



The (Un)known Epoch: Exploring Dystopian Japan in Yoko Tawada's *The Emissary*

Foong Soon Seng, Gheeta Chandran & Raphael Thoo Yi Xian

Abstract

Yoko Tawada's *The Emissary* is set in Japan after a massive and irreparable disaster. The entire country isolates itself from the rest of the world during the post-disaster period. Tawada's novella probes into the issue of sustainability through the ageing population and natural catastrophes in dystopian Japan. Borrowing the concept of the "Anthropocene", the present study examines the "human-induced environmental change" that predominantly affected the entire Japanese population. The *Emissary* provides a glimpse into the notion of social tension in this surreal landscape. Due to environmental degeneration, the dystopian Japanese society is ostensibly suffering from contaminations, extinctions and overpopulation of elderly, while the children, ironically, are born frail, sick and delicate. Tawada's novella follows the lifestyle of the two main protagonists, Yoshiro and Mumei in the inhabitable, post-apocalyptic Japanese society. As the Japanese government imposes a strict isolation policy, it captures how both Yoshiro and Mumei cope and react with the perils that the disaster imposes. The novella further satirizes the futuristic Japanese society by envisioning a distressing dysfunctional society that predominantly deals with the aftermath of the catastrophe. The Kafkaesque depiction of the regressive post-apocalyptic Japanese dystopian society in the novella further reimagines humans' environmental adaptation for survival.

Keywords: Dystopian, Post-Apocalyptic, Environmental Degeneration, Environmental Adaptation, Japanese Literature.