context. Dark Romanticism altogether is not a reaction against Romanticism and its held views. It can be generally understood as a way of presenting the paradoxes and the complications, which the Romanticism often sought not to present in a controversial manner. Although Romanticism and its poetic languages are evident enough to note of the celebratory voices in praise of nature, that are often presented in prose, poetry and verses, this has always been dogged by the persistent efforts in trying to do away with the darker aspects that often results in melancholic and nostalgic voices.

Romanticism and Dark Romanticism goes hand in hand. Romanticism believed in the intellect and glorification of emotions, on the contrary, Dark Romanticism, sought to present the darker aspects of human life, which Romanticism often tries to embellish with poetic

geniuses and through the play of words. What Romanticism eulogises, Dark Romanticism tries to present the offshoot of the Romantic's by-products often in a controversial manner. Argumentatively, Dark Romanticism is a part and product of Romanticism and out of which its issues depicted are expatriated. However, Dark Romanticism as a sub-genre of Romanticism and part of the literary movement did not wholly emerge as great as that of the Romantic Movement, although it left a significant mark since its inception in literary history.

3.2. Relation to Gothic Literature

Dark Romanticism is generally conflated with Gothic literature in the sense that both of these genres depict issues that are irrational, grotesque, of death, sufferings, the demonic, sin, etc. What differentiates Gothic from Dark Romanticism is the supernatural element that is often projected in Gothic Literature. Gothic literature is marked by supernatural elements and grotesque, whereas, Dark Romanticism is marked by erotic sensibility, realism and the study of human minds and peculiarities of human behaviour. The sexual idiosyncrasies and distorted image of all its mankind are the hallmark of the Dark Romantic literature, which are not very frequent in Gothic literature. The persistent flaws of such issues and aspects pertaining to Dark Romantic elements, mark Yoko Ogawa's fictional world. Yoko Ogawa's fictional space is an excruciating space of human loss and sufferings, all of which are the quintessential themes projected in Gothic and Dark Romantic writings.

It is, in fact, very difficult to draw a neat demarcated line between Gothic and Dark Romanticism. Gothic and Dark Romanticism goes hand in hand. What Gothic literature sought to present about the darker aspects of life and human fallibility in art, Dark Romanticism also sought to present in a controversial manner through its projection. Dark Romanticism and Gothic writings are one, in that its projections are directed towards the fatal flaws of mankind. However, the idea of presenting a villain character in the story, which is

the hallmark of Gothic literature, are not very ostensible in Dark Romantic writings. Humans and society or community are the villain to itself in Dark Romantic writings and there are no such supernatural powers and forces that encompasses human destruction and depredation as visible in Gothic literature. However, what entails these two genres together is the idea of the fatal destruction which occurs at the end of the story.

In Gothic literature, we find terror, supernatural elements, rivalries and demonic scene occupying a pivotal role for the development of plot and progress of the story. Victorian British authors, such as the Bronte sisters, Mary Shelley and some others, incorporated these themes and ideas and took this genre to its greater height. This in a way has also paved way for the full development of the Dark Romanticism as a genre. And as aforementioned, Dark Romanticism is an offshoot of Romanticism and Gothic literature, but are not only the by-product of these two genres, and there is a frequent oscillation between the genres. In that sense, Dark Romanticism exists within Gothic elements and Romanticism.

3.3. Relation to Transcendentalism

When one is conditioned to talk about the Dark Romantic elements underlying any literary works, it is almost impossible not to examine the issues depicted in the literary works published by the prominent American dark romantic writers of the 19th century. With the emergence of many compromising authors such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson and Edgar Allan Poe, the genre itself rose to its prominence not only in America but worldwide. The overarching issues depicted by these American Dark Romantics writers over the years have become universal. This further paved way for the contemporary writers to talk about issues that were often suppressed. In America, Dark Romanticism as a literary genre, was seen as a reaction against the Transcendentalist's belief and ethos, that "if humans are made in the "likeness of God," then all humans were potentially good and all

might be perfected” (Jerry Philips, Michael Anesko, 33). The Transcendentalist writers who believed in an innate quality of mankind and sought to present this argument in art and literature, saw the reaction of the Dark Romantic writers as going against their views.

The leading figure of the transcendentalist movement, Ralph Waldo Emerson who published multiples essays and lectures on the idea of self-reliance, awakened writers, such as Edgar Allen Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Emily Dickinson and others. These awakened emergent authors are not only against the transcendentalist’s belief of the inherent goodness in mankind, they also sought to present this argument in a controversial manner. They believed that human has a potential and a tendency to transgress beyond the understanding of human norms. Undeniably, Dark Romanticism is a reaction against the Transcendentalists’ beliefs and ethos and one can extrapolate the fact that Dark Romanticism as a movement in literature evolved out of the Transcendentalist’s beliefs and ethos and as reaction against its predecessors.

When we look at the emergent trends and movements in the literary history, a new emergent movement is the result of the discontentment and disillusionment of its predecessors. Likewise, Dark Romanticism which is the result and born out of the Transcendentalist Movement in literary history, shows the disillusionment and discontentment which goes against the Transcendentalist Movement. Dark Romantic writers try to show how human are not only prone to sin and sufferings, but are subjected to sin, guilt, death and decay, as against the Transcendentalist’s beliefs. They incorporate horrific and dreadful scenes which are contrary to the Transcendentalist beliefs and writings.

Contemporary Japanese writers such as Yoko Ogawa, Yukio Mishima, Kenzaburo Oe and others, are among the contemporaries who share a similar platform with the American Dark Romantic writers, in that they are bounded by the idea of human fallibility and the

psychological complexities of human minds. These writers sought to present the darker aspects of human life, they show human's tendency to inflict pain and sufferings, and explore the morality of mankind in cruel and meanest manner. No doubt, Yoko Ogawa's fictional world fits the genre to a full extent and degree, in that she constantly introduces these dark romantic elements in all her fictional space.

3.4. On Japanese Dark Romanticism

Tracing the origin and evolution of Dark Romanticism in literary history and its heyday in literary representation, Dark Romanticism as a genre can be seen as dominating from the beginning of the 19th century, although its issues depicted have always been there since the beginning. Various political and social as well as religious reforms in the course of history, have significantly contributed to the growth of the genre in Japan. Dark Romanticism as a literary genre in Japanese literature is seen as a revolt against the various socio-political, religious and economic reforms that have taken over in the last century. For instance, the early writings of Yukio Mishima is an attack on the socio-political and religious forces that have placed upon its citizens. Suicidal thoughts, actions and its provocation, which are quintessentially the characteristics of the Dark Romantic writings, are all prevalent in the early writings of Yukio Mishima. To cite more, contemporary writers such as Kenzaburo Oe and Kazuo Ishiguro have also depicted numerous societal issues covering Dark Romantic themes and elements of the contemporary Japanese society. Kenzaburo Oe and Yukio Mishima are among the contemporaries who took this genre to its height in projecting the disgust which their predecessors often suppressed. One of the most recent writers, such as Kazuo Ishiguro, equally projected the darker aspects of human life that has to do with the idea of the future.

The Meiji Period (1868-1945) saw the emergence of many literary figures paving way for the contemporaries, in projecting the social realities through literary space. Richard Medhurst in his article entitled, “Seeking the Essence of the Novel: A Short History of Meiji Literature,” has categorised the Meiji period of the Japanese literary history as a move to realism. Fiction was not unknown in Japan during the Meiji period, however, the period saw the advent of short stories and poetry depicting the lives of the Japanese society in a non-conventional manner. The stories depicted reflect the socio-political and religious issues that overwhelmed Japan during the World War and thereafter. Argumentatively, the socio-political movement that shook the entire Japanese society to a large extent, gave new possibilities and impetus in literary representation during the Meiji period and thereafter. Haiku emerged as a powerful attack against the socio-political reforms and severe changes that Japanese society underwent. One cannot deny the fact that the writers of the Meiji period continue to exert a puissant influence even in the Postwar period in Japanese literary history. Yukio Mishima’s suicidal fictional narratives and Yoko Ogawa’s take on the idea of Dark Romanticism, are evident of the influences and the social reality that looms over the Japanese society. As such, literary space became a space of its own, expressing the silences and anguishes, which has often been denied in the living reality.

Moreover, the discontentment and the refusal to accept the ideas laid down by their predecessors and its hesitancy to submit within the domain of the contested power structure, is one among the other issues. Dark Romanticism, like any other genre in literary history, is prevalent in different literature across continents as a reaction against preceding generation, or as a way of expressing the discontentment, a particular author faces over time. However, it is undeniably true that the assimilation of various materialistic visions, incorporated as part of culture, and its subsequent ways of normalising them has pushed society to transgress and cultivate new norms while in search for an identity.

In Germany, Britain and in America, the Dark Romanticism as a genre became most active during the 19th century. Its influences can be seen all over Asian and other continents as well. However, Dark Romanticism as a literary genre was not particularly differentiated as a genre until literary theorist, Mario Praz, published his lengthy book, *The Romantic Agony* in 1930. Following the trend that underwent several changes in literary history, in Japan, Dark Romanticism as a literary genre became an open space in projecting the socio-political and religious issues. In Japan, the genre became most active during the post-war era as a reaction against democracy, globalism and communism. The writers of the post-war era in Japan depict the psychological complexities of an individual entrapped during and after war in Japanese literary history. Yukio Mishima, Haruki Murakami, Kenzaburo Oe and Yoko Ogawa, represent the contemporaries that depict characters that are not only true to life, but true to the society entrapped during the bubble of the economy and its aftermath.

3.5. Elements underlying Dark Romanticism in the Fictional Art of Yoko Ogawa

Contemporary Japanese writers such as Yoko Ogawa is one among the other contemporaries who carries inner strength in depicting the darker aspects of human life. Yoko Ogawa's writing conveys a very unconventional attitude and discontentment towards life and society. In depicting the darker social aspects of life, Yoko Ogawa shows her refusal to submit to the dominant forces. It is, for the same reason, that Yoko Ogawa's character shows transgressive development in their character, which goes beyond the norms of humanity. Human fallibility, sufferings, pain, fascination of death, personal torments, self-destruction, psychological effects of guilt, sin, etc. which are normally associated with these Dark Romantic writers, are all visible within the fictional writings of Yoko Ogawa. What characterised Yoko Ogawa as a Dark Romantic writer has been analysed by Diana Donath in her essay *Black Romanticism in Postmodern Japanese Literature- The Works of Yoko Ogawa*. In this particular essay, she says:

An outstanding representative of this literary current is Ogawa Yoko, whose focus is on decay and decadence, dilapidation and ruin of buildings as well as of the human, both mentally and physically. With her explorations of the dark side of the human soul...

Ogawa Yoko has created her own special form of Black Romanticism. (Donath 11)

It is true that Yoko Ogawa's fictional space is a space of physical and mental unrest, thereby fulfilling the dark romantic themes and elements. Yoko Ogawa faithfully portrays her characters that are true to life. In Yoko Ogawa's fictional world, it is not just the characters who undergoes such trials and tribulations, but readers are also left in a state of physical and mental unrest. It is not just her characters that have gone through such phases in life, but humans in general have suffered defeat such ordeals and, therefore, one could empathise with it. Dark romanticism, in this sense, exists within any society and within any shared arena as discussed in the earlier chapter. And no matter how hard any individual or any fictional character strive to do away with it, Yoko Ogawa shows the nature of dark romanticism within any shared arena. The belief that humans are prone to sin and suffering and that pain forms an integral part of men's life, are portrayed with utmost exhilaration in Dark Romanticism.

Death, which forms the core elements of every Dark Romantic writers, is prevalent in almost all her fictional works. Physical deformities, loss of identity, isolated settings and deviation from normality forms an integral part underlying Yoko Ogawa's fictional narratives. Yoko Ogawa's preoccupation and fascination of the darker aspects of life are drawn from the surface of everyday life and the mundane as she has said in one of her interviews:

Every human being has something violent inside, but most of us try to hide it. In the same way, we try to ignore the dangers that lurk in everyday experience, to skirt them and pass by. But at the same time, we're fascinated by these "unseen" things, and that fascination becomes a motivating force in my work. (Treisman 1)

What drives Yoko Ogawa to present such grossness in her literary space, is the outcome of the societal forces as she mentioned in her interviews. Undeniably, contemporary Japanese society appears to be safe, but the danger that always lurks beneath the surface instigated Yoko Ogawa to bring this issue to the forefront. She depicts the true nature of what she saw with her own eye. The fact that *The Diary of a Young Girl Anne Frank* has a strong and puissant influence in Yoko Ogawa's literary space is evident to show not just her upbringing and her society, but it also reflects her literary influence. Yoko Ogawa shows this influence in almost all her fictional art; reducing herself to a typical Dark Romantic Japanese author.

When reading Yoko Ogawa's fictional works, elements of Dark Romanticism, such as, frequent lost of character's contact with the outside world, loss of physical and mental ability, loss of physical and mental identity, frequent deaths both within and outside family unit, grotesque and demonic scenes, and unpleasant decisions and incidents, occurs at regular intervals. Yoko Ogawa introduces these new elements with realistic and surrealistic levels of experiences. For instance, in novels, such as, *The Memory Police* and *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, Yoko Ogawa projects the loss of character's physical and mental ability and the gradual loss of identity. In these novels, Yoko Ogawa shows the darker aspects of human life and shows how it is like to live in a world devoid of rationality and most importantly, sensibility. Moreover, character's isolation, alienation and detachment from society prefigures in Yoko Ogawa's fictional works.

What fascinates Yoko Ogawa the most in projecting the dark romantic aspects of human life, is her refusal to give her fictional character an identity. Her fictional characters remained nameless and impersonal, leaving it for the readers to identity them with their social profession and traits they carried out. The fact that Yoko Ogawa's characters remained nameless and impersonate shows the dark romantic elements by leaving it impersonal. To delineate the Dark Romantic elements underlying Yoko Ogawa's fictional space, some of the

dark romantic elements will be analysed, such as, the settings of the novel, Yoko Ogawa's take on the idea of the death, impersonality of her fictional characterisations and physical disability, etc. as apparent in some of her selected fictional art.

3.6. The Dark Romantic Setting

In Dark Romanticism, the settings of the novels, as portrayed in Yoko Ogawa's fictional art, are usually full of fear and mysterious. The stories are usually set in an isolated location, on decay and decadence, spooky atmosphere, desolate island and from far away town and cities. Seclusion and alienation from society are the hallmark of Yoko Ogawa's fictional space. Undeniably, Yoko Ogawa possessed an irresistible quality towards the crumbling blocks of life and society. Her artistic vision is the vision of dark romantic writers and she portrayed it in the most dilapidated manner. The setting of Yoko Ogawa's novel nonetheless allows the reader to visualize the spooky atmospheric spectrums, thereby proving it even more real and artistic. *The Memory Police* and *Dormitory* shall be studied to explore and delineate the dark romantic settings as portrayed in Yoko Ogawa's fictional space.

