
Research Article**Women's Agency and the Shadow of Patriarchal Domination:
Reflections on Kinokawa by Ariyoshi Sawako****Nina Alia Ariefa***

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Kinokawa (The River Ki) is Ariyoshi Sawako's first work, which is about three generations of Japanese women living in different eras. Ariyoshi's efforts in writing this novel are evident through the plot which tells the stories of women who lived during this period. Ariyoshi describes in detail the aspects of humanity affected by the rapid changes of the times. Like the seemingly calm Ki River that hides swirling currents underneath, this novel reveals the story of women who strive to cope with the dynamic changes of the times. In analysis, this study uses a feminist literary criticism approach, focusing on the stories of three female characters, Hana, Fumio, and Hanako. In addition to showing the gap between generations and is influenced by epochal changes toward Japan's new age, this study also reveals the dominant representation of women's agency. Through this novel, Ariyoshi exposes the demands that others and Japanese women place on themselves and reveals their strength. With a strong yet calm voice, Ariyoshi develops vivid female characters that make their mark in a world dominated by men.

Keywords: Ariyoshi Sawako; Feminist literary criticism; Kinokawa; Patriarchal domination; Women's agency

1. Introduction

The development of the idea that women also need to tell their world, something that would not be perfect if told by men, is suspected to be one of the factors in the development of literary works by female writers. Women's perceptions also need to be considered as part of the wealth of human thought, which has been repressed and neglected. So far, the world of women has not been completely and perfectly told because the hegemony of text production has long been held by men. That there are different points of view used by women and different experiences felt by women regarding the same events experienced by men.

The Shōwa period of the 60s was known as the period of the massive emergence of Japanese female writers. Orbaugh (1996) even called this phenomenon a sudden boom of Japanese female writers that occurred in the period

1960-1970. When compared to the number of female writers before World War 2 (WW2), the significant increase in the number in the Shōwa period of the 60s-70s was a major achievement and an important note in the history of the development of women's writing in Japan.

Ariyoshi Sawako (1931-1984) is one of the writers from a series of Japanese female Shōwa writers in the post-war era. As a productive female writer who emerged in the new climate of Japan, Ariyoshi consistently presents various issues in her works. Rimer (1988) even called Ariyoshi Sawako one of the best post-war Japanese writers. As a productive writer, Ariyoshi paid great attention not only to contemporary issues such as social and environmental problems, but she also raised many topics about women in her works in the historical novel genre. In some of her works in this genre, Ariyoshi often raises stories about women in domestic life

in various eras. Her first novel, *Kinokawa* (The River Ki, 1959), is set in the late Meiji to early Showa period and follows three generations of aristocratic women who have achieved success, leading to the novel being adapted for the big screen as an NHK drama and adapted into a film in 1966.

There have been several previous studies examining the novel, including one by Mitchell (1994). In her thesis, *Good Wives and Wise Mothers*, she compares and contrasts the works of several Japanese women writers, one of which is Ariyoshi Sawako's *Kinokawa*, with the works of Japanese-American women writers. Mitchell examines how societal expectations and cultural gender roles have combined to shape women's realities and experiences as wives, mothers, and daughters, exploring the question of what happens when claiming a cultural heritage and becoming entangled with the rejection of traditional cultural gender roles, and what varies from generation to generation.

In her writing entitled *Desperate Housewives in Modern Japanese Fiction: Three Novels by Ariyoshi Sawako*, Nakanishi (2007) discusses discrimination against women using the context of Japanese history contained in three translated novels by Ariyoshi Sawako through a sociological literary approach. Through this research, Nakanishi explores three works by Ariyoshi that depict a gloomy portrait of the lives of Japanese women whose parameters remain unchanged from the 18th century to modern Japan. In addition, there is also a study by Okawa (2015) entitled 有吉佐和子「紀ノ川」における性的差異 (Sexual Differences in Sawako Ariyoshi's "Kinokawa"). She discusses sexual differences in the characters in *Kinokawa*.

Different from the three previous studies, this study focuses on the study of *Kinokawa* by emphasizing the disclosure of reflections on women's agency in Ariyoshi's work. The study of women's agency in this study reveals the capacity

and role of women depicted in *Kinokawa*'s text. The concept of agency itself is related to the autonomy of individual action; the element of an agent who can realize action; the ability of individual consciousness to organize its consciousness, and explains the individual's capacity to act independently and freely from structural determination.

