

Digital Detox and Rediscovering Self through Literature and Human Connection in Satoshi Yogisawa's *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop*: A Study

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Abstract

Isolation and emotional upheavals are intensifying day by day in an increasingly digitalized world. Satoshi Yogisawa's *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop* (2023) profoundly articulates literary realm and human associations as an aid for digital alienation and self-discovery. This paper focuses on how meaningful human interactions and reading serves as conscious modes of digital detox, giving characters time for introspection, and reweaving of the self by fostering resilience and emotional well-being. Takako, a young woman, the protagonist of the novel is estranged by broken trust and social detachment, and her journey beautifully captures the essence of it.

Keywords: Digital alienation, detox, reflection, relationships, family, self-discovery, emotional renewal, bookshop, attention, bonding, mindfulness and healing.

Introduction:

The uproar of the digital world in the twenty-first century is infused with hyper-connectivity and leaving individuals feel lonelier than ever before. People are in touch via various social media apps but they have lost the connections and bonds they once shared. While technology affirms proximity and inclusiveness, it often facilitates aloofness, anxiety, and a disrupted inner self. Within this context, Satoshi Yagisawa's *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop* (2023) offers a literary refuge from digital fatigue. The novel serves as a tranquil withdrawal into the analog world where the smell and touch of the paper, the weight and feel of a book, and the warmth of human interaction usurps the icy shimmer of digital devices.

The female protagonist, Takako, struggles with a soul-wrenching heartbreak as her boyfriend and one of her colleagues betrays her and marries one another. As a result, she resigned from her workplace as they were in the same company. Takako perfectly embodies the modern individual grappling between attachment and hollowness.

Despite having social media and technology, she doesn't receive any comfort from it, rather it drains her. She tries to sought refuge into the digital world, but endless scrolling only worsened her ache by reminding her she has nothing of what others seems to have. Every picture, every smile, all sorts of online whispers and notifications causes her to compare her broken pieces to others' perfect lives. The more she scrolled, the more she lost her peace, and purpose of her own life. Instead of healing, she turned herself into a chaotic mess and disconnected from others and as well as her own self. Due to lack of genuine virtual connections, and unbearable pain she finds solace in sleeping. Takao narrates,

The coping mechanism I ultimately went with was to devote my life to sleep. Even I was surprised by how sleepy I was. I know it was probably my body's way of helping me avoid reality, but once I buried myself in my covers, I would fall asleep right away. I spent days in a deep sleep in my little room, drifting all alone through outer space. (Yagisawa 5)

Eventually, destiny had other plans for her. A serendipitous phone call from Satoru, her long-lost uncle, awakens her to a new beginning. She isn't particularly fond of him. He seems rather strange and eccentric to her. Nonetheless, she reluctantly accepts his proposal to help him at his bookshop in Tokyo to live rent-free in the tiny room above his bookshop, hoping to disappear from the world to mend her wounded spirit. Nestled in Jimbocho, Tokyo, the Morisaki Bookshop has remained in her family for three generations. It is the greatest treasure of her uncle, who has devoted his life to the bookshop since his wife Momoko left him five years earlier. The Morisaki Bookshop truly alters the rhythm of Takako's existence. She voices gently,

I will always remember the days I spent there. Because that's where my real life began. And I know, without a doubt, that if not for those days, the rest of my life would have been bland, monotonous, and lonely. The Morisaki Bookshop is precious to me. It's a place I know I'll never forget. (Yagisawa 1)

The Morishaki Bookshop becomes a heavenly space for the weary heart. It is not just a sphere of commerce to buy books but also a living keeper of human sentiments, narratives and memories. Within this cozy nook Takako learns valuable lessons from her uncle, from the books she reads and through the genuine interactions with the people she meets out there. Satoru, Takako's eccentric uncle, becomes both mentor