The Memory Police, translated by Stephen Snyder and published in 2019, is set in an isolated island. The geographical setting as well as the atmospheric setting of the novel is quite grim; it is located in an isolated island and it recalls the time when everything seemed fading with time, memory, and the living ones have to go on living in fear at the tyrannical hands of the Memory Police. The opening lines of *The Memory Police* insinuate a moving picture of loss and fear its citizens living on the island have to endure on a daily basis, setting the mood for the rest of the story:

I sometimes wonder what was disappeared first-among all the things that have vanished from the island. "Long ago before you were born, there were many more things here," my mother used to tell me when I was still a child. "Transparent things,

fragrant things...fluttery ones, bright ones...wonderful things you can't possible imagine. (Ogawa 3)

Geographically, the novel is set on the secluded island coupled by the presence of the Memory Police that interrogates people and impose certain policy upon its citizen. Away from the mainstream of the society, geographically, the novel's setting inoculates that sense of the secluded and alienated society. It reminds one of the disconnections it has with the outside world. No one of its citizen knows how the world map looks like or how to navigate maps and connect themselves with the outside world. As the narrator explains, "and since there is no map of the island- maps themselves having long since been disappeared- no one knows of its precise shape, or exactly what lies on the other side of the mountains" (Ogawa 8). Yoko Ogawa presents this community living on the island, as one isolated from the outside world, thereby, suggesting the possibilities of the dread the citizen go through on a daily basis. Moreover, the island, where all the incidents and happenings took place in the course of the novel, is seen as oppressive and dominating: "if you don't cooperate, you become their victim... I have no idea where they take you once they have you. Prison? A labor camp? The gallows? But you can be sure it isn't anyplace pleasant" (Ogawa 34). Along with the geographical location, the time frame of the novel reminds us of the dark romantic elements underlying Yoko Ogawa's fictional space.

The Memory Police is truly an excruciating space, in that, the citizens living on the island are constantly subjected to certain policy that detain people who could remember events, things and objects. The first duty of the Memory Police was to enforce the disappearances. The protagonist who is a novelist by profession narrates the story of her citizens living on the island, about her family, friends and near ones who has to go through these complicacies at the hand of the Memory Police. Through this, Yoko Ogawa shows what it is like to live under the surveillance of time and political turmoil. Fear of the worst that may befall upon its

citizen at the hands of the Memory Police and the fear of losing voices are constantly echoed in the course of the novel. Yoko Ogawa presents a very mysterious setting, in that she does not describe why or how this constant disappearance occurs on the island and why its citizens are subjected to the oppression of the Memory Police. She simply presents the darker aspects of its citizens living on the island and the hardship they have to forbear on a daily basis.

The setting of the novel, *The Memory Police*, also reminds one of George Orwell's *1984*. Yoko Ogawa presented the idea of surveillance and interrogation as seen in George Orwell's *1984*. The grim settings of the novel as portrayed in George Orwell's novels, such as the notion of surveillance, interrogation of people's freedom and the seizure of individual freedom, etc. which are apparent in George Orwell's *1984* are echoed in Yoko Ogawa's novel. The Memory Police, in this sense, parallels the Big Brother's totalitarian modules where both function as a way of repressing people's liberty and identity. The Memory Police like the Big Brothers seemed to grow a bit brutal each time they search for houses and detain people who can remember. In the words of the narrator:

Nothing could be simpler for the Memory Police. They're lurking everywhere- maybe in the back room where they do the dishes... No matter how careful we are, we all leave behind little bits of ourselves as we go about our lives. Hair, sweat, fingernails, tears...any of which can be tested. No one can escape. (Ogawa 25)

The methods adopted by the Memory Police was to seize those who could recall and remember things and are done with great speculations and no one seemed to escape from it. The totalitarian society taking over its citizens and society as seen in George's Orwell's *1984* are echoed in *The Memory Police*. Yoko Ogawa gives us the horrific picture of the dystopian society. She shows what will happen if everything gradually disappears with time, including human and its voices. *The Memory Police* subtly projects the dystopian vision and attitude

towards life and society. Yoko Ogawa shows the grim futuristic world of its citizen living on the island losing everything apparently. Like every dystopian writers, Yoko Ogawa projects the socio-political scenarios of the contemporary culture and imagines the world losing everything and projects the abstruse generations that is to come. She shows what the society will turn into if a state is completely taken over by the totalitarian state and presents the grim environment of its society in a very reflective manner. The setting of the novel shows the dark realities of life, the dark side of human life and the dark culture of its civilisation, which are the quintessential elements of dark romantic literature.

The socio-political forces which pushed mankind to suffer defeat at the hands of the oppressors are projected in a very detailed and elaborative manner. Yoko Ogawa truly fits the genre of dark romanticism as she introduces a new dark romantic setting in all of her fictional art. The setting of her works set her apart from the rest of the other dark romantic writers. It is an accepted fact that the setting of the novel plays a crucial role in determining the mood of the readers. The effects and impacts it can have on the readers solely depends upon the setting of the story and Yoko Ogawa did not disappoint when it comes to depicting horrific scenes and episodes which are closely related to dark romanticism. *Dormitory* is one among Yoko Ogawa's masterpieces in depicting the dark romantic elements that we find rarely in other works. *Dormitory* is a short novella, but full of horrific and grim setting seeping through the course of the story. As the title suggests, it is in the dormitory where all the horrific incidents, the grossness and some supernatural elements associated with dark romanticism are presented in a mysterious way. Roughly about 50-55 pages and there is not a single page left unturned in depicting the horrific incidents and happenings. Even the descriptions of the building, the environment and all the activities that occurred invoke that sense of dilapidation, ruins, decay and abjection:

The cloudy glass in the windows, the yellowed curtains, and the cracks in the walls all hinted at its advanced age, and though it was meant to house students, there was no sign of student life-no motorbikes, tennis rackets, sneakers, or anything of the kind. It was, in short, the mere shell of a building. (Ogawa 110)

Yoko Ogawa's *Dormitory*, depicts the old abandoned building that has been left unattended for years and the fear of what worst things may befall people if registered to live under the tyranny of time and the deadliness seemed to hover around all its surroundings. The setting of the novel is quite grim and horrific, so much so that, it incites fear and trepidation in the heart of the readers, which are quintessential elements of the dark romanticism. The horrific and creepy settings of the novel is further seen in the lines such as, "weeds had grown up in the courtyard," "someone had left a helmet by the bicycle rack," "when the wind blew, the grass seemed to whisper," and "there were no students to be seen" (Ogawa 127). The unnamed narrator describes the setting of the novel and particularly the environment of the dormitory where all the horrific incidents took place shows the connection of the dead and the living. The souls of the dead seemed to resuscitate in a mysterious way so as to obstruct the livings. However, none of these details are explained in an elaborative manner. Yoko Ogawa simply puts the lives of the living under the dread condition of fear coupled by the unseen presence of the dead souls resuscitating in a mysterious manner. Moreover, the setting invokes death as a mysterious element, in that, people disappear or go about missing without a trace as that happened in *The Memory Police*. The narrator could feel that, "there was something deep and weary about the silence that hung over the place, something almost sinister that could not be explained away by the fact that it was spring break and the residents would be absent" (Ogawa 127).

In the course of the story, in every visit of the narrator to this place, she describes the scene as if it were haunted or possessed by some supernatural powers:

Though the new semester had started, the dormitory was as quiet as ever. At one point I thought I heard footsteps from deep within the building, but the sound died away almost immediately. When I had lived here, there was always a radio playing somewhere, or a laughter or a motorbike engine racing... (Ogawa 134)

In another occasion during her visit to her cousin, she describes the scene as, “The dormitory was dark. Only the window caught the light, sparkling brilliantly. Somewhere, behind one of those windows, someone disappeared... for some reason they had melted together in the reflection from the window” (Ogawa 142). Yoko Ogawa’s choice of words and phrases such as, “it seemed that all signs of life had faded;” “the dormitory is in period of irreversible degeneration;” and “the whole place is collapsing” shows the struggle and rivalry between life and death which is seen in any dark romantic settings (Ogawa 135, 153, 154). Dark Romantic setting, a being isolated and uncommon from the multitude, captures the darker experience of life which we rarely see in the other genre. The overwhelming power to project the dread, the disgust, brutality, horror and supernatural, at the same time, shows Yoko Ogawa’s antithetical feeling toward dark romanticism as a whole.

3.7. Death as the Core Element of Dark Romanticism

One of the most prominent and recurrent theme visible in Gothic and Dark Romantic literature, are the obsession and preoccupation with the idea of death. In Yoko Ogawa’s fictional space, death becomes a part of her narration and obsession. The ideas of death in Yoko Ogawa’s fictional space concerning the idea of dark romanticism connote two implications: the death of character continues to shape its society. The fact that Yoko Ogawa is obsessed with the idea of death is also to tell the stories of the people who have to go on living with the memories of their loved ones which can never be forgotten. Death, in this sense, does not imply an end of something for the living, but an increasingly haunting

experience for the living. It is in fact true that those who survived from the disastrous catastrophe have to go on living with the memories of their loved ones and this is made explicit in Yoko Ogawa's fictional space. The idea of death in Yoko Ogawa's fictional space is to present how this ideology functions in the society.

In Yoko Ogawa's fictional space the absence of the physical self (death) does not imply or functions as an exempt from reality. There is yearning, longing and a desire that is beyond the idea of death which is the core of every society. Moreover, the anxiety, fear and psychological disorder that creeps in along with death, makes it even more difficult for the living to fully live in the present. Yoko Ogawa by introducing constant death, both within and outside family, shows the absurd realities of mankind and the limits of language as consolable. In Yoko Ogawa's fictional space, death does not remain death; it lives in the heart of the survivors and in the life of the readers. Characters may have perished from this universe, either by the societal forces or through supernatural and various other elements, but it lives in the heart of people as a haunting picture. Small incidents, or even in the smallest details and encounters, death in Yoko Ogawa's fictional space continues to exert a puissant effect on the lives of the characters, leaving them unable to fully live the present. Ostensibly, it is the death and the memories of the dead that provides the darker aspects of human, the paradoxicality of living, and the passivity of mankind.

The Memory Police is about all these and much more. Every day, the narrator has to live with the memories of the death of her parents, unable to live her present fully. What it feels like to live in a world where everything seemed fading away (the idea of death) are portrayed in the cruellest and deadliest manner. The constant disappearance of things and objects, a fading memory of its citizen and subsequent disappearance (death) of people, are echoed in *The Memory Police*. Yoko Ogawa's motive, in presenting all these elements, is to keep the readers intact with the ideas of dark romanticism that always seemed to lurk within any

shared arena. In *The Memory Police*, Yoko Ogawa reintroduces the new idea and concept of death. What we have seen from her earlier works about the idea of death is the natural death, of death that occurred due to physical disorder, killing of a person, sickness, fate, and so forth. However, what we have noticed in *The Memory Police* is the mysterious death. The gradual disappearance of people (that is, the idea of death) without a trace and evidence, like how things and objects disappear, are concurrent throughout the story. *The Memory Police* reintroduces dark romantic elements of death in an obscure and mysterious form. The entire story narrates the story about disappearance of objects, things and of course people, in a mysterious manner. Yoko Ogawa did not explicate how this happened or why it happened. She simply projects the harsh realities of life that comes with death.

The Memory Police invites us to look upon Yoko Ogawa's fresh take on the idea of death. Here, death as an inevitable force for every human and for the citizens living on the island, and the cause of death, are presented as a mysterious element. In *The Memory Police*, none of the characters really know how or why a person dies in the course of the novel. They simply disappeared not to return alive again. Yoko Ogawa shows this idea and conception of death and how it operates in the society. The living ones have to live on with the memories of the death, unable to fully comprehend the present. In this sense, the dark romantic elements of death that Yoko Ogawa hints to arrive at, is the implications that death does not literally put an end to a journey. Yoko Ogawa presents the dark romantic elements of death to show how its ideology eventually shapes its society. When the novel *The Memory Police* opens, we're told of how the narrator's mother and, of course, its citizens living on the island died without a trace. The narrator narrates how her mother was taken by the Memory Police and her mother's body returned after a week later, along with her death certificate which states a heart attack as the cause of the death. The mystery of the novel lies in the fact that no one seemed to know why people die or disappear. Yoko Ogawa simply shows how the ideology of death

operates in the society and the effects it has on the people. When R asked the narrator in *The Memory Police*, “If their photographs are gone, how will you remember your parents’ faces?” She replied, “It’s their photographs that will disappear, not my mother and father...I’ll never forget their faces” (Ogawa 94). Through this, Yoko Ogawa shows the abstract kind of relation the dead shares with the living and vice versa.

The narrator speaks of the frequent deaths in the family in *The Memory Police*, “My mother died, and then my father died, and since then I have lived all alone in this house. Two years ago a nurse who took care of me when I was small dies as well, of a heart attack” (Ogawa 8). The fictional space of Yoko Ogawa is an excruciating space for the living as well. The deaths as aforementioned are never forgotten but are kept alive in other ways. And the idea that the living ones have to fill in the gaps of the death, makes it even more complicated for the living. The fact the idea of death is labelled as a disappearance, just as things and objects that disappeared without a trace, is to show how this ideology of death never seemed to be resolved for the living.

The mysterious element of death, that disappearance without a trace, as studied in *The Memory Police* is once again echoed in *Dormitory*. It is very hard to imagine, as the narrator in *Dormitory* explained, “that a human being with a brain, a heart, with arms and legs and the power of speech could have simply vanished like that” (Ogawa 139). This frequent disappearance of things and objects and of course, the people in *The Memory Police* and *Dormitory*, shows the mysterious elements which are quintessentially the core elements of dark romanticism. In *Dormitory*, just as the citizens disappear from the island in *The Memory Police*, students residing at the dormitory continue to disappear constantly, as the Manager explains:

In February, one of the students suddenly disappeared. 'Disappeared' is the only way to describe it-it was as if he dissolved into the thin air without so much as a whimper... He was a freshman, studying mathematics. A brilliant student who had received a prestigious scholarship. (Ogawa 139)

Yoko Ogawa could have used death instead of disappearance as both of these connote the idea of something that is lost or one that never returns. However, in order to give the mysterious effect that underlines any dark romantic literature, Yoko Ogawa is being very careful in her word selection and choices. The puissant effect it has on the readers through her word selection, transcends beyond the idea of human understanding. In *The Memory Police* and *Dormitory*, Yoko Ogawa gives a dramatic effect, of death as something supernatural and beyond the understanding of human power and knowledge.

Yoko Ogawa's short stories, such as, *The Man Who Sold Braces*, *Welcome to the Museum of Torture* and *Afternoon at the Bakery*, also project death in a very violent and mysterious way. Physical death and how it operates and eventually shapes its society (that is, the ideology of death) are shown with greater intensity in her shorter stories published in a collection, *Revenge*. Yoko Ogawa's short stories in *Revenge* continue to exert this strong influence. Death in *The Man Who Sold Braces* occurred as it is supposed to, in a mysterious way. As we can see from the words of our narrator, "I got a call from the police telling me my uncle had died and I should come to claim" (Ogawa 98). This is followed by the concept of death as that which became as normal as part of their narrative, "the funeral was over very quickly. Only a few people had attended, and no one cried" (Ogawa 109). The ideology of death and how it shapes its society are shown in the words of the narrator: "the image of my uncle that remains clearest in memory for me is of his back as he is leaving our house" (Ogawa 107). Like the unnamed novelist from *The Memory Police*, who finds it difficult to comprehend her

present fully with the death of her near and loved ones, here, the unnamed narrator also finds it unable to move on with the living memory of the uncle.