Kabeer (1999), defines agency as "the ability to determine one's goals and act on them." This refers to the capability approach presented by Sen (1985), who defines 'agency freedom' as the freedom to achieve whatever one, as a responsible agent, decides to achieve." Individuals may not act, or create fundamental changes in power relationships, but are able—through direct or indirect decision-making processes—to break out of routine behavior and attempt to change the environment or its outcomes.

Rapport & Overing (2002) define agency as the capacity and ability possessed by agents as the source and origin of their actions. Especially regarding the relationship between individuals and social structures, the concept of agency is generally used to explain the ability of individual consciousness to organize its consciousness, as well as to explain the individual's capacity to act independently and free from structural determination. Scott (2006) adds that agency can also be seen as an element of an agent's capacity to carry out actions. Both Rapport & Overing and Scott explain that the concept of agency is not only an explanation of how an action can be carried out by humans but also functions to explain the dynamics of the relationship between individuals or agents and social structures.

Several other researchers provide similar additional definitions, including Ibrahim and Alkire (2007) (based on Malhotra, 2003): "agency is the ability to act on behalf of what one values and has reason to value"; World Development Report (WDR) (2012): "agency is the

ability of individuals (or groups) to make effective choices and transform those choices into desired outcomes"; The World Bank Voice and Agency Report (2014) states "agency is the capacity to make decisions about one's life and act on those decisions to achieve desired outcomes, free from violence. The ability to determine, act on goals, and make important decisions, Donald et al. (2017) and Laszlo et al. (2017) include the ability to participate in the economy and public life as part of the definition of agency.

According to Donald, et al (2017), this definition of agency requires an understanding of three concepts, namely (1) a person's ability to set goals by their values regarding a particular issue or decision, (2) whether they feel capable of achieving those goals, and (3) whether they are capable of acting to achieve those goals.

Three main dimensions are needed to fully understand agency: (1) Individuals need to set goals that are in line with their values. This dimension of agency assesses whether individuals reflect and develop well-defined goals on a particular issue and whether those goals stem from individual values and preferences; (2) Individuals need to have a sense of control and ability. Also defined as "having a sense of agency", this construct is an important prerequisite for the agency to be applied (Kabeer 1999). Feeling a sense of control and the ability to initiate action are requirements for the definition of agency. In addition, for individuals to act according to their goals, they need to believe (to some degree) that they can achieve them; (3) Individuals need to act based on goals. The final dimension of the agency is the individual's ability to realize their goals which can involve a series of different actions. Individuals can choose the extent of their participation in the decision-making process relevant to achieving their goals – either through active encouragement to become the final decision maker, or through other means of negotiation or bargaining to achieve those

goals. While the first two dimensions of agency are internally regulated, goal-based action is usually a relational process.

Kinokawa novel has a fairly long period, namely from the 1890s to 1958. This period covers the phase of Japanese history that includes the Meiji Restoration as Japan's open contact with the West, as well as the beginning of the modernization period in Japan, until the post-WW2 era in the Showa era. With a period of around 70 years, this novel tells the story of three generations of women with their respective experiences and perspectives in living their lives. The breadth and depth of the women's stories in this novel allow for a study using a feminist literary criticism approach to its female characters to analyze women's issues and patriarchal domination in the span of the three eras. Thus, the research question is how Ariyoshi Sawako's novel *Kinokawa* (1959) reflects women's agency in the shadow of patriarchal domination during the Meiji era to the Shōwa era after WW2.

2. Methods

This research will use a qualitative analysis method based on a feminist literary criticism approach. This research will identify, classify, and individualize statements in *Kinokawa* about women and their relationships with men, explore the practices of patriarchal domination and the form of agency among its characters, and interpret these practices to reveal reflections on women's agency depicted in *Kinokawa*. This research uses a feminist critical approach to show the imbalance of power relations between men and women through patriarchal domination. In addition, this research also explores the practice of women's agency amidst the pressure of this domination that continues to overshadow the lives of Japanese women from time to time. Feminist criticism questions how literary works and other cultural products strengthen or weaken the oppression of women in terms of

economics, politics, society, and psychology (Tyson, 2015: 79). Thus, the voices presented in literary works that show the affirmation of oppression, as well as women's rejection of oppression, are also part of the issue of feminist criticism. The presence of these voices can be considered as an indicator of the presence of a power structure that is intended to be highlighted through the literary work.