Of all Yoko Ogawa's fictional works, *Hotel Iris* represents the dark romantic elements of death as the epitome of all. In this novel, the idea that death comes with pain and sufferings, are shown horrifically with physical illness and defects. In the novel, the narrator's family, comprises of five members, and out of which three died out of physical illness. Yoko Ogawa's portrayal of the dark romantic elements such as death in *Hotel Iris* is hauntingly a moving picture of dread and anxiety. The concept of death, which is the quintessential part of dark romanticism, is often followed by its operation in the society and how it eventually shape its society. By bringing in the idea of death in her fictional space, Yoko Ogawa shows that death in any form can be of excruciating as it brings physical and mental unrest, which is, again, a quintessential part of dark romanticism.

3.8. Impersonality and Characterisation in Dark Romanticism

Yoko Ogawa's refusal to give her character a name and identity is evident to show her obsession with the Dark Romantic elements. Most of her fictional characters remained anonymous and they are identified by their social profession they carried out in their life. Her refusal to give her fictional character an identity, shows her artistic vision fully ingrained by the dark romantic aspects of life. There is not a single story in Yoko Ogawa's fictional space where she granted her character a whole identity to the readers. As aforementioned, the impersonality of her fictional character invites us to look into artistic vision from dark romantic aspects. Diana Donath in her essay entitled, *Black Romanticism in Postmodern Japanese Literature- The Works of Ogawa Yoko* states:

Ogawa's protagonists usually remain nameless and are only referred to with their occupation or social position- 'the stenographer', 'the translator', 'the gardener', 'the

girl', etc... In Ogawa's works, leaving the characters thus impersonal and vague is meant to create a distance and an alienation of the reader, but sometimes it ends up leaving the reader uncertain and unsatisfied. (Donath 13)

It is true that leaving her fictional character impersonal and anonymous, undoubtedly creates a "distance" and "alienation" to the readers as Diana Donath has mentioned in her essay. However, it does not leave the reader "uncertain" and "unsatisfied" as Donath proposed (Donath 13). The fact that Yoko Ogawa leaves her fictional characters impersonal and are referred by their social profession and occupation is to invite the readers to look into their social position and delineate the callousness of their profession as well. The fact that the social profession becomes a part of their identity, calls for an interrogation and its functioning in the society. Leaving her characters impersonal, in this sense, gives the author that sense of freedom and liberty to interrogate her society, culture, ethos and beliefs. Unrestricted and accustomed to this dark romantic element, Yoko Ogawa projects the socio-cultural issues within the contemporary Japanese society. Except in one or two of her fictions, most of her fictional characters remained anonymous.

Yoko Ogawa as a dark romantic writer uses this anonymous device in her fictional characterisations to create the dark romantic aspects into her fictional art. It may be recalled that the protagonist in *The Memory Police* is identified in the course of the novel, but until chapter three, the unnamed narrator, who is also the protagonist of the novel, did not reveal herself to the readers by her social profession. She simply narrates the story of how things and objects disappeared from the island and how people gradually lost their memories with the disappearance of things and objects, thus, making it impersonal. In chapter three of the novel, the narrator describes her state and her social profession in the following manner: "I make my living now from my writing. So far I've published three novels" (Ogawa 15). The fact that the narrator is a novelist and decides to remain anonymous to the readers, is to look

into the callousness of her social profession. What makes a narrator, a novelist without an identity in *The Memory Police*?

The idea of impersonality in *The Memory Police* does not simply imply the idea of seclusion and alienation from the society, or within any shared spaces, which is the core of dark romanticism. It also calls for an interrogation of the social profession and the relation it has with its society. Leaving her fictional character impersonal or anonymous alone does not wholly capture the dark romantic elements underlying Ogawa's literary space. As the narrator explains, "here on the island, writing novels is one of the least impressive, most underappreciated occupations one can pursue," this shows the kind of society and the socio-political forces (Ogawa 15). The fact that the narrator is trying to protect her writings from the Memory Police, shows her deliberate attempts to find her true identity and her place in her society. This further implicates the idea of the complexity in identity-formation in dark romantic literature. It is this complexity and absurdity in identity-formation in Yoko Ogawa's fictional space, that has often categorised itself within the genre of the dark romanticism. Throughout the entire process of the story, Yoko Ogawa denied the unnamed novelist an identity of its own. As usual in her fictional space, the protagonist in *The Memory Police* is identified by her social profession, i.e, as the novelist, from the beginning until the end of the story.

When we look at some of Yoko Ogawa's short stories and novellas, we also see this element of character's impersonality all over her literary space. *Pregnancy Diary* is a short novella where Yoko Ogawa decided not to give her fictional characters a name or an identity. This impersonality of Yoko Ogawa's fictional characters emphasize their serious detachment and alienation from society. In *Pregnancy Diary*, except one character, that is, Dr. Nikaido, all the other three prominent characters remained nameless. The novella is written in a form of a diary and the narrator who records all events is identified by the first person "I" in the novel,

her sister as “my sister” and her brother-in-law as sometimes “he” and other times as “my brother-in-law” (Ogawa 57). Through this, Yoko Ogawa shows the complexity of identity formation in any dark romantic writing, be it through the shared spaces of home or any other shared space.

In Yoko Ogawa’s fictional space, it is this impersonality of character, in a way, which shaped the character’s mentality to transgress as a way to defy and look for an identity. An act of transgression, which is the core of dark romantic literature, prefigures as a prominent evident in Yoko Ogawa’s fictional space. *Pregnancy Diary* as discussed in chapter II, which is impotently about the shared spaces of struggle and gradual alienation from home, has also something to do with impersonality or the lack of an identity. The lack of an identity, in the course of the novella, in *The Pregnancy Diary* stems from such transgressive characters that go beyond the understanding of human behaviour. As discussed in the earlier chapter, the transgressive character of the narrator is tied up with this impersonality. The heinous act played out by the narrator towards her pregnant sister, by feeding her a grapefruit jam, consciously, knowing that this would eventually destroy her chromosome and her unborn baby, shows the dark romantic element within the shared space of home and also shows the complexity in identity-formation. In the words of our narrator:

After the incident, the manager gave me a big bag of grapefruits that he said he couldn’t sell...On the first page, there was a picture of an American grapefruit with a caption in bold print: “Beware of imported fruit! Antifungal PWH is highly carcinogenic and has been shown to destroy human chromosomes!” The caption came back to me now in the kitchen. (Ogawa 94, 95)

The unnamed narrator knew that this would eventually harm her pregnant sister and her unborn baby, but goes on to prepare them into a hot delicacy which her sister gobbles them

up immediately, not knowing that this would deteriorate her health and her unborn baby. The fatal destruction perpetrated towards the end of the story with the death of her sister's newly born child, is to put an end to all the chaos developed over time. The narrator's transgression is to search for an identity, for a proper home and of course, her belonging. Through this, Yoko Ogawa shows the dark romantic element that is omnipresent within shared spaces or arena, through lack of identity.

Dark romantic writers like, Yoko Ogawa, presents the darker aspects of human life even more profoundly by reducing her fictional characters to non-entities. Yoko Ogawa in her fictional space constantly raises the art of this identity formation in literary space and beyond. For her, identity or personality is not made or manufactured, but are shaped by the societal forces. The social profession that forms an integral part of her character's identity and the callousness of this social profession in the society, shows the failure of its system as such. Yoko Ogawa's presentation of the dark romantic aspects, such as, impersonality of characterisation, can also be seen in other fictional works like *The Housekeeper and the Professor* and *Dormitory*. Yoko Ogawa presents the very absurd ways of life in these two fictional spaces. The distance and alienation created by the dark romantic element of impersonality of characterisation consist of denying individual personality. In *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, the only character who is responsible for the development of plot and progress of the story, is identified by his social profession as "the professor" and the professor's housekeeper as "the housekeeper" (Ogawa 1, 7). Similarly, in *Dormitory*, none of the characters are identified by their names in the course of the story. Three of the main characters in the course of the novel are either identified by their social profession or by their relation they had with each other. For instance, the narrator is identified by the first person "I" as it is, the man who runs a boarding house is identified by his social profession as "the Manager" and the narrator's cousin as "my cousin" (Ogawa 109, 114, 119). Accustomed as

Yoko Ogawa is, in leaving her fictional characters impersonal, she knew exactly the functions of this impersonality in literary space concerning dark romanticism. Yoko Ogawa knew that the concealment of her character's personal identity can succeed in projecting the character's mental and psychological issues which is the core of dark romanticism. Impersonality, in this sense, functions to mark a new interpretation and indication of a dark romantic literature in the history of English literature.

3.9. Loss of Physical Senses and Deformity

Yoko Ogawa's preoccupation with the idea of dark romanticism has also something to do with the loss of physical senses and deformity of her characters. Gradual loss of the character's senses and the character's physical deformity in any shape and size forms an integral part of her narratives. In most cases, Yoko Ogawa talks about the loss of the character's memory and the gradual loss of physical senses that comes along with it. *The Memory Police* and *The Housekeeper and the Professor* extensively depict the loss of physical senses and the harsh reality of life that comes with losing senses, such as memory. Diana Donath describes Yoko Ogawa's fictional space as "disgusting and revolting, mean and cruel, bizarre and absurd." As Donath points out, Yoko Ogawa "repeatedly describes frailty, mutilation and physical handicaps like stuttering and limping, the loss of legs, arms, fingers, eye or tongue, the loss of the ability to hear, to see and to speak, or the loss of memory or of reason," which are closely associated with the elements of Dark Romanticism (Donath 14).

Dark Romanticism in Yoko Ogawa's fictional space does not just imply the brutality of the outside forces, or the socio-political forces. The term encompasses all that has to do with the harsh realities of life through physical challenges and deformities. For instance, the loss of physical senses or physical deformities, loss of memory or reasoning, which are an intrinsic

part of negativity and subordination further projects the darker aspects of human life. And as physical deformities in any shape and size imply subordination, it further projects the dominant power structure and hegemony existing within any shared space or arena. By introducing all of these elements, Yoko Ogawa reintroduces the dark romantic aspects of human life through physical deformities in her fictional space. *The Memory Police* and *The Housekeeper and the Professor* shall be taken to explore the dark romantic element pertaining to the loss of physical senses, such as memory. While *Dormitory*, *The Memory Police* and some of the selected short stories from *Revenge* shall be analysed to delineate the dark romantic elements pertaining to the character's physical deformities.

A. Memory

The projection of the loss of memory or the loss of physical senses has always been a prominent preoccupation in the writings of the contemporary Japanese writers. Kazuo Ishiguro, Haruki Murakami and Yoko Ogawa for instance. The projection of human ability or tendency to forget the lived and shared experiences, of past and its happenings, which further determines the loss of identity, prefigures eminently in the writings of these contemporary writers in Japan. In particular, Yoko Ogawa narrates the tyranny of memory and shows how it shapes an individual's ideology towards the possibilities of the character's mental and psychological instability. Memory has never been a faithful record of the past events for writers like Yoko Ogawa, as it presents the distorted and fragmented image which can never be fully comprehended. For Yoko Ogawa, memory is constructed and reconstructed over time. Moreover, as seen from her depictions, memory is not a reliable source for an individual to depend upon. Memory, in this sense, presents part of its image in a very fragmentated and distorted forms. Yoko Ogawa employs the functions of memory in her fictional space to show the darker aspects of human life in the form of physical challenges and disabilities. Let us look into some of these issues and aspects. In Mari Praz's *The*

Romantic Agony, Lord Byron views sensations in any form and says “The great object of life is sensation, to feel that we exist, even though in pain,” but this is something missing in Yoko Ogawa’s fictional characters (Praz 72).

In Yoko Ogawa’s fictional space, the loss of memory or the loss of physical senses, are presented as the loss of its conscious self, which is the core element of the dark romanticism. Not being able to recall events, things, objects, and of day-to-day activities as well as physical, mental and psychological disorder of the character’s are projected. Short-term memory and permanent loss of memory, are the two alternatives that are visible in Yoko Ogawa’s fictional narratives. The fact that Yoko Ogawa’s fictional characters experienced such physical challenges, is to present the harsh realities of life that comes with such challenges.

The Memory Police presents the lives of its citizen on the island who are losing their memory with the disappearance of objects and things. It further projects the difficulties of living under the tyranny of time and memory. As discussed earlier, things and objects are intricately linked with memories, so that when these disappeared, memories fade along with it. The unnamed narrator, who is a novelist by profession, narrates the condition of the people living on the island and recalls, “it’s all but impossible to recall the things we’ve lost on the island once they’re gone” (Ogawa 6). Here, Yoko Ogawa stresses on the permanent loss of memory in the lives of its citizens living on the island in *The Memory Police*. Permanent and short-term (loss of) memory are the two discernible types of memory loss in Yoko Ogawa’s fictions. In *The Memory Police*, Yoko Ogawa laid emphasis on the permanent loss of memory; for once the things and objects disappeared on the island, its citizen gradually forgets its values and connections it has with humans in general. The memories of things fade with the disappearances of things and objects, and the citizens never seemed to recall what is being lost on the island. In a conversation, the narrator recalls:

We talked about all sorts of things- but often we spoke of our memories. Of my mother and father, my old nurse, the observatory, sculptures, and the distant past when one could still take a boat to other places. But our memories were diminishing day by day, for when something disappeared from the island, all memory of it vanished, too. (Ogawa 18)

The permanent loss of memory with the disappearance of things and objects and of course, the people and its voices, are heightened here to show the intense gravity the loss of memory it can have on people. However, the mystery of the novel lies on the fact that Yoko Ogawa did not delineate how things and objects disappeared on the island, or how human gradually lose its memory or why the Memory Police investigate and interrogate those who could recall and remember. All of these functions mysteriously in the course of the story. The narration, too, happened as it is supposed to and nothing occurred all of a sudden. Yoko Ogawa's inductions of the mysterious elements are carried out normally, unshaken by the other forces that would eventually distort the dark romantic features.

The losing or fading of memory, functions as a mysterious element in the course of the novel. As aforementioned, Yoko Ogawa did not show how and why things and objects disappear, or how memory fades along with the disappearance of such things and objects, or how people disappeared along with the disappearances of all these. The elements of the dark romanticism in *The Memory Police* lies in the fact that Yoko Ogawa chose to tell the stories about the hardships, the sorrows, the difficulties and the pain of its citizen who had to forbear under the tyranny of time and memory. The narrator explains, "sometimes I try to remember...but I can't recall the objects" (Ogawa 62).

Loss of memory, either of permanent loss or of short-term memory, in Yoko Ogawa's fictional space constitutes the core experience of the disintegrated whole being. To the

narrator and the people living on the island, losing a memory, or of not being able to recall things, of objects that are lost, or its citizens not being able to recall any specific events that were once a part of their narrative, or the sound of the chirping birds and the sight of their flight, shows the disintegration of the social ordeal and the reconstruction of the new memory for the subsequent lives. This dividing line between the past and the present is infused by the idea of fear and terror. Even when its citizen realized what had disappeared, they seemed relieved as the working memory functions to suppressed the old ordeal and replace with the new:

Even when the new job was less paid, they seemed to have no regrets about losing the old one... People- and I'm no exception- seem capable of forgetting almost anything, much as if our island were unable to float in anything but an expanse of totally empty sea. (Ogawa 10)

The working of this new memory functions as a captive to the present self as the character's conscious self is nothing more than a traumatic ordeal. In *The Memory Police*, Yoko Ogawa stresses this permanent loss of memory on the life of its citizens on the island and shows how it subsequently shaped the ideology of people. And as memory represents the temporal and an unreliable mechanisms, she shows the dark romantic elements of memory as one that is also fully accountable for the dark side of human life.

The unconscious urge to repeat the same questions and the unconscious compulsion to repeat the same task that comprises short-term memory, is very vocal in *The Housekeeper and the Professor*. Loss of memory, either of permanent loss of memory or short-term memory, constitutes a core element of dark romanticism in Yoko Ogawa's fictional space. By accommodating her fictional characters within the traumatic dimensions of the dark romanticism, Yoko Ogawa relies upon the use of memory to create a new form of dark

romanticism that comes with physical challenges. In *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, Yoko Ogawa implies the use of short-term memory to bring out the loss of human experience, the lack of human relationships and the traumatic social order through the character of the Professor. It is only through a painful and physical disorder that brings out the complexities of human life and the understanding of the dividing line between the normal and the suppressed. In this novel, Yoko Ogawa shows the function of memory as a deceptive mechanism of social and psychological disorder.

The novel follows the tale of the Professor and the Housekeeper who tussles daily to keep up with the life in order. The Professor is presented as someone whose “memory lasts precisely eighty minutes- no more and no less” (Ogawa 6). One can imagine the dark romantic element Yoko Ogawa employed in the lives of the Professor, whose memory is bounded by time and sometimes through numbers. The distorted reality of the Professor’s life was even made clear before the Housekeeper’s entry into her business as a housekeeper by the agency:

If you meet him today, he wouldn’t remember you tomorrow...He can remember a theorem he developed thirty years ago, but he has no idea what he ate for dinner last night. In the simplest terms, it’s as if he has a single, eighty-minute videotape inside his head. (Ogawa 5)

The Professor’s sister-in-law also warned the Housekeeper of the Professor’s mental state and asked her to help him lead a normal life. Both of these characters are unnamed and are identified by their social profession as it is. The Housekeeper is a widow who comes daily to the Professor’s apartment as a housekeeper to cook, wash and look after his apartment during his absence. Yoko Ogawa not only projects the harsh realities of the Professor’s life, but also each individual who counterparts with the Professor in all walk of life. As the Professor’s sister-in-law said to the housekeeper that the job was not complicated, but the fact that they

all need to adopt to the pace and life of the Professor, whose memory lasted only for a few minutes, shows the complexities and the harsh realities of life that comes with the deformation of memory. As the narrator recalls, “circumstances changes from day to day, and the people who are subjected to them change as well” (Ogawa 151).

The Professor has a habit of taking notes such as in the form of a person’s birth date, or perhaps height and weight, etc., to relate the relation he has with the person in accordance to his own understanding. The reconstruction or reworking of this memory is, however, not always clear or well construed. This reconstruction or reworking of this memory is understood in terms of self-deception or misremembering as it signals the collapse of the sense of the past and the present. The Housekeeper recalls how the Professor’s memory and ways of remembering function as to deceive the social order of the social reality. She notes, “the note clipped to his sleeve simply informed him that it was not our first meeting, but it could not bring back the memory of the time we had spent together” (Ogawa 22). Moreover, she also notes:

To the professor, whose memory lasted only eighty minutes, I was always a new housekeeper he was meeting for the first time, and so every morning he was appropriately shy and reserved. He would ask my shoe size or telephone number, or perhaps my zip code. (Ogawa 7)

To the Professor, the Housekeeper is always a new person and they’re introduced to each other on a daily basis. It is not just the callousness of the household chores the Housekeeper had to focus upon being placed at the Professor’s house. However, as she had mentioned, the work also demands the mental process in order to keep track with the Professor’s mental state. How and what it feels to be around anyone who keeps no record of the past events are depicted in a very dreadful manner. Yoko Ogawa deals with the idea of memory and she

shows how memory has never been a faithful record of any past events and presents it in the form the dark romantic point of view. The following lines spoken by the Housekeeper reflects the argument of Yoko Ogawa's depictions of the dark romantic element on the loss of memory:

When I reached home, the professor no longer knew who I was. I checked my watch-it had been an hour and ten minutes since I'd left. The Professor's eighty-minute timer had never failed before. His head has always been more accurate than any clock. I took off my watch and held it up to my ear. (Ogawa 136)

B. Physical Challenges and Deformities

Yoko Ogawa's fascination with the dark romantic elements is further made explicit by introducing her characters with physical deformities and physical challenges. Yoko Ogawa's characters experienced all sorts of physical impairments and deformities in the form of characters losing arms, legs, voices, memories, etc. The physical, mental and psychological challenges that comes with such physical impairments show Yoko Ogawa's preoccupation with the dark side of human life. By portraying the lives of the physically challenged people, Yoko Ogawa hopes to give a better understanding and interpretation of the physically challenged people that are often sidelined within the societal domain. Ogawa's exploration is to further present the difficulties in identity formation for this section of people and presents the dark side of human life that forced them to alienate from their society. By presenting these issues, Yoko Ogawa also critiqued the societal forces, such as the stigmatisation that comes with it.

Yoko Ogawa's portrayal of her deformed characters and deformed identity within the societal set up also parallels the Disability Studies, in that both of these functions to depict the lives of those who suffers subordination and detachment from the society. However, what

distinguishes Yoko Ogawa from this particular study is the supernatural element that sometimes creeps in along its depiction. As discussed in the preceding section on the loss of senses (memory) in *The Memory Police*, the novel is not just confined to the loss of physical sensation, Yoko Ogawa also projects the loss of physical abilities and the difficulties that form the larger part of dark romanticism. The dark romantic elements Yoko Ogawa highlights in this novel has to do with physical challenges and the impacts it can have on their life.

In *The Memory Police*, we know that an unnamed narrator is a novelist by profession. The stories she delineated within the novel itself parallels the main plot in that both of these functions as a way of preserving identity from the outside forces, such as, the Memory Police. The unnamed narrator who is to a certain degree, subjected to the brutality of the political forces imposed by the Memory Police, takes notes and she further incorporates them into her writings. The stories she scribbled are about people losing their physical ability, such as, characters losing legs or arms, people suffering from various contagious diseases and to losing voices, too. This correspond the brutality of the Memory Police, which imposed certain policy upon its citizen and detain those who could recall or remember. The loss of physical senses (memory) with the gradual disappearance of things and objects on the island that occurred in the main plot, correspond to the stories she delineated into her stories. The characters depicted from within the story itself shows the fear and the losing of physical senses as well. Art is a reflection of life and the art of writing becomes a source of documenting these political forces imposed on its citizens on the island. In all these portraitures, Yoko Ogawa depicts the idea of dark romanticism that comes with the physical changes along with the dark social and political scenarios.

Yoko Ogawa's unnamed narrator wrote about people who lost their physical body parts and losing their voices. She also wrote stories about a woman who lost her right leg in an

accident. In another story, she wrote about a young woman nursing her younger brother who is suffering from a disease that is destroying his chromosomes. However, the most elaborated one consisting of certain length, is a novel she wrote about a typist who lost her voice and who communicates her thoughts and feelings by using a typewriter. The pressure and the difficulties that comes with losing voices is made explicit in the novel when the typewriter comes to realize that losing her voice is also not only about coming to an end of all the good times, but gradually losing her character and identity as well. She recalls, “When you lost your voice, you lost the ability to make sense of yourself” (Ogawa 132). Yoko Ogawa presents the physical deformity of losing voices in a very cruel and bizarre manner. In order for her to communicate with others is supported by a typewriter machine. And once this typewriter (machine) lost its value or connection, she would no longer be able to communicate with the human world. Again, in the course of the novel, the novelist placed her character in a very discomfoting and disturbing state when the typewriter machine gradually lost its purpose in the course of the novel. As we can see: “your voice is trapped inside this machine. It’s not broken, it’s just been sealed off now that it is no longer has a purpose” (Ogawa 130). One can imagine the horror Yoko Ogawa employed here in presenting her characters to such a situation.

As discussed earlier, the novel, *Dormitory* is about the horrific setting, invoking that sense of fear and trepidation throughout the course of the story. However, more than this, the novel also depicts the life of those who have to go on with the struggles that comes with physical challenges and difficulties. In this shorter work, Yoko Ogawa projects the hardships and the inequalities of life through physical and mental challenges. In *Dormitory*, Yoko Ogawa shows how a person with physical challenges affects the social and mental stability as well. Her obsession with physical deformities, the physical challenges and the hardships of life that comes with these issues, are projected in very sensible manners that are true to life and

society. In *Dormitory*, Yoko Ogawa projects the unnamed Manager as “missing one leg and both arms” (Ogawa 124). Her persistent obsession with the dark romantic elements are personified through the projection of the unnamed Manager and his deformities.

Yoko Ogawa did not explain how the conditions of the Manager deteriorated. When the novel first opens, the Manager is projected as weak and deformed in his physical structure. The unnamed narrator would often visit and would imagine how the Manager would look if he were as normal as any of them: “I found myself imagining ten strong fingers extending from board, fleshy palms, fingers that would have been as graceful and precise as his toes” (Ogawa 131). Yoko Ogawa’s fascination of the dark romanticism is visible through her projection of her characters who encountered the harsh realities of life. The fact that the narrator would always imagine herself about how the Manager would have been or how would he look like if he were shaped as normal people, shows the notion of subversion and stigma that is often associated with the differently abled person. Although this notion of subversion and stigmatisation seemed to have been fading in today’s contemporary culture, however, Yoko Ogawa shows that this deviance is not defiant yet.

The pathetic living condition of an unnamed Manager coupled by his physical challenges, shows the absurd realities of life that are often projected in any dark romantic literature. The lines spoken by the narrator such as, “he had a prosthetic leg,” and “as he twisted his shoulder in the direction of the couch and told us to sit down, they flapped loosely against his body” shows the inequalities of life and darker aspects in the lives of the Manager (Ogawa 128). Every day is a day of physical and mental struggle for a person like the Manager and there seemed no escape. As a dark romantic writer, Yoko Ogawa did not grant her characters to outgrow the indifferences and see the possibilities of live in a wider perspective. It is for this same reason that Yoko Ogawa has often been identified as a dark romantic writer, as she continuously shows the sombre attitude towards life and society.

Although the narrator was very conscious of the deteriorating nature of the Manager's health, she could do nothing:

His ribs were slowly caving in on this body...I became unbearably sad when I imagined the moment his ribs would finally pierce his heart, or the weight of his artificial leg as it was removed from his cold body, or the deep silence in the dormitory when I was left alone. (Ogawa 156)

A very negative awareness of life at the shared spaces of home or any other shared arena also occurs in *Dormitory*. All of these Yoko Ogawa's fictional characters, particularly, the protagonist Aya in *The Diving Pool*, the unnamed narrator in *The Pregnancy Diary* and the Manager in *Dormitory* bear a strong remembrance of the darker aspects of human life. In *Dormitory*, the deteriorating sense of the physical self, which are an intrinsic part of human life are reflected in a very negative prospect in the life of the Manager. The lines spoken by the Manager, such as, "but the X-ray showed that my ribs are bent out of shape, like tree branches that have been hit by lightening," "my heart...it looked as if they were about to pierce right through it," "no operation can bring back my arms and legs," and "my ribs will continue to contract," shows the depleting nature of human life (Ogawa 150, 151). It further projects the idea of death as a carefree entrance, which are quintessentially a dark romantic element. Through this, Yoko Ogawa projects the idea of death that comes with cost. Death is projected as an end to his physical disabilities, however, at a cost of the pain and afflictions he has endured all these years.

3.10. Human versus Human in Dark Romantic Plot

The human tendency to harm or betray its fellow beings, either consciously or unconsciously, has always been a dominant feature in Dark Romantic plots. Humans, in general have done more harm and damage to its own fellow beings more than any other forces, and dark

romanticism shows how this has affected human's relation at all levels. Yoko Ogawa's fictional space is the space of that broken relationship between fellow human beings. Yoko Ogawa shows the detrimental effects men can do to another man when exposed to this dark side of human life. Her fictional character shows the tendency to destroy or betray another, as an act against the impairment and against the societal forces placed upon them. *The Diving Pool* and *The Pregnancy Diary*, exhibits that dangerous forces human carries within and further projects the impact it can have on another. Moreover, the human tendency to harm its companions, near or far ones, within any shared space and arena are depicted to show the underlying dark romantic elements.

The Diving Pool is a short novella that depicts the cruelty of human bonding within the shared arena of home. The protagonist Aya, who is a narrator of the story, is depicted as the representative of the dark romantic feature that exhibits the dark side of human life. In this novel, Yoko Ogawa shows the cruelty of human bonding between the two siblings, Rie and Aya. The toxicity in human relationships that is shared within any space, the cruelty of human bonding and a human tendency to transgress beyond the societal norms and expectations, are depicted to present the dark side of human life. In this novel, both Aya and Rie are depicted as the victims of their society. Rie, the innocent one is the victim of Aya, and Aya is the victim of the societal set-up.

The fact that Aya can never accept her biological parents nor her foster siblings as her own, results in the gradual seclusion and alienation from her own community. In bullying a defenseless Rie and by offering her a rotten cream puff which almost put Rie's life to death, Yoko Ogawa shows the unspoken attitudes that is present within and inside any human life. That particular night, Rie was diagnosed with a fever and diarrhea and was taken to the hospital. The interior monologue spoken by Aya herself during the course of Rie's defenselessness shows how Yoko Ogawa is fascinated with the idea of dark romanticism that

is present within oneself. For Aya, “there is something almost erotic about their defenselessness, and yet they seem fresh and vivid, like separate living creatures” (Ogawa 25). Rie’s terrified tears were particularly satisfying for Aya, like hands caressing her “in exactly the right places-not vague, imaginary hands but his hands” (Ogawa 28). In other words:

Her sobs were violent, seemingly about to rupture something inside her, and they were satisfying my cruel urge. I wanted her to cry even harder, and everything seemed perfectly arranged: no one would come and pick her up, I would be able to listen to my heart’s content. (Ogawa 26)

Through this, Yoko Ogawa further projects the negativity which forms an intrinsic part of every human relationship. Aya is the victim of her society and her frustration poured against Rie in bullying her which almost put her life to death, is the result of the societal set-up and norms. The seclusion and alienation she harnessed within the shared arena of home is directed towards her transgressive behaviour and character. The human transgression that is often depicted in dark romantic literature and which, of course, entails the core of dark romanticism, is presented through the lives of the protagonist Aya and her transgressive character. Her transformative character developed over time and, as shown in bullying a defenceless Rie, she asserts her individual freedom and inner peace. Yoko Ogawa’s fictional character, like Aya, shows the tendency towards negativity and pessimistic attitudes towards the society and its set-up. The very awareness of life, which comprises of flaws, corruption, imperfection, pain, sufferings, etc. forms an integral part of Yoko Ogawa’s fictional narratives. Yoko Ogawa’s characters are so much imbued with the idea of fate that her characters exhibit that willingness to sacrifice peace and happiness with the fatal ideas of pain, suffering and destruction all together. It is only by causing their companions and their

fellow humans to fatal destructions, do they find ways of emerging into new self with a new identity. This further explicates the idea that is discussed in detail in the following chapter.