Feminist literary criticism is a literary criticism that attempts to describe and examine women's experiences in various literary works. Feminist criticism challenges and opposes traditional and established ideas and views of men regarding the basic nature of women and how women feel, think, and act, as well as how women in general respond to life and this life. Thus, this feminist criticism questions the prejudices and assumptions about women that are formed by men. This feminist criticism does not allow the tendency of men to lead women to play the role of belittled characters.

3. Result and Discussion

To reveal women's agency in Kinokawa's text explains how the capacity of female characters to act and their relations with male characters. Overall, the female characters in this novel are presented as female characters who have agency amidst the pressures of a patriarchal-based social order. In addition, it will also explain the context of women's positions in traditional Japanese families that are intertwined with the issue of patriarchal social order that was strengthened in the Edo period.

This novel uses a Japanese setting in the Kudoyama, Jison-in, Musota, Wakayama, and Tokyo areas, and a time setting around the 1890s to the 1960s, which includes the Meiji, Taisho, and Showa periods. The 1890s fell within the Meiji period (1868-1912), which was the period after Japan experienced a long period of feudal leadership. In the Meiji period, Japan began to open itself up to the Western

world. This period is known as the early period of Japan towards modernization. The influence of Western views and lifestyles that entered Japan began to gradually influence the conditions of Japanese society at that time. Then the story in the novel continues with the Taisho period (1921-1926) and ends in the middle of the Showa period (1926-1989) approaching 1960, the period after WW2. Many historical events and depictions of the conditions of political upheaval that occurred during these 70 years are included in Kinokawa, including the Japanese war against Russia, and the dominant one is the situation when Japan was involved in WW2.

In addition, there are also depictions of several issues that have emerged regarding women's issues, including the depiction of the ideal woman contained in the slogan *ryousai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother), the pros and cons of *atarashii onna* (new woman) in Japan, the addition of a social dimension to the role of women reflected through their important contributions during the war, both in WW2 and the difficult times faced by Japan after WW2.

There is the use of a third-person omniscient point of view in this novel that tells everything related to the main characters, about their character, thoughts, feelings, events, and even the background of an event. The plot used in this novel is generally forward (progressive), with events or incidents in the story moving sequentially from beginning to end. However, at the beginning of the novel, there is a short section in the form of a flashback to the story of the main character's wedding plans, named Hana.

Kinokawa focuses on the life stories of three female characters, namely Hana, Fumio, and Hanako, and their lives in a traditional family that strongly upholds patriarchal traditions and values. The character Hana in this novel is a woman born in 1877, the only daughter of the honorable Kimoto family. Her father,

Nobutaka, was a leader of the Kudoyama region, Ki province. The character Hana is described as a beautiful, educated, elegant woman, with a calm character, and a cool head. She was raised by Toyono, her grandmother because her mother had died when she was little. Hana received formal education at a girls' school in Wakayama City and mastered various traditional Japanese arts, such as flower arranging, performing tea ceremonies, and playing the koto. In addition, she also can write beautifully, behave, and speak gracefully and elegantly. Hana married Matani Keisaku, the man chosen by Toyono, and lived as a woman who was obedient and devoted to her husband's family. Hana paid great attention to her appearance in an elegant long-sleeved kimono throughout her life. In general, Hana's character is depicted as an ideal woman in traditional Japanese society.

Hana has an eldest daughter named Fumio. She was born on May 10, 1904, 4 years younger than her older brother Seichiro. Fumio received formal education at the same school as Hana's old school. She is described as a woman who is stubborn, critical, rebellious, brave, indifferent and does not care about her appearance. She is a tomboy and likes games and activities that are generally done by boys, such as climbing trees, fighting, and fishing. Her different views with Hana in many things, always make her involved in conflict with her mother. As a woman living in the modern era, Fumio considers Hana's attitude and principles about women who uphold Japanese traditions, very old-fashioned and no longer relevant to the development of the times.

The character Hanako is Fumio's daughter who is described as having a special closeness to Hana, her grandmother. She was born in Japan but spent her childhood outside Japan with her father and mother. Hanako has a tall, thin stature, and grew up as a weak and sickly little girl because of her premature birth. Hana's

harsh reprimands when Hanako was in elementary school, and the need to adapt to the atmosphere of war and the difficult post-war times that she went through with her family made Hanako grow into a strong, healthy, and independent girl.