There are multiple issues that can be explicated in Yoko Ogawa's fictional space concerning the dark romantic element of human going against human. In *The Pregnancy Diary*, Yoko Ogawa further depicts the cruelty of human bonding between the two biological sisters; one who is already married and the other who lives with her pregnant sister and her brother-in-law. All the main characters in *The Pregnancy Diary* are unnamed and are referred to as "my sister" and "my brother-in-law" from the narrator's point of view (Ogawa 57, 67). The narrator lives with her sister and her brother-in-law and she works in one of the stores in their locality. In this novel, the idea of pleasure and pain are put together to connote what dark romanticism stands for, one that recalls the dark romantic elements in *Hotel Iris*. The idea of viewing pain and suffering as an integral part of pleasure and desire in dark romanticism, are achieved with certain novelty and in *The Pregnancy Diary*. Yoko Ogawa shows the objective as well as the subjective notions of dark romanticism.

In the course of the story, the store Manager gave the narrator a big bag of grapefruits which he could not sell. The narrator knew that the grapefruits would put her pregnant sister and her baby to greater danger as the caption of the grapefruit package written in a bold print reads: "Beware of imported fruit! Antifungal PWH is highly carcinogenic and has been shown to destroy human chromosomes!" (Ogawa 95). However, as she went home she goes on to prepare them into hot delicacies which her pregnant sister gobbles them up with great delight. What is even more disastrous is the awaited fate of her pregnant sister's fate and her baby: "I wondered whether PWH would really destroy her chromosomes" (Ogawa 96). There is nothing more villainous than the heinous act played out by the narrator in *The Pregnancy Diary*. The story ends in a very tragic way with the death of the newly born child. The narrator went out to see what she hoped and expected at in the end of the story: "I could see

the corridor leading away into the darkness. I set off toward the nursery to meet my sister's ruined child" (Ogawa 105).

Yoko Ogawa is one of those writers who observes the intimate connection between cruelty and desire and one who observes a neat demarcation between subjective and objective reality. The thought process, which is the subjective element are objectified into reality, which is a quintessential theme for dark romanticism. For objective reality depends on subjective element, Yoko Ogawa's take on the idea of dark romanticism works in the most subtle manner in that both of these elements work to embrace the fatal destruction. The painful functioning of the social order, the disregard of the normal life, the existential and moral crisis, are echoed in Yoko Ogawa's fictional narratives.

Conclusion

Dark Romanticism as a genre is not a new taste in literature. It has grown and evolved since the seventeenth-eighteen century, however it continues to thrive and evolve over the years as the depiction of any socio-political and cultural evils expose any dark side of human life. The elements of the Dark Romanticism in Yoko Ogawa's fictional space is not just confined to the above discussion and delineation. Ogawa's fascination and experiment with the dark romantic aspects in the literary space, is much more than the discussed issues. There are multiple ways and approaches in which the elements underlying the idea of dark romanticism can be applied into her fictional art. Other quintessential dark romantic elements, such as, the idea of love that becomes lust, human trapped in an attic or in a congested space, the resignation to life that comes after the suicidal thoughts, etc. can also be further delineated from Yoko Ogawa's fictional works. Moreover, the author's influences on reading Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* can also be extricated from Yoko Ogawa's fictional art, as it bears strong influences in depicting the dark romantic aspects of life. The depictions of the

dark romantic elements strongly shows the author's brought up and the kind of environment she was raised in. The contemporary Japanese society appears safe in all aspects, however, the dark romantic aspects that always ceased to exist within any shared arena and spaces are heightened to bring out the mental, emotional and psychological issues that entails it. Depression, an easy resignation to life, and a tendency to give up life, which are very common aspects in contemporary society, and particularly common in Japanese society, are projected within the elements of dark romanticism as discussed. Certainly, the issues depicted in chapter II concerning the shared spaces of struggle and alienation are also the derivation and the perceptions of the dark romanticism. The chapters in this dissertation are intricately linked to one another and each chapter is either a continuation of the previous one or an introduction to the following chapter. In chapter IV, we shall look into the idea of the emerging new self after transgression from the societal norms and duties.

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Chapter IV: Transgressive Female Self and the Emerging New Woman in the Fictional Art of Yoko Ogawa.

4.0. Introduction

The continual fight for equal human rights and freedom has been a much discussed and debated issue in contemporary writings. However, it never seemed to conclude with a concrete solution. Women are being oppressed and suppressed in multiple ways. Women are also being denied space in various walks of life. The socio-political and cultural issue concerning women has often been sidelined and women are the ones who suffer the most when it comes to inequality and injustice. However, with the emergence of the literary space, women are able to bring these issues to the forefront and express the social injustices in a more elaborate and proper manner, whether they are being heard or not. In that, literary space becomes a space of expressing the differences and negotiating the debates especially for women, when the socio-political orders function to undermine the arising issues. Throughout the history, there is nothing more revolutionary than a literary space in projecting the indifferences and its fight for recognition, be it social, political, cultural or religious issues. Literary scholarship is keen to recognise and validate that lived and shared experiences through its projection and portrayal.

With the coming of the literary space and of the rising consciousness of the social reality, women in particular, no longer choose to remain silent in their walks of life. The fights for women's rights and recognition in different spheres of life continue to thrive and evolve even more profoundly in the contemporary ways of living and in its literary depiction. And although the contemporary Japanese society appeared safe, there are certain issue that needs to be readdressed concerning women in social, political or cultural aspects. Yoko Ogawa is one among the contemporaries who is vocal in depicting women's issues and concerns. In

fact, the contemporary women writers, like, Yoko Ogawa, expressed their anger and frustration even more profoundly than the writers of the earlier period. In this chapter, the position of women in contemporary Japanese society in Yoko Ogawa's fictional art, and look at the author's approach to life and literature.

Yoko Ogawa is one of the other contemporaries who project the socio-political and cultural issues concerning women in her fictional art. Ogawa shows the position of women in her society and shows how women are often relegated and neglected under the dominant forces of male-centric set-up. Although, Yoko Ogawa has never identified herself as a feminist or a feminist writer, however, her literary space is a space of concern for women's issues and its subordination faced within the male-centric world. The concern she has for women shows not just her rising consciousness about the women's position in her society, but also shows her influences and her brought up. The concern that women should not be confined within the dominant forces of patriarchy, which is often depicted in almost all her fictional art, shows her knowledge and understanding of her culture and society. The concern that women should have their own space and identity in all walks of life, as portrayed in her fictional space, shows the need of the Japanese society, especially women to come out of their comfort zone and find place in society. In depicting the socio-political and cultural issues which are often inflicted upon women, Yoko Ogawa hopes that this will, in turn, lead to the rising consciousness among people and pave way for the contemporaries to speak out the injustices played out against women.

This chapter is divided into three sections and each section is devoted to the study of Yoko Ogawa's women characters, their position in the society and the struggles in a patriarchal set-up before finally arriving to conclude with the chapter's main concern and idea, that is, Yoko Ogawa as a feminist writer.

4.1. Understanding the Position of Women in Yoko Ogawa's Fictional Art.

The positions of women in Yoko Ogawa's fictional space comprises of women being relegated within the dominant structure of patriarchy, sexual oppression and its subordination. Patriarchy forms an integral part of women's issues and its subordination as seen in Yoko Ogawa's portrayal of women. The positions of women in Yoko Ogawa's fictional art are not always safe, thereby resulting to seclusion and alienation as discussed in chapter II. In other words, Yoko Ogawa's women character experienced all sorts of physical, mental, emotional and psychological impairments brought by the societal norms and expectations. Before Yoko Ogawa's women attained that sense of freedom from the societal forces, they are put to numerous tests and trials. Yoko Ogawa trained her women characters in such a way that they are grounded only to emerge stronger and tougher. In the course of the trail phase, most of the Yoko Ogawa's women characters seemed to be weak and unable to bear the consequences brought by the societal forces; however, they are altogether not hopeless. They gradually emerge as a strong independent woman and see life from the greater perspectives rather than being defined by the outside forces. In this section, we shall we look at the position of women from some the selected fictions of Yoko Ogawa and delineate the cultural toxicity present within its discourse.

A. Patriarchy

The ideology that women are supposed to be confined within the four walls of home and within the dominion of men is very vocal in Yoko Ogawa's fictional space. The physical and mental oppression that comes with the patriarchal set-up can be studied in Yoko Ogawa's *The Housekeeper and the Professor* and *Hotel Iris*. Yoko Ogawa portrays the position of women, particularly the middle-class women of her society in *The Housekeeper and the Professor* and shows how difficult it is for any middle-class woman to find an accurate place under the

patriarchal force. In *Hotel Iris*, Yoko Ogawa shows the gender toxicity that is present within the patriarchal society and shows how women are victimized. The position of women under the patriarchal set-up in the select works will be analysed, as well the ideas that Yoko Ogawa is trying to present through her fictional art.

In *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, Yoko Ogawa exposes the hardship of a middle-class woman to survive under the patriarchal society. In this novel, Ogawa particularly shows the difficulties of a single mother, a widow, who is without a husband and a father figure, left abandoned to find her place for herself in the society. In the course of the journey, life has not been very fair for the widow and her ten-year-old son, as society looks upon them as they are—a widow and a middle-class family. Since she is a widow and she belongs to a middle-class family, she has no voice at all and even if she does, she has little or no hope that she would be considered as appropriate by her society. In the novel, it is the widow who suffered, sacrificed and blamed for what she is not, but also because of her social profession and position. In bringing this middle-class woman, Yoko Ogawa criticizes the contemporary lifestyle and shows how women have often been defined by the patriarchal set-up. In depicting the life and position of a single mother in *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, Yoko Ogawa exposes the evils and the social stigma that looms over the contemporary Japanese society. According to Yoko Ogawa, to fit in within the patriarchal structure comes with an individual's willing decision to suffer and forebear the weight of the society.

Moreover, the position of women in *The Housekeeper and the Professor* shows the societal conceived notion that relegates women within the dominion structure of home and comfort. In the novel, the widow works with the Akebono Housekeeping Agency where they assigned the housekeepers for works if any vacancy or need arises. As she tells us, she is “the youngest woman registered with the agency,” although she already had more than ten years of experience (Ogawa 4). In the course of the story, the widow, with the help of the Akebono

Housekeeping Agency finds her appointment as the housekeeper in one of the professor's place who was said to have some memory issues. The rules, the norms and the expectations are set for her even before she joins the work. As a housekeeper, she is expected to perform certain duties laid out by the professor's sister-in-law:

You will be taking care of my brother-in-law...The Job isn't complicated. You would come and Monday through Friday at 11:00 A.M., fix lunch, clean the house, do the shopping, make dinner, and leave at 7:00 P.M. That's the extent of it. (Ogawa 4)

Generally, women has often been identified with the household chores and to serve the male counterparts. Women over the century has been struggling to come out of this shell and Yoko Ogawa's fictional space shows the remnants that is still existing in today's contemporary Japanese society. The women issues never seemed to heal and fade with time. By exposing the contemporary ways of living and the position of women in the contemporary society, Yoko Ogawa also exposes the corruption of the older generation and how it continues to exert its puissant influence in the contemporary society. The plight of the widow in *The Housekeeper and the Professor* is the plight of many Japanese women and particularly middle-class women in the contemporary society. In *The Housekeeper and the Professor* Yoko Ogawa portrays not just the physical unrest of the social profession of her women character in the story. She also shows how it eventually affects the emotional, psychological and mental state of a person when exposed to this toxic patriarchal set-up. The position of women, particularly, the widow in the novel is such that the whole of herself and beyond is demanded of her as we can discern from her utterance:

The work wasn't physically demanding, and yet at the end of each day my muscles were stiff and my whole body felt heavy. It was always a struggle at each new

assignment until I adapted to the rhythm of the work, but the adjustment was especially difficult with the professor. (Ogawa 10)

The position of women in *The Housekeeper and the Professor* is a state of mental and physical unrest. And although, the professor was said to have a short-term memory issue and he can never recall what exactly happened an hour back, the fact that he knows why the housekeeper is there for and also knows what she was assigned for, shows how women are perceived or looked upon in the society. The fact that he was also the product of such system can be seen from the line spoken by the housekeeper about his character. In the words of the narrator: “He was quiet and cultured young man, but he lacked the decency to take responsibility for what had happened” (Ogawa 32). This shows the kind of influences and normalising questionable behaviour. It also shows signs of predecessors’ influences and its preconceived notion about women of how they are expected to serve male counterparts. The Housekeeper in the course of the story longs for her stability and security in her life, but nothing of this sort were granted to her by her society. As we can see from her words, “The client’s needs change constantly, and you almost never find a truly ideal fit between housekeeper and household. What’s more, the longer you stay in the same job, the greater the potential for conflict” (Ogawa 107).

In this novel, Yoko Ogawa stresses the difficulties of a middle-class woman, like the housekeeper, to find a true place in contemporary society. The kind of treatment they receive from their society is an unjustifiable attack against the social order. The Housekeeper in the course of the story was accused for what she did not do by the Professor’s sister-in-law. She was accused of having spent the night with the Professor. While in reality, being assigned to look after the Professor, the Housekeeper out of concern for the Professor’s well-being decided not to go back home as the Professor was not well and he needed some attention. What the Housekeeper did was completely out of concern and love for the Professor but what

she eventually got at the end of the day was accusation and blame only. In the course of the story, she was fired by the Professor's sister-in-law for breaking the rules set for her by her society. The narrator recalls:

To them, I was just one more housekeeper in a long line, not someone to be remembered after I was gone. I usually forgot them, too, as soon as I was out of door. And by the next day, I was too busy learning the rules and expectations for my new job to have time to feel sentimental. (Ogawa 107)

The position of women in *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, recalls the time when women were completely shunned from participating in any outside activities and events as they were made to work within the confinement of the four walls. It also recalls the time when women were denied of any freedom as they were been controlled by the patriarchal society. In Yoko Ogawa's fictional space, what patriarchy stands for and how patriarchy actually wronged women, are shown through the life of the Housekeeper. As we have seen, in the course of the story, she was blamed and fired for what she was not, but because she is a middle-class woman and because her social profession allows them to do so.

The positions of women in Yoko Ogawa's fictional works are demeaning as patriarchal set-up takes control of everything. The complicacies of the women's position in such societies are further depicted in *Hotel Iris*, which shows the life of a young woman denied of basic education, individual freedom and her own space. Here in this novel, Yoko Ogawa depicts the patriarchal society which affects all aspects of life. The protagonist Mari, a young teenager is projected as the victim of patriarchal society and as the representative of all young women who were denied basic education in the name of gender roles and norms. The typical gender roles as seen in *The Housekeeper and the Professor* are further carried out in *Hotel Iris* with great professionalism to expose the gender toxicity and societal norms.