The story of each female character is presented in three parts in Kinokawa. With the story set in the early Meiji Restoration, the character Hana is said to have been born and raised by upholding the traditional values instilled by her grandmother, Toyono. Meanwhile, Fumio, Hana's eldest daughter, represents a woman with modern characteristics, who grew up in the Meiji era with the spirit of Japanese modernization and the spirit of change to abandon all traditional Japanese ideas that she considered no longer relevant to the modern era in which she lived. This difference gave rise to many conflicts between the two of them. The character Hanako is Fumio's daughter. She was born in Japan but spent her childhood until elementary school outside Japan with her parents. She and her family returned to Japan after the situation worsened before WW2. Hanako also experienced Japan's difficult times during the war and the post-war period.

Overall, the story in Kinokawa is told by a narrator, an anonymous agent who is not involved in the events told. Through the voice of the narrator, this novel presents external focalization of the female characters, whose voice responses in the form of their emotions and feelings. There is an expression of the thoughts and critical views of the female characters in the text through external focalization, which shows the tendency of the text to provide space for these characters to speak and express themselves. The dominant emphasis on female characters also shows the novel's bias towards women and the things they voice.

The problematic story of female characters intertwined with traditional values in traditional Japanese families in

this novel reveals women's agency amidst the shadowy practices of patriarchal domination and in facing the various ups and downs of Japan's conditions after the opening of the country in the Meiji era until after WW2. Although the Edo period as a marker of the feudal era ended in 1868, the traditional Japanese family system (ie) based on patriarchal order continued its traces into the following periods.

The influence of Neo-Confucian teachings which took root for three centuries in the Edo period, strongly built a patriarchal order that defined the roles and positions of men and women in Japanese families. In ie, men are positioned as the most important and the center of attention. In their lives, women always obey male figures. As revealed in the rules of gorin goso which explain that when a girl is subject to her biological father, after marriage she is obedient to her husband, and after being a widow she is obedient to her son. Thus, the implementation of patriarchal order in the traditional Japanese family system places women below the position of men. Through his work, Ariyoshi presents the twists and turns of women's struggle to be able to continue to survive the various challenges of the era, while highlighting women's agency in facing the practice of patriarchal domination that continues to haunt them.

There are four forms of women's agency depicted in this novel which are shown through the vitality of female characters in responding to the circumstances and challenges they face. The four female agencies are the capacity and ability to articulate their voices, the ability to stand firm, the ability to rise and survive, and the ability to do the best in their lives. By focusing on these four things, there seems to be an emphasis on the depiction of women's agency in Kinokawa which is different from the narrative about women who are inferior and powerless in traditional Japanese families.

3.1 Capacity and Ability To Articulate Their Voice

The form of women's agency is depicted in Kinokawa through the ability of female characters to articulate their views or opinions. The ability of women to express this opinion also shows the scope of the aspect of women's goal setting. This point is shown when Toyono debates Nobutaka when they are discussing a potential husband for Hana. Facing Nobutaka who has a different view does not discourage Toyono from voicing her opinion. Toyono conveys her personal view frankly, which can be interpreted as a form of female agency.

In traditional Japanese families, the eldest male has significant authority and power compared to other family members, especially female family members. In terms of determining and arranging marriage, the authority of the head of the family is decisive. Hierarchical relationships are maintained in family life to instill an instinctive respect for the age of family members and the superiority of men. This significant position is depicted through the character of Nobutaka who has the status of head of the Kimoto family, who is also the leader of the Kudoyama area. The authority of men as heads of families in a patriarchal society includes their role as decision-makers in various issues, including the marriage of their family members. The female agency depicted through the character of Toyono in her debate with Nobutaka in this novel underlines the issue of women's assertiveness and courage in facing patriarchal domination.

“Of course I have. I’m going to send her to the Matanis.”