The position of women in *Hotel Iris* experienced that sort of physical and mental complications as visible in *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, however the emphasis will deal with the denial of basic education and individual space for personal growth and development. The patriarchal mindset that women's education may not be very necessary for the progress of their society and that women should work towards the progression of her society by working within the so-called comfort of home are echoed in *Hotel Iris*. In this novel, Yoko Ogawa shows the hypocritical nature of her society who expects women to render more than what they receive from their society. In *Hotel Iris*, Yoko Ogawa reflects these complexities through the life of a young protagonist Mari who underwent a series of test from her society. From the confinement of her home to her journey towards attaining her individual space and freedom, Mari continuously faced resistance under the patriarchal system.

In *Hotel Iris*, young girls like Mari who are so capable of doing much more than what the patriarchal society can offer, are settled even before they decide who and what they wanted to be when they grow up. And for Mari, a young teenage girl, her dreams are narrowed down to spending "at the front desk" (Ogawa 18). Having to spend each day within home and working tirelessly is more a female's job than to look for other alternatives that would place them in a better position. Mari's mother is truly a perfect embodiment of the influences of the patriarchal system. In the course of the novel, we hear the young Mari speaking of how her mother made her quit school to help out at the hotel after her grandfather died:

My days begins in the kitchen, getting ready for breakfast. I wash fruits, cut up ham and cheese, and arrange tubs of yogurt in a bowl of ice. As soon as I hear the guests coming down, I grind the coffee beans and warm the bread. Then, at checkout time, I total the bills. (Ogawa 17)

Through this, Yoko Ogawa shows how women of the older generation were also influenced heavily by the patriarchal system which ingrained them into believing these societal constructs. Mari's mother is a portraiture of the older generation women who were taught into believing that women were supposed to be the guardian of home and that education may not be necessary for women. In that, patriarchal system in Yoko Ogawa's fictional space shows how it has not only affected the women folks, but also affected the ways in which women treat their own sex. In the course of the history and even in literary depiction, women have betrayed their own daughters, sisters, mothers and so forth. Yoko Ogawa is aware of how patriarchy did harm to women in all spheres of life. The relationship between Mari and her mother shows how women have also played crucial role in contributing to the women's problematic issues and causes.

The hostility developed over time between Mari and her mother in the course of the story, is also intended to show how dangerous a woman can also be when exposed to such system. In the novel, Mari's mother being the representative of the older generation women who was tricked and ingrained by the patriarchal set-up, wanted her daughter Mari to follow the way she was raised and nurtured. As long as Mari planned to go according to the way her society, and particularly her mother, had planned for her, she will fit into her society and find her way which is acceptable. However, once Mari decides to break this preconceived notion about women set by her society, she will no longer be able to fit into this system as women are supposed to accept whatever is offered to them. Mari recalls of how the usual punishment meted out to her was to be sent to bed without any dinner. She realises that individual freedom comes with an individual's willingness to suffer and withstand the pain in this patriarchal system.

B. Oppression and Suppression of Women

Yoko Ogawa's fictional world is also one of oppression and suppression of women. Ogawa exposes the kind of repression women faced in contemporary Japanese society. She particularly shows the sexual harassment faced by women and the suppression of feeling and emotion that are antagonistic towards the social and political forces. Unlike her predecessor who looks upon women's sexuality from the aesthetic point of view, her concern is directed towards the understanding of women's plight.

Minimalist in details, Yoko Ogawa portrays the position of women in a realistic approach that are true to life. By using a direct language and images of the sexual oppression her women characters experience, Yoko Ogawa shows the problem of her society which views women as an object of sex. In depicting this issue, Yoko Ogawa further shows how patriarchal set-up has influenced such evils into the society consciously or unconsciously. In *Hotel Iris*, the position of the female protagonist is nothing less than a sexual object in this patriarchal set-up world. In this section, Yoko Ogawa's *Hotel Iris* will be taken up to explore the sexual oppression women experience in this patriarchal system and *The Memory Police* will be looked into to explore the suppression of female feelings and emotions by the socio-political milieu.

Women in Yoko Ogawa fictional writings were created as if to face the oppression as patriarchal system allows to be so. Yoko Ogawa is concerned about the ways women are treated in their relationship with men in this patriarchal society. *Hotel Iris* reflects this concern through the relationship between Mari and the Russian translator. The kind of relationship the female protagonist, Mari, in *Hotel Iris* developed with the Russian translator as the result of the patriarchal domination is nothing less than a sexual-oriented relationship. In the course of the story, the relationship Mari developed with the Russian translator was

more of an escape from her home, which turns out to be occasions of physical abuse at the hands of the Russian translator. She was physically oppressed and abused by the Russian translator as their relationship concerned overtime. Mari is the victim of her society in two ways: from the patriarchal dominations at home and also in her relationship with the Russian translator.

Sexual abuse and oppression are not a new issue in contemporary Japanese society. Yoko Ogawa shows how sexual abuse and oppression has become a part of the relationship between men and female. Yoko Ogawa's choice of words and images to describe the sexual oppression faced by the protagonist, Mari, in *Hotel Iris* reflects the pattern of men-women relationship in this patriarchal society. In describing the sexual scene and all its entailments, Yoko Ogawa remained unbothered by what her society or her contemporaries would think of her choice of words and images. She executes it the way it is supposed to be executed and shows how often women became a sort of sexual objects to be used and abused. Following are some of the selected few direct references from the text to show how women are often sexually abused and oppressed in this patriarchal set-up:

Pressing my face to the floor, he ripped open my dress. There was a tearing sound, as if he had slit my back with a knife...My whole body should have hurt, but I didn't feel anything. Somehow, my nerves had become hopelessly tangled, so that pain became vaguely pleasurable as it rippled over my skin. (Ogawa 50)

Then he lay on top of me. He moved very slowly, as if to make his pleasure last as long as possible- and to be absolutely sure the cords did not come to loose. His lips ran over my neck and ears, and then pressed against mine. (Ogawa 52)

Moreover, descriptions such as "He played with my breasts" shows how women are often used and played by men in order to satiate their lust (Ogawa 52). The patriarchal society,

which views women as sexual objects or as sexual beings are reflected in *Hotel Iris*. The oppression of women in various walks of life are not only the issue and concern in Yoko Ogawa's fiction. Yoko Ogawa's female characters are suppressed and silenced in multiple ways. In *The Memory Police*, Yoko Ogawa further shows how women are also oppressed and suppressed collectively under the socio-political milieu. In this novel, Yoko Ogawa shows the subtle erosions of individual freedom and the encroachment of individual privacy that presides over her society. Repeatedly, in Yoko Ogawa's fictional narratives, women are often the ones who suffer the most at the hands of the oppressors. Yoko Ogawa particularly shows the difficulties of her society and particularly women entrapped during the course of socio-political turmoil.

The Memory Police, which is the most recent celebrated novel of Yoko Ogawa, builds up the idea of women's oppression and repression during the major political upheaval. It also shows how women are not only oppressed, but are repressed or suppressed by socio-political agendas brought by the political force of the Memory Police. The political agenda of the Memory Police functions as a way to interrogate those who could recall any events, things, objects, etc. Here, the female protagonist who is a novelist by profession, narrates the story of her citizens living on the island, about her family, friends and near ones who has to go through these complicacies at the hand of the Memory Police:

No longer were the advance warnings of their visits...Everything happened by surprise, and they now carried heavy battering rams capable of breaking down the door. They invaded houses in search of any space where someone could be hidden-storage rooms, under beds, in the back of closets. (Ogawa 64)

Fear of the worst that may befall upon its citizen at the hands of the Memory Police, and the fear of losing its voices, are constantly echoed in the course of the novel. Yoko Ogawa

presents a very mysterious and grim setting, in that she does not describe why or how the citizens living on the island are subjected under the oppression of the Memory Police. She simply depicts the life of its citizen living on the island and particularly the life of the female protagonist who was put into a series of test during the political operation. Women are not unaware of the socio-political forces that comes with it, during their quest for their own freedom and space as we can see from the lines spoken by the female narrator herself: “If you don’t cooperate, you become their victim...I have no idea where they take you once they have you. Prison? A labor camp? The gallows? But you can be sure it isn’t any place pleasant” (Ogawa 34). Through this, Yoko Ogawa shows the idea of repression or suppression of women by the political milieu.

The position of women are not just confined to the above discussed issues in these two novels. However, the oppression and suppression of women being central in all of the Yoko Ogawa’s fictional space, has been taken to understand the women’s roles in contemporary society. However, Yoko Ogawa’s female characters are characterised by their zeal and willingness to redefine these spaces assigned by their society. In that, the search for their own female self, to look for the other positive possibilities for betterment of women’s life and their society are further portrayed in almost all her fictional works. Ogawa hopes that the messages she is trying to convey through her fictional narratives, reaches far and beyond, in the consideration of women’s causes and issues in contemporary society.

4.2. The Quest and Emerging New Self

Yoko Ogawa is one of those writers, who, after exposing the harsh realities of life, the fragmentary vileness of her society and the natural disfigurement of social set-up, teaches her society, particularly women folks, why they need to find their own space in order to survive in their society. Yoko Ogawa being aware of the position of women in contemporary

Japanese society, does not want the societal norm to define her fictional space. She constantly questions her society and women folks about the role and the position of women. In all her fictional art, Yoko Ogawa stresses the need for women to stand on their own and find their own individual space and freedom. Through her portraiture and depictions, Yoko Ogawa teaches her society, particularly women, to come and participate, negotiate and free themselves from the societal norms and expectations that have been set for them by the patriarchal system.

Like any other feminist writers, Yoko Ogawa focuses on women's issues and aspects and addresses the need to do away with the gender roles, which has already created a huge division in society. Yoko Ogawa's fictional space is a space of continuous negotiations, trying to do away with the norms that has been set by the society. In that, the societal force does not define Yoko Ogawa's fictional space or any of her female characters, although they may have faced resistance at certain point in life. Before Yoko Ogawa's female characters finally attained that sense of freedom and space for their own self, they're grounded, moulded and trained to see life from the greater perspectives- that life has much more to offer than what has been prescribed by their society. Yoko Ogawa's women characters exhibit intolerance and risk against the societal machinery, against its system and develops transgressive characters as a way to defy societal orders and find their own space. In that, they are able to find and discover their own true self, true identity and freedom from the contested power structure.

What we noticed in Yoko Ogawa's fictional art is that none of her major female characters are defined by the societal norms and expectations. Although Yoko Ogawa's female characters are oppressed, harassed and suppressed, they are crushed only to emerge stronger. Their willingness to challenge this societal set-up reveals the courageous nature of Yoko Ogawa's female characters. This not signals the coming of a new era where women freely

participate against the social issues and the injustices played out against women, however it shows the emerging of new women in all aspects of life. The emerging of the new self from social, political and moral aspects are studied in the following section.

A. Social aspect

Of all Yoko Ogawa's fictional works, *The Diving Pool* is one among such other works of Yoko Ogawa's where we find the development of the female character or protagonist that witness a massive transformation in her character, finding her own space and freedom. The protagonist emerging into her new self rather than be defined by her society, lies in the fact that she was able to discover and understand the position of herself in her society at a young tender age. She was able to understand and perceive how any individual and particularly women of any age can be neglected or marginalised in her society. Moreover, she was also able to understand that any person and particularly women can still be part of society and still experience that sense of alienation and seclusion from their own society. The coming to this consciousness about her society, about her position and role, shows the growth of Yoko Ogawa's female character in *The Diving Pool*.

Moreover, how contemporary society treats women differently and how any woman can still be part of society yet feel that sense of alienation even through the shared space of home and outside are shown. Instances from the novel to show how the protagonist, Aya, has often been neglected and alienated from her own community can be seen from the following lines:

I can never simply come home the way other girls do. I find myself reading the Thought for the Week, passing through the gate, entering the Light House-and something always stops me, something always seems out of place... There is always something irreconcilable between the house and me, something I can never get past.

(Ogawa 8, 9)

Aya is the only child who is not an orphan however, the fact that she cannot consider the Lighthouse as her own home nor her parents and her foster siblings as her own, and most importantly that she can never be part of it, made her “disfigured” and alienated from the rest of her community (Ogawa 11). Family sharing a space requires everyday sacrifices, communication, and exchanges and all of these seemed to be missing from Aya’s context: “I wanted only one thing: to be part of a normal, quiet family” (Ogawa 12). Argumentatively, if we look closer into all the relationships, she shared with people in the course of the novel, family issue is not the only issue that drives her away from her society. Aya’s relationships with her foster siblings are based on what the situation demands and not on mutual love and care. Jun is the only person whom Aya exchanges talks in the course of the novel and from whom she finds inner peace when she is surrounded by his presence. However, there is something irreconcilable between them and in all her shared relationships Aya felt disfigured. What Aya eventually harnessed through these shared relationships in the end are nothing but the psychological complexities and mental instability. As the novel progresses, Aya’s own quest for her own individual space begins as a way to redefine this space. In other words, Aya’s quest for her own individual space and freedom begins as a way to defy the norms prevailing in her society.

What we see in Yoko Ogawa’s fictional space is that her female characters usually sacrifice their moral grounds during the search or quest for their own freedom and individual space. It is important to note that in Yoko Ogawa’s fictional narrations, the transgressive female self is not against any individual or peer group, however it is against the societal set-ups, the norms and its functioning.. The transgressive self in Yoko Ogawa’s writings should be understood in terms of the character’s growth and development, as it signals an individual’s rising consciousness and awareness of the social reality. In *The Diving Pool*, the protagonist Aya sacrificing her moral grounds in bullying the youngest member at the Lighthouse, is

understood in terms of her search for her own personal freedom and the emerging of the new self. Aya's transgressive action seen at the end of the novel is to emerge into a new identity rather than defined by her society. By bullying a defenceless Rie by offering her a rotten cream puff which almost put Rie's life to death, Aya's suppressed emotions about the social set-ups are put to an end in the course of the story. All the complications as discussed above are put to an end by bullying the youngest member at the Lighthouse. Through this, Yoko Ogawa's female protagonist in *The Diving Pool* was able to gain her own freedom and independence. The very awareness of life, which comprises of flaws, corruption, imperfection, pain, sufferings, etc. forms an integral part of Yoko Ogawa's fictional narratives. Negativity is an intrinsic part of human life, but to learn from it and to provide a new possibility and a new outlook of life, makes Yoko Ogawa's fictional character a remarkable one.

Yoko Ogawa's women exhibit a strong and courageous nature, be it in social, political or cultural space. *The Diving Pool* shows the courageous and undefeated nature of women from the social outlook. *Hotel Iris* and *The Housekeeper and the Professor* are also those Yoko Ogawa's fictional works where Yoko Ogawa not only exposes the toxicity that is often embedded within the social structure, but she shows how women continue to emerge as a strong individual from the patriarchal bindings. As discussed in the earlier section, patriarchy has often been the most traumatising force that denies women's participation in all aspects of life. Women are being denied freedom, individual space and the right to privacy in the name of patriarchy. Moreover, women have also often been denied of access basic education and exposure in the name of patriarchy. Yoko Ogawa's discontentment towards the treatment of women in contemporary Japanese society and her refusal to submit to the dominion structure of such societal forces, are further underlined in *Hotel Iris* and *The Housekeeper and the Professor*. In these two novels, Yoko Ogawa portrays the emerging of the new women from

the social setup. She presents her female protagonists, Mari in *Hotel Iris* and the unnamed housekeeper in *The Housekeeper and the Professor* as the victims of this patriarchal set-up and shows how these women have emerged as strong emancipated women undefined by time and space.

The position of women in *Hotel Iris* as discussed in the previous section comprises of the patriarchal definition of what women are supposed to be and are made of. The protagonist's quest for an individual freedom from this patriarchal structure comprises of her losing moral values and principles. Yoko Ogawa often questions her society and particularly men folks, on the role they have played in women's life who not only made women suffer from the social set-up, but to the extent of driving them to lose their moral values and principles. In *Hotel Iris*, an illicit relationship that develops between the protagonist Mari and the Russian translator in the course of the story is, in Mari's case, to look for more than what patriarchal society can offer. However, for Mari, this became a sort of asserting and embracing her own new self even if it battles her morality. Through this, Yoko Ogawa shows the emerging of her new women rather than be confined or defined by the patriarchal set-up.

In the novel, we see that the shared relationship between Mari and the Russian translator is marked by inclinations towards sexual desire, sexual gratifications and sexual abuse, but for multiple reasons, it gave Mari a sense of freedom and a new identity. As Mari narrates: "My whole body should have hurt, but I didn't feel anything. Somehow, my nerves had become hopelessly tangled, so that pain became vaguely pleasurable as it rippled over my skin" (Ogawa 50). By the end of the novel, we see that Mari has already experienced all sorts of physical torture and sexual abuse during the course of her relationship with the Russian translator, however this gave her a new positive outlook and independence from her home.

The emerging of the new women in *Hotel Iris* begins with Mari drafting elaborate lies to her mother at the pretext of doing some other works in order to meet the Russian translator. As Mari expressed, “I was willing to tell any sort of lie to keep my appointment” (Ogawa 70). The first step towards Mari’s transgressive character begins with Mari making appointments with the Russian translator. Her relationship with the Russian translator initially begins as a way to defy the patriarchal roles. In a number of occasions, Mari made up lies to her mother in order to keep her relationship status a secret from her mother. In one of the occasion, Mari went to meet the unnamed Russian translator and comes home late that particular day. Although, this particular incident has put Mari’s mother into a furious temper, in a way, this signals a new course in Mari’s life. Her developing relationship with the Russian translator is not only the new experience as it also shows her refusal to obey the command of her demanding mother by drafting lies. It shows Mari’s longing to be freed from this system and the quest for a new identity. Mari’s elaborate lies about her late arrival speaks about her longing to be freed from the physical bondage patriarchal society has instilled in people. She replied to her mother: “I’m sorry, Mama. I met an old woman in town who was feeling ill. She was pale and shaking all over, so I took her to the clinic. I couldn’t just leave her there...” (Ogawa 15). In order to assert her own freedom and her own individual space in this patriarchal space, Mari has go on drafting lies as this is the only way that would secure her freedom as a young teenager. Mari confesses that, the lies came to her much more easily than she imagined that she felt no guilt at all. On the contrary, she found it almost “amusing to watch the first lie gave birth to all the others” (Ogawa 28). Mari’s relationship with the Russian translator initially began as a way to defy the social orders and its prevailing system. Her relationship with the Russian translator began as a quest for her new self and to emerge into a new identity. To deviate from this societal norm, is a refusal to obey the prescribed roles and expectations set by the societal forces and to emerge into a new self rather than be

defined by the social set-up. In this sense, Mari's deviation can be understood in terms of asserting her own space and freedom.

When we look at the character of Mari at the beginning of the novel, from her innocent state to her emerging new self, the transformation can hardly be ignored. When she was asked by the Russian translator, "Why would a seventeen-year-old want to spend her Sunday with an old man like me?" To this, she replied, "But if I stayed home, I would have to work. And who wouldn't want to go for a walk with someone who's so pleased by a little good-bye?" (Ogawa 23). Understanding the position of women in her society and realising the need to break away the societal constructs that relegates women within the dominion structure of home characterised Mari's remarkable personage. Mari eventually realised that her relationship with the Russian translator would degrade her moral values and principles, but this gave her a new sense of freedom from restraint from home. In Mari's words:

Strangely, I did not think about Mother, or what would I tell her tomorrow. It seemed tomorrow would never come, that the storm would never stop and we would be trapped on the island forever. This thought made me all the more excited. (Ogawa 155)

For Mari, even if it takes away her morality, she was willing to pay the price for what the patriarchal society had done to her. She was also aware of the fact that she was "not the translator's only victim," but the fact that she became devoted in her relationship with the Russian translator shows her repudiation against her society (Ogawa 60.) This way, Mari not only gained her respite from her domineering mother, but also gained her individual space and freedom eventually from the shared space of home and from her society. Yoko Ogawa in depicting the life of the transgressive women characters, also questioned the male counterparts or the prejudiced patriarchal society. The search for the female self and the emerging of the new self in Yoko Ogawa's fictional art, comprises of female transgression.

Transgression in any form in contemporary society is often understood in terms of breaking the moral codes and principles and Yoko Ogawa's female characters not only find utmost exhilaration by breaking the moral laws and principles but through which they are able to merge into a new identity and a new sense of freedom.

B. Political Aspect

In this section, we shall look into the undefeated nature of Yoko Ogawa's women and the emerging of the new self from the political milieu. Yoko Ogawa's *The Memory Police* extensively talks about the political propaganda that functions as a way to curtail individual's rights and freedom, especially concerning women. In this novel, Yoko Ogawa presents her female protagonist who is entrapped during the political turmoil and shows how women were not only denied of space in political sphere, but are oppressed and suppressed of their whole existence. In this novel, Yoko Ogawa shows how women continue to fight for recognition and gain political freedom through strong determination and courageous nature. In this section, we shall look at how Yoko Ogawa's female protagonist emerging as a strong independent woman from the political turmoil struggle through their courageous nature that is always within it.

In this novel, *The Memory Police* Yoko Ogawa placed her female protagonist under the pressure of the political forces of the Memory Police. As discussed earlier, the political forces imposed on its citizen living on the island, was to seize those who could recall and remember anything. The position of its citizens living on the island and particularly the protagonist, reminds us of the dystopian society that is coming to reality, reconstructing the future and making it unbearable to live fully in the present. From the women's perspectives, the political force imposed on the female protagonist, is understood in terms of denial and suppression of her emotions and feelings. As we know that the female protagonist is a novelist by her

profession who makes her living from her writing but the fact that nothing can be spared or hidden from the tyranny of the Memory Police, not even her scribbled words, shows the idea of women's oppression and suppression from the political milieu. In the course of the novel, this female protagonist trying to preserve her scribbled words, compiled in the form of novels from the brutality of the Memory Police shows her search for her identity and individual freedom.

To write and to be accepted by her society has been the most difficult task for women since the Victorian society. It is also because patriarchal system does not grant space for the women to write as writing in any forms becomes a hindrance to the idea of childbearing and child rearing. However this comes with the political ideology and its inter-play. As we have seen in the novel, it is the political force that defines women's possibilities and capabilities which leads to individual losing space and freedom. It is the geo-political agendas that shape the women's concept of believing into political constructs and limiting their possibilities. Yoko Ogawa sought to challenge this political set-up by allowing her woman character to explore beyond the horizon rather than limiting herself to the confined space brought by the political agendas. In the course of the novel, the female protagonist's ways of preserving her memories in the form of scribbling her thoughts, which was against the Memory Police can be understood in term of the search for the female self and individual freedom from the geo-political forces. For the novelist, 'writings' not only implies her non-cooperation against the political set-up brought by the Memory Police, but it also sought to represent her identity, individual freedom and space. As the Memory Police was to enforce power upon those who could remember, for the female protagonist the act of writing becomes a sort of empowering her forgotten joys and moments. In the course of the story, she wrote in a hidden or secret room away from the Memory police and the scribbled manuscripts are handled with great intensive care to preserve them from the Memory Police. It is in this hidden or secret room

that the protagonist can be herself away from the outside forces that would degrade her moral values and principles.

From the feminist perspectives, how the geo-political force operates in the novel can be understood in terms of not just the physical oppression, as it entails the whole idea of mental and psychological repression. It also reminds one of the Victorian society and the kind of treatment women received from their society. The women writers during the Victorian period were never granted space to write and most of the women writers belonging to this period wrote under the pseudonyms. Let us recall how the famous Victorian women writer Mary Ann Evans made it to literary scene under the male pen name as George Eliot. As difficult as it was for women to make it to literary space under the socio-political forces decades ago, it is still relevant today in contemporary Japanese society as seen in this novel. The search for the female self and freedom from the socio-political forces that was prevalent yesterday, is still the same as it comprises of political ideologies that functions to undermine women's position in society.

The undefeated nature of Yoko Ogawa's women characters are seen in this novel. Yoko Ogawa's women characters exhibit a strong and courageous nature and they do not give up or surrender on issues that can be resolved through strong determination and courageous nature. In that, the protagonist in *The Memory Police* shows the continual fights for her recognition and individual freedom from this political entanglement. Her deliberate attempts exhibited in trying to preserve her writings and her memories from the Memory Police shows her courageous nature as well as her determination. The lines spoken by the protagonist's editor R to the protagonist during one of their conversation reveals the undefeated nature of the protagonist: "It seems strange that you can still create something totally like this –just from words-on an island where everything else is disappearing" (Ogawa 25). Moreover, towards the end of the novel, the lines spoken by the protagonist shows the undefeated nature of

women: “But the laws of the island are not softened by death. Memories do not change the law. No matter how precious I may be losing, the disappearances that surround me will remain unchanged” (Ogawa 242). What consoles the protagonist from the political enforcement by the Memory Police is the unyielding presence of her editor R. For the protagonist, R is not just her editor but someone who carries her soul within himself. Even when everything disappeared including herself, she knew that her editor R would hold on her legacy she has invested through her manuscripts, as we can see from the line spoken by the protagonist: “Yes, I know you take good care of my body. And I know you can summon up memories of the music box and the ferry ticket, the harmonica or the *ramune*” (Ogawa 157).

The secret room, which the protagonist had built to keep her editor hidden away from the political forces of the Memory Police, served as an embodiment of her achieving a new identity and individual space during the course of the novel. But because the political forces employed by the Memory Police was to enforce those who could retain anything and everything through the use of their memory, the protagonist feared that she would not be remembered after she is gone. Her willingness to preserve her written manuscripts from the tyranny of the Memory Police shows her desire to be remembered for her works. But the only possibilities the protagonist can keep her written manuscripts and records from the political force was to keep her editor somewhere unknown from the Memory Police. In that way only, the protagonist’s written records can be carried further by her editor R even after her death. The novel’s concluding conversation between the protagonist and her editor R shows altogether their efforts in subduing the political forces and the eventual emergent of the protagonist’s new self:

“I know how hard you’ve had to work,” he said, “but I can’t tell you how happy I am to be holding this manuscript.”

“I wonder whether the story will remain after I disappear.”

“Of course it will. Each word you wrote will continue to exist as a memory, here in my heart, which will not disappear. You can be sure of that.”

“I’m glad. I’d like to leave behind some trace of my existence on the island.”

“I suppose so,” I said, closing my eyes. (Ogawa 270)

To be freed at last is the end of something and the beginning of a new era and for the protagonist and her editor R, they have won the race over the Memory Police. And even though the protagonist seemed to disappear with time at the end of the novel, her memory will live on forever through the editor R’s unyielding power to carry forward her written manuscripts recorded over time. This signals the emerging of her new self from the political milieu.

C. Moral aspects

In *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, Yoko Ogawa presents a middle-class woman in search of her true identity and a place that would eventually secure her a true identity in her society. This unnamed Housekeeper could be one of the most sympathetic character of all the Yoko Ogawa’s female characters, and the most rewarding of all other female characters. Her role as the housekeeper and her position in this patriarchal set-up has already been discussed in the preceding section. In this section, we shall look at how perseverance, tolerance and dignity play a rewarding role in the life of the Housekeeper. The quest and emerging of the new self in *The Housekeeper and the Professor* can be seen in a different light from the other female characters. Yoko Ogawa’s female protagonist often sacrifices its moral values and principles while on their quest for their identity as seen and discussed in the earlier sections. In *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, Yoko Ogawa presents a completely different picture

of how any individual can also be rewarded without compromising their moral values and principles. As we have discussed in the earlier section on the position and the role of the Housekeeper, this woman character has the most unfortunate position of all Yoko Ogawa's female characters.

However, unlike the other Yoko Ogawa's female character who often sacrifices their moral grounds during their search for their new emerging self, the Housekeeper's way of accepting her own self and fate is remarkable. What we can take from this woman character is the positive attitude and outlook she has towards her society. It is also because of her social profession that does not allow her to rebel against the social injustices perpetrated upon her; however, her perseverance and dignity towards her society is indelible. In the course of the story, she was fired by the Director of the Housekeeping Agency, but her decision not to retaliate against the injustices, for being penalized for what she did not do and also the concern she has for the Professor, provides a new insight into her character:

“There are plenty of other housekeepers who can look after him,” said the Director, cutting me off. He opened the drawer in his desk and filed away the card. “This is not negotiable,” he said. “We’re done here.” And that was how I came to leave my job at the Professor’s house. (Ogawa 106)

Because of her social profession as a housekeeper and the fact that she is a widow, she was not given a second chance or an opportunity to speak out the truth. If we look at the other female characters in *Hotel Iris*, *The Diving Pool* and in *Pregnancy Diary*, the transformation and transgression in fighting against the social injustices, was very brutal and harsh experience. In such fictional works, the search for the female self and the emerging of the new self comprises of a rebellious act against the social set-up and its norms. Moreover, the refusal to obey the command and the need to fight for women's recognition within any shared

space are seen with great force. In *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, Yoko Ogawa sought to present a very positive attitude towards life and society. She shows how women can also find their place in society through self-acceptance, tolerance and maintaining dignity towards the society and people, rather than building hostile relationship in their search for freedom and individual space. The unnamed Housekeeper's approach to life is the testimony to this; that despite resistance, she was able to handle her fate with so much of acceptance and grace. To be able to come to terms with her prescribed fate by her society and still be human, is one of the remarkable characteristics that can be seen from the character of the Housekeeper.