So casually did she inform Nobutaka of her decision that he was quite taken aback....As head of the Kimoto family, Nobutaka felt that it was his duty to oppose his mother’s decision....Nobutaka was so taken aback by his mother’s argument that he could not

utter a word. Toyono was a great debater and she felt that she had to win every argument even if she failed to make any sense. Toyono had the habit of bringing the Meiji Restoration of 1868 into every discussion. On this occasion she concluded her argument by saying:

“The country’s not run on feudal lines anymore. There shouldn’t be all this fuss and bother just because a girl is about to be married.” (p.13-15)

The quote above is a depiction of agency in the form of the ability of female characters to convey their views and opinions directly to men. The manifestation of this female agency is seen through the opinion of the character Toyono 'Of course I have. I'm going to send her to the Matanis' which she expressed firmly and clearly. Her statement also voices the determination of the goals desired by the female character. The depiction of female agency presented through the character Toyono is also strengthened through the narrator's statement about Toyono when she conveys her opinion, in the sentence *'So casually did she inform Nobutaka of her decision...'* The existence of self-confidence in voicing her views is also an important indication of the existence of female agency in the character Toyono in facing and debating Nobutaka. Toyono's desire for her granddaughter (Hana) to marry into the Matanis family shows Toyono's capacity as an individual to act independently and freely from the determination of the structure emphasized in the traditional Japanese family system.

Toyono's statement received a surprised response from the character Nobutaka, as depicted by the narrator through the phrase 'he was quite taken aback.' This response emerged because Nobutaka did not expect that Toyono would express his views so frankly and openly. The quote *'As head of the Kimoto family, Nobutaka felt that it was his duty to oppose*

his mother's decision' shows a depiction of Nobutaka's efforts to show dominance and prioritize his status as a man in front of Toyono. The phrase *'his duty'* above shows Nobutaka's awareness of his status as head of the family. Nobutaka's inner expression voiced by the narrator, namely *'to oppose his mother's decision'* can be interpreted as Nobutaka's rejection of Toyono's efforts in decision-making, which Nobutaka believes is within his authority as the leader of the Kimoto family. The moment of argumentation between the characters Nobutaka and Toyono can also be interpreted as a depiction of the contestation between patriarchal dominance and women.

There is a depiction of increasing tension that arises because of Toyono's statement to Nobutaka which gives rise to a backlash from Nobutaka as a form of patriarchal domination against Toyono's claim as a woman. The backlash can also be interpreted as Nobutaka's attempt to assert his authority as head of the family. However, Toyono is adamant and establishes his agency through the statement *'The country's not running on feudal lines anymore. There shouldn't be all this fuss and bother just because a girl is about to be married.'* This statement clearly shows his open opposition to the practice of patriarchal domination. Women's agency is shown through Toyono who shows her capacity to choose and act individually until finally Nobutaka is depicted as unable to do anything about his mother's decision.

3.2 Ability To Stand Firm

Women's agency in the form of feelings of confidence and being able to realize these goals is depicted through women's ability to stand firm. This is shown through Hana's statement about her desire to marry the son of the Matani family. The relationship between Hana and her father in the traditional Japanese family structure is determined as a hierarchical relationship.

Although living in the confines of power relations, it does not necessarily make this female character silence her voice. The determination of goals comes from Hana's preferences about the prospective life partner that she considers right for her.

Nobutaka still would not give in. He sent for his daughter and asked her what her own wishes were. Hana gazed steadily at her father with her round eyes and replied:

“I would like to marry into the Matani family, because Musota is closer to Wakayama City than Suda.” (p.15)

The depiction of external focalization that explains the gaze and firm answer of the character Hana to the character Nobutaka in the quote above shows the agency of the female character in terms of decision-making. Through this character, a female figure is presented who tries to create fundamental changes in the power relations that surround her. Through the decision-making process as depicted in the quote above, the character Hana is depicted as being able to get out of routine behavior and try to change her environment. The quote above shows the self-confidence of the character Hana about the goal she wants to achieve, which is to marry the son of the Matani family. The firmness and determination of this female character can also be interpreted as a way for women to free themselves from the shackles of patriarchal domination.

Not only is she able to state her life path firmly, but Hana's agency also includes self-confidence in achieving her life goals, as well as being able to act to achieve those goals. In her household life with Keisaku, the character Hana is also depicted as having control and ability (sense of control and ability), which is also interpreted as a form of agency.

As depicted in the character Toyono in the discussion in the previous section, the character Hana who lives in a time when women inhabit a narrow space and have relatively limited freedom compared to men, does not discourage this character from expressing herself and asserting her choice in front of her father. The depiction of women's abilities through the character Hana in making decisions for themselves is also an important manifestation of women's agency to underline.

In addition to the character Hana, there is a depiction of steadfastness as a manifestation of women's agency through another female character, namely Fumio, Hana's daughter. Different from Hana who in Kinokawa is told not to have a frontal conflict, the character Fumio who has a stubborn and rebellious character is depicted as a character who often has open conflicts, especially with her biological mother, Hana.

The rebellion of the character Fumio, who is loud and outspoken in expressing her views, can also be interpreted as an effort by women to reject and fight against traditions that still exist regarding women's normality, women's roles in the family, and the institutional order of the family that oppresses and overshadows women.

“Really, Mother, you’re so hopelessly old-fashioned! You’re making yourself an enemy of all Japanese women by keeping me in shackles. As a member of the same sex, it’s unforgivable. (p. 97)

Fumio, who refused to live as a woman as Hana had hoped, chose to continue his studies in Tokyo to escape from his family. While living his life alone in the big city, Fumio found the freedom he desired. When he entered the age of marriage, Fumio rejected all matchmaking

efforts made by his parents. He firmly stated his views in the following quote:

Fumio firmly told her father, who had made his way to Tokyo upon his wife's return home, that she absolutely refused to have anything to do with an arranged marriage. "The thought that my marriage would unite our family with that old Hidaka family fills me with revulsion. If you force me to go through with the marriage interview, I swear I'll become a newspaper reporter and earn my own living. It'll be a good chance for me to prove that equal rights means economic equality as well." (p.139-140)

The influence of the liberal movement that spread in the Taisho era can be said to have emerged through the figure of Fumio who has a rebellious spirit. Fumio's firm rejection conveyed to her father in the quote above can be interpreted as a manifestation of the widespread atmosphere and influence of the new democracy in Japan, which rejects practices of maintaining tradition. Fumio, who is depicted as growing up as a modern woman and is influenced by the renewal movement in Japan, rebels against Hana who she considers outdated. This is shown through Fumio's threatening statement when she is about to be matched with a man chosen by her parents, namely *'I swear I'll become a newspaper reporter and earn my own living.'* This sentence shows Fumio's affirmation of her position as a woman who refuses to be restrained by the same shackles that bound Japanese women in previous periods. The mention of the profession of a newspaper reporter who earns her income is considered an uncommon life choice for women at that time, who generally got married and took care of the household. The difficulties experienced by Keisaku in dealing with his daughter are depicted through the narrator's explanation.

'Keisaku, who had no trouble directing the members of the Prefectural House to do as he wished, had a difficult time indeed handling his daughter. (p.141)

Fumio's desire to choose her life partner is also depicted when she states that she will marry Eiji through a letter she sends to her father.

She was informing her father of their love, hoping that he would give them his blessing. If he turned down the young man after looking into his family background, she could not predict at this point just what drastic step she would take. The tone of her letter was threatening.

"This is tragic! She is really infatuated," declared Keisaku, amused by the letter. (p.144)

The presence of Fumio's determination to uphold the principle of living a modern life and being consistent with her life goals is a form of female agency that is dominantly depicted in this novel. After marrying the man of her choice, Eiji, Fumio lives moving around outside Japan following her workplace. She sends news via letter to Hana several times about the life and modern lifestyle that she and her husband apply to their small family.

I have married a mere bank employee, but his future is bright. He and I will not be shackled to the past, since he is not from a distinguished family with an impressive name and farmlands handed down from generation to generation. Our motto is 'a modern life-style.' (p.154)

The quote above clearly states the goal of life desired by Fumio in the phrase *'will not be shackled to the past.'* The desire to be free from the shackles of rules and traditions that have been applied for a long time by her family is stated frankly by Fumio. The ideals to implement the principle of *'a modern lifestyle'* expressed

by Fumio can be interpreted as an indication of the desire for change from the past to a new era, and can also be interpreted as a form of women's rejection of being under the shadow of patriarchal domination, although in its journey, this principle cannot be fully realized in Fumio's household life. In her journey, Fumio is faced with the reality of challenges in carrying out her role as a wife and housewife similar to those faced by her mother, Hana, who is under the leadership of a man as the head of the family.

Ever since the wedding, Fumio had worked hard to be a devoted wife. Now that she was pregnant, she felt utterly exhausted from her efforts to please her husband and behaved like a spoiled child with her mother. (p.159-160)

The quote above provides a description of the heavy burden experienced by Fumio during her marriage, namely 'worked hard to be a devoted wife' and 'utterly exhausted from her efforts to please her husband. This expression shows that Japanese women still face the shadow of shackles and patriarchal domination, even though they live in the wind of democratic change towards a new direction at that time. This novel also provides a depiction of the fate of Japanese women who cannot immediately destroy the patriarchal domination that has been rooted in the lives of Japanese society at that time.