Following are lines that depict her humanity and tolerance against the social injustices even after her removal from the post of the Professor's housekeeper: "what bothered me most was knowing that he would have no memory that we had ever been there... It was painful to think about. I was sad, but also angry with myself for having broken something that could never be fixed" (Ogawa 107). It is the Housekeeper's self-acceptance and humanity towards her society that enables her to find her space towards the end of the novel. The Housekeeper was called back by the Agency to resume her work again at the Professor's house and that is where the Housekeeper found her true place in her society. Moreover, she regained her friendship with the Professor and the Professor also reunited his friendship with her and her son Root. A widow who has a big dream for her son's well-being and see him doing well in life was the greatest promising dream she ever had. To see her son growing under the Professor's care and love was, for her, a dream accomplished:

Watching over my son was the professor's greatest joy. And Root appreciated the Professor's attentions. He never ignored or took these kindnesses for granted, and acknowledged that they should be fully recognized and respected. (Ogawa 128, 129)

Yoko Ogawa's *The Housekeeper and the Professor* shows the search for the female self and the emerging of a new self without giving up her moral grounds. Yoko Ogawa portrays a very positive attitude towards life and society. By the end of the novel, we see that the Housekeeper found her new identity and joy having to share the same space with the Professor, not just as a housekeeper as initially perceived, but altogether as a family and a friend. This began as a new chapter in the lives of the Housekeeper, her ten-year old son Root and the Professor with a new outlook and affirmation.

4.3. Yoko Ogawa as a Feminist Writer

Yoko Ogawa has never identified herself as a feminist writer, however her fictional narratives shows how concerned she is about the well-being of women in her society. She deliberately reconsiders and re-examine the position of women through her fictional depictions. Like other feminist writers, Yoko Ogawa stresses the importance of gender equality and gives voice to the oppressed and suppressed women of her society. One emphasis Yoko Ogawa particularly sought to undertake in her fictional art, is the assigned gender roles and a doable nature. Like other feminist writers, Yoko Ogawa sought to reconstruct the socio-political and cultural space and believe that literary projection of women's issues and plight is the first step towards eradicating these problems.

Feminism became active during the closing of the 19th century and early 20th century and which stresses on the equality of gender roles in all aspects of life and Yoko Ogawa falls within this domain, in that she deliberately accentuate the importance of gender equality between sexes in her fictional depictions. Patriarchy has often been the most obstructing element for women and Yoko Ogawa hopes that her voice reaches the societal lawmakers and sensitize them of the indifferences women face in society. Yoko Ogawa concerns over women's issues are not just confined to the social set-up; she shows how women are also

oppressed and repressed which is brought about by the political forces. Yoko Ogawa hints at the fact that the social injustices women continue to face in any shared arena, are the result of the political ideology operating at various stages. How this political ideology functions from public arena and how it is incorporated into shared space of home to degrade the position of women, also shows the political influences at multiple levels.

The fictional dimensions and the portrayal of Yoko Ogawa's female characters show her inclinations towards addressing the women's issues faced by the contemporary Japanese society. Ogawa's inclinations to make use of her female characters as the hero or the protagonist of the novel is intended not just to present the women's plight faced in contemporary Japanese society but also function as a way of paving ways for women in literary space. The dominant female characters and the role played out by the female characters in all her fictional works show the rising consciousness of the women's issues in contemporary society. The fact that all of her protagonists comprise of women characters and the seldom-depicted women issues shows her concern and obsessions on women's predicaments. Moreover, the omnipresent feminine voices and their eventual victory in her fictional space are intended to present the women's victory and triumph over the societal set-ups and expectations.

What characterised Yoko Ogawa from the rest of the other women writers of the contemporary society is the female narrator occupying the dominant role over the male characters. In Yoko Ogawa's fictional space, we do find women characters not just occupying the leading role, but also trying to redefine the laws made by the male characters. Yoko Ogawa's women characters know exactly what they are doing and why they are doing. It is the author's conscious intention to cast her women characters into questioning oppressive societal norms prescribed for women. Moreover, the fact that her fictional art comprises of the female narrator, consisting of at least one or more women's issue, shows her

deliberate attempt to bring the women's issues to the fore front. Yoko Ogawa's vision of life is the vision of every feminist writer. They continuously strive towards the betterment of their society, which begins with sharing equal status and privileges between the two sexes.

Undoubtedly, Yoko Ogawa could be classified as a contemporary feminist writer. In an age where literary space has become an important space for negotiating conflicts, Yoko Ogawa shares feminist platform and concerns. With her brilliant mind and subtle awareness of the socio-political scenarios of the contemporary Japanese society, Yoko Ogawa goes beyond common human understanding and conventions of sexes. Through her portrayals and depictions, Yoko Ogawa also seek to reveal awareness among have contemporary women to be true to themselves rather than be defined by the societal setup. Undeniably, her vision is the vision of every feminist writer, in that, she believes in the liberation of women's rights and movement. The positive affirmation she imparted through her fictional art will continue to thrive for the betterment of the contemporary society, in general, and modern Japanese society in particular.

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CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

The fictional world of Yoko Ogawa presents a huge portrait of the contemporary Japanese society, from individual to family issue, and from socio-political and cultural issue. Yoko Ogawa believes that literary representation best depicts its society: didactically and realistically. In that, Yoko Ogawa re-examines her society and she faithfully portrays the contemporary Japanese society in various aspects of life. Her fictional representation shows the common issues that are visible in the contemporary writings. It can be generally understood in terms of representing the contemporary Japanese writings. The concluding chapter undertakes the common thematic structure and differences, Yoko Ogawa shares with some of the other contemporary Japanese writers.

5.0. Dark Romantic element of Death in the Fictional Art of Kenzaburo Oe and Yoko Ogawa.

Dark Romantic element of death revolves around the fictional world of Yoko Ogawa and Kenzaburo Oe. Yoko Ogawa and Kenzaburo Oe are two among the two contemporaries who convey a very dark awareness of life and society. The physical death of the characters form an integral part of their fictional narration. The idea that these contemporary writers are trying to convey through the dark element of death, is to show how death is perceived in Japanese society. The induction of the dark romantic element, such as, death as part of their fictional narration characterised Ogawa and Oe as Japanese fiction writers from other contemporaries. For Oe and Ogawa, the absence of the character's physical self (that is, death) does not simply imply the end of something, however, it implies an increasingly haunting experience for the living. It is in fact true that those who survived disastrous catastrophe have to go on living with the memories of their loved ones, and this is made explicit in Kenzaburo Oe and in Yoko Ogawa's fictional space. The fact that Yoko Ogawa

and Kenzaburo Oe are obsessed with the idea of dark romantic element, such as, death is to tell the stories of people that can never be forgotten. It also expressed their frustration and discontentment towards their society.

Frustrated by the socio-political and cultural upheaval after the post-war Japan, Kenzaburo Oe expressed his disillusionment and frustration towards his society by constantly introducing death in his fictional space. The inclination towards death, suicidal thoughts and suicides looms over his fictional space. Kenzaburo Oe wrote during this contemporary time when the Japanese society is crippled by cultural turmoil and this posed a huge challenge in his identity formation as well. This is reflected in his fictional art as a way to express his frustration and discontentment towards his society. Kenzaburo Oe's *Death by the Water* and *The Changeling*, shows this cultural turmoil with a tinge of autobiographical element in it. It bears a profound evident of his frustration towards the socio-political and cultural set-up after the post-war Japan. In his fictional works, we see the dark romantic element, such as, death to represent the anger, discontentment, frustration and disillusionment towards the contemporary Japanese society. Death, in any form, in Kenzaburo Oe's fictional works, are directed towards the discontentment towards the societal set-up and as a way to put an end to all of these. For instance, in *The Changeling*, we see this meticulous development, which is partly written in a form of an elegy, in the memory of an unexplained suicide of his brother-in-law, Itami Juzo. Argumentatively, the Dark Romantic element, such as, death in Kenzaburo Oe's fictional works are directed towards his society for the inequality, injustices and promises they had failed to fulfilled. In *The Changeling*, Oe put a blame in his society, for the premature death of his brother-in-law and expressed his inability to be consoled and accept the social reality of contemporary Japanese society. This unexplained suicide of his brother-in-law profoundly shocked Oe, since they had been a close friend. The Dark Romantic element, such as, death in Oe's fictional works, shows the discontentment towards

the contemporary society, but it also depicts the dark side for those who have to go living with the memories of their loved ones.

In Yoko Ogawa's fictional space, likewise, the absence of the physical self (death) does not imply or functions as an exempt from reality. As seen in Kenzaburo Oe's fictional works, there is yearning, longing and a desire that is beyond the idea of death. By constantly introducing the Dark Romantic element, such as, death in her fictional characters, Ogawa shows the absurd realities of mankind. And as seen in Kenzaburo Oe's fictional world, death in Yoko Ogawa's fictional space too, does not imply the end of something. It lives in the heart of the survivors and in the life of the readers. Characters may have perished from this universe, but it lives in the heart of people as a haunting and moving picture. Small incident, or even in the smallest details and encounters, death in Yoko Ogawa's fictional space continues to exert a puissant effect on the lives of the characters, leaving them unable to live fully present. Yoko Ogawa's *The Memory Police* projects this aspect, through the life of the unnamed female protagonist who had to go through all the complicacies with the death and missing of people around her.

In Yoko Ogawa and Kenzaburo Oe's fictions, the death of characters rest on the mysterious. In Yoko Ogawa's fictional space, the death of the characters works in very mysterious way, to enhance the supernatural element that is seen in dark romantic literature. As it is in Kenzaburo Oe's fictions, Yoko Ogawa's characters often go missing without a trace and are later brought death. Death, in Oe and Ogawa's fictional world, remain anonymous and the cause is rarely known, which is again, the underlying technique in Dark Romantic literature.

5.1. Kazuo Ishiguro and Yoko Ogawa's use of Memory Technique in their Fictional Art

Contemporary Japanese writers, such as, Yoko Ogawa and Kazuo Ishiguro are among the contemporaries who rely on the use of memory in their fictional narration. The use of

memory technique, to create a new sense of identity and to emerge into new self, forms an integral part of their fictional narration. In other words, Kazuo Ishiguro and Yoko Ogawa employ the use of memory technique to project the contemporary Japanese society. The common thematic structure that we find in the writings of Ishiguro and Ogawa is the repetitive evocation of nostalgia (memory), as means for continuous evaluation of the character's life. Yoko Ogawa employs the use of memory technique to depict the physical and psychological complexities of the characters and of the socio-political forces of the contemporary society. Kazuo Ishiguro employs as a way to depict the positive possibilities and outlook one can look forward in contemporary Japanese society. This aspect is taken up to show Yoko Ogawa as the representative of a contemporary Japanese fiction writer.

Kazuo Ishiguro employs the use of memory technique to engage the readers and his characters into the story line, and to impart moral lessons through it. In Kazuo Ishiguro's fictional works, through the use of memory, Ishiguro's characters are able to look back, learn and devote the rest of their life to another, rather than being trapped somewhere they were not meant to be. Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989) and *Never Let Me Go* (2005) are among the other works of Ishiguro where we see this development towards the positive possibilities and outlook of life. Memory is employed, as a way to create a new form of identity and to emerge into new self in Ishiguro's work of fictions. Memory holds an important element in Kazuo Ishiguro's novels which allows them to look back, learn and devote the rest of their lives to a new positive possibility in life. The fact that Kazuo Ishiguro mostly depicts the life of those who are repressed and oppressed by the societal forces is to let his characters remember people and places that have made them worth living. This allows them to look back and move forward in life, rather than converging to a single point of vulnerability. Kazuo Ishiguro's famous debut *The Remains of the Day* (1989) and *Never Let*

Me Go (2005) employs the use of memory as an agent for self-realisation and self-recognition in his fictional art.

The use of memory technique in Yoko Ogawa's fictional works shows the betrayal of memory and its inability to rely as a faithful record of past events. In Yoko Ogawa's fictional works, images are presented as distorted, broken and in fragmentary manner. Characters often find themselves unable to discern their past and present. The fear of losing memory (senses) and the gradual loss of a person's memory are depicted in a very diasporic manner. Yoko Ogawa shows how memories are not a faithful record of past events, thereby resulting, in her character's transgression. Yoko Ogawa's *The Memory Police* and *The Housekeeper and the Professor* discuss this feature, to show how memories are not often a faithful record of events, activities, etc. In these fictional works, Yoko Ogawa shows the physical as well as psychological complexities of the characters who are subjected to losing memory and senses.

Kazuo Ishiguro and Yoko Ogawa have a strong attachment with the use of memory. The use of memory technique in their writings plays a dominant role in contemporary Japanese fiction narratives and Yoko Ogawa can be shown as representative of contemporary Japanese fiction writer. Yoko Ogawa repeatedly employs this technique to present the socio-political and cultural issues of her society that is seen again and again with the contemporary Japanese fiction writers.

5.2. Search for identity in the Writings of Haruki Murakami and Yoko Ogawa.

Yoko Ogawa and Haruki Murakami are among the contemporaries who writes about the lost souls and the wanderers in search of home, comfort and relief. Murakami and Ogawa are known for the depiction of the contemporary Japanese society. They have showed how the contemporary Japanese society is affected by the socio-political and cultural upheaval, since the post-war Japan, and projects the difficulties of the contemporary society in identity

formation. Murakami's characters, such as, Tamura Kafka in Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore*, Tsukuru Tazaki in *Colourless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*, and Yoko Ogawa's characters, such as, Aya in *The Diving Pool* are instances where we do find characters longing for an identity. Murakami and Ogawa often placed their characters in the most complex situation, to show how the contemporary Japanese society has regressed over time. However, it is due to their understanding of the complex contemporary culture that they remain undefined by the societal forces in its depictions. Murakami and Ogawa believe that humankind's search for new self should not be defined by outside forces and that the search for freedom should not be destined to be futile. It is for this reason that, the search for new identity and relief of weary soul looms over the writings of Murakami and Ogawa.

Ogawa and Murakami's characters are often seen as journeying into new experiment in an unknown setting, in search of their own identity. By placing their characters in the abyss of life and death, to emerging into new self, they showed that growth and development of characters are relative. It further highlights the positive possibilities of time as healing and redeeming and projects the meaningful journey of life. This connects their characters to life more concretely than ever before. Murakami's characters, such as, Tamura Kafka and Tsukuru Tazaki, shows how each individual should not be confined by the conventional norms, and Ogawa's characters, such as, Aya and Mari, shows that any dreams should ever be abandoned by any other social forces. The struggle these fictional characters go through, caught in the dilemma of not being able to be recognize by their society is beyond measure. However, when they realise their own role in their society and yearns to be their own storyteller, the narration takes a completely new shift. It is time that grounds these characters, however, it is only through time that they were able to mend all those incidents that traumatised them at certain points in time.

With the coming of the literary space and of the rising consciousness of the social reality, contemporary writers, such as, Yoko Ogawa and Haruki Murakami depict the social issues that is prevalent in today's contemporary Japanese society. For many contemporaries, as Murakami and Ogawa, literary space is a space of projecting issues. The fact that the today's contemporary Japanese society is tormented by many social issues, resulting in identity crisis and other complications, compelled contemporary writers to project these issues in a non-conventional manner. Yoko Ogawa and Haruki Murakami offers contemporary society yet another alternative way of mitigating these socio-political and cultural issues in today's contemporary Japanese society.

It can be concluded that, Yoko Ogawa as a contemporary Japanese writer can be understood as representing the contemporary Japanese fiction writers. The issues and concerns which are visible in the writings of Yoko Ogawa can be seen in the writings of the contemporaries, such as, Kazuo Ishiguro, Kenzaburo Oe, Haruki Murakami, as also their fictional art. Not many articles and writings about Japanese contemporary literature and particularly on Yoko Ogawa are available. More studies on it are therefore eagerly expected.

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