3.3 Ability to Rise and Survive

In addition to having confidence and control over her life choices, the third form of female agency is shown through women's ability to rise and create their own space of appreciation to survive amidst the pressure of patriarchal domination. In this novel, women are depicted as being able to act to create their happiness. This ability is manifested through women's actions in appreciating themselves in the face of patriarchal domination that oppresses them.

This ability also shows women's resilience in overcoming circumstances or situations that bind them.

This third form of agency is presented through the story of Hana when she is depicted giving birth to her second child, a girl. Hana tries to cheer herself up when Keisaku seems disappointed because the baby is a girl, as depicted in the following quote:

When Keisaku had expressed his disappointment that the baby was a girl, Hana had apologized, saying that she would have another child. However, from the time she was thoroughly convinced that the baby was a reincarnation of her grandmother, she no longer felt tired. A wave of elation swept over her and she congratulated herself for having given birth to a girl. (p.63-64)

Although Hana apologizes to Keisaku, she rises and grows her self-confidence through the depiction of her inner self that rejects Keisaku's behavior, which shows disregard for Hana's existence and role as a wife. This is revealed in the second sentence through the phrase '*she no longer felt tired.*' This phrase shows the perspective of the character Hana who initially felt depressed and guilty, then changed into a great energy that gave her strength, through the belief that the baby girl she had just given birth to was the reincarnation of her late grandmother, a figure who had always been her role model and supporter. In addition, this phrase can also be interpreted as a form of women's rejection of the oppression imposed on them. The character Hana shows women's agency by creating her own space of appreciation and freeing herself from the shackles of inferiority.

The phrase in the third sentence shows this. The phrase conveyed by the narrator through external focalization of the

character Hana, namely “...she congratulated herself for having given birth to a girl.” shows the individual's capacity to act independently and try to free themselves from the determination of the structure that binds them. This is a manifestation of women's ability to create their own space for happiness, as well as a manifestation of women's rejection of the position of being othered or considered low. Hana, who was raised in a patriarchal upbringing that strongly emphasizes the main role of women, namely giving birth to male offspring for the continuation of the family name, shows her agency as a woman in creating her own space for happiness to overcome the pressure and dominance of the patriarchy she feels.

A different situation, but still in the context of women's ability to rise and survive in unfavorable situations, is shown through the character of Hanako who lives her teenage years in a situation of war and the shadow of patriarchal domination. The struggle to continue living and realize her dream of completing her education shows women's agency in responding to the difficult situations she faces.

After all, I'm working my way through college. Since Father's death, I have been receiving scholarships and working part-time to pay for my tuition and clothing. ... And then, I shall think that, just as people lived in the distant past and will continue to exist in the years to come, however difficult the present may be for me, I must live for tomorrow. (p. 221-222)

The depiction of the character Hanako in the quote above shows the form of female agency that shows the autonomy of individual action. The ability of this female character to overcome problems is shown through her expression of trying to finish her studies with various hard work efforts. The expression ‘I have been receiving scholarships and working part-

time to pay for my tuition and clothing’ reflects the autonomous action taken by the character Hanako who is reluctant to submit to the circumstances that make it difficult for her. In addition, the next expression of the character Hanako which reads ‘*however difficult the present may be for me, I must live for tomorrow*’ also underlines the agency possessed by the character Hanako as a woman who can realize actual actions.

Not only has the war situation devastated her family's financial situation, but Hanako is also in a condition as a woman that requires her to struggle independently to achieve her dreams. Unlike her brother who is still prioritized to receive financial support from Fumio, even though their family's living conditions are very difficult, Hanako must continue to work independently to be able to meet her financial needs to complete her education.

Fumio kept a close eye on her bank account and her widow's pension, whose present value was greatly reduced because of the drastic devaluation of the Japanese currency. She felt that she had to be very frugal with her money until Akihiko had completed his university education and had entered a firm. (p. 223)

The quote above also explains the challenges experienced by the character Hanako who is not only faced with the difficult situation after Japan's defeat but also with the shadow of patriarchal domination that still prioritizes men over women. Hanako's actions in choosing not to be defeated by circumstances, show the form of female agency through her capacity to take action with a specific purpose and to achieve a specific goal, free from the threat of violence or punishment. Hanako's agency is presented through her ability as a woman to make her own decisions and take actions that affect her life. In other words, this is a depiction of the condition of being active and exerting power for oneself.

3.4 The Ability to Do the Best

The fourth form of female agency is shown through the ability of women to make the best efforts in living their lives. This novel provides a depiction of the productivity of female characters through the hard work that each of them does in achieving their life goals. This productivity is based on self-awareness as an independent, autonomous human being and not based on their submission and obedience to men. The ability to make the best efforts stems from the actual actions carried out by the female characters. This is illustrated by the character Hana in her statement to Fumio, as follows:

Fumio, you often said that you couldn't stand seeing a woman so completely dependent upon her husband and eldest son. You also said that being submissive was ridiculous. But I never thought of myself as being submissive. All I've done was to work as hard as I could. When your father was Speaker of the House, I did my best as the wife of the Speaker of the House. When your father became a member of parliament, I did my best as the wife of a member of parliament. And when Seiichiro entered Tokyo Imperial University, I did my best as the mother of a student attending Tokyo Imperial University. I really tried to do everything I could for Seiichiro until I realized that he was just a pale imitation of your father. There was nothing more I could do.” (p.234)

The phrase '*But I never thought of myself as being submissive*' shows the emphasis on the autonomy of Hana's character as a woman in joining Keisaku in marriage. The statement that she is not submissive to men, as Fumio believes, can be interpreted as an affirmation of her existence as a woman. She reaffirms herself through her next statement, namely, '*All I've done was to work as hard as I could.*'

to reject the assumption that her existence is subject to the control of patriarchal domination. This statement can also be interpreted as an affirmation of herself as a woman who has control, plays her role as well as possible, and is self-aware, within the framework of coexistence with men as life partners. The words '*I did my best*' which are repeatedly presented accompanying all the roles played by Hana in the quote above, show the emphasis she places on herself as a woman who believes she has the authority to live her life and her role as a wife and mother in the family.

'I really tried to do everything I could' shows Hana's rejection as a woman who is considered weak and submissive to men. She is depicted as playing her role not because of her submission to men, either to her husband or her son. She rejects all forms of negation of the hard work she has done and rejects her hard work being considered meaningless because it is considered to be a supporter in perpetuating male dominance over women. Her statement can be interpreted as an effort to emphasize women's agency, which includes women's ability to carry out their roles as well as possible through hard work and actual action. In other words, through the character of Hana, this novel conveys a perspective on women's lives in carrying out their roles as human beings who are aware of their life goals and carry out the best actual actions that cannot be ignored to be said to be part of women's agency.

In presenting different perspectives of women because they are influenced by different eras, Ariyoshi tries to show various dimensions of the situations faced by women, with various tensions that arise but describes the ability of each woman to take action, to live her life according to the goals she has set. Their ability to take action based on their choices and life goals also shows their resilience and fighting power which are a form of women's agency.

Although the female characters presented by Ariyoshi in the Kinokawa novel each choose different goals, some of which are even depicted as contradictory, all of them show the figure of women who are empowered and have sense of agency. These women are depicted acting based on their chosen life goals, struggling to face various situations, and surviving in their ways, not only from the patriarchal domination that continues to shadow them from time to time but also surviving the complexity of the pre-war to post-war situations faced by Japan at that time.

4. Conclusion

Although the four female characters are depicted living in different eras, all of them are depicted as women who have life goals, demonstrate the ability to achieve their goals, and act based on goals, which are three important elements of agency. This also shows when and how women can influence their own lives, their families, and their communities.

In Kinokawa, there is an observation of external focalization that is dominant towards the four female characters, which shows Ariyoshi's novel's bias towards the story and fate of Japanese women. The use of external focalization indicates its use as a narrative strategy in presenting the views and feelings of female characters. Through this strategy, this novel observes and emphasizes the capacity and autonomy of female characters in facing the changing times in the shadow of patriarchal domination.

Four forms of female agency are presented through their various abilities, capacities, and strengths in facing the dominance of Japanese patriarchy and the various challenges of the times. Through this novel, Ariyoshi describes the demands made on Japanese women, both by others and by themselves, and reveals their strengths. The resilience and fighting spirit of these female characters show a form of resistance against the patriarchal narrative

that builds a stigmatization of women as weak, helpless, and inferior to men. The agency of these female characters also shows the continuity of women's strength from time to time. With a strong yet calm voice, Ariyoshi develops female characters who live and stand out in a world dominated by men.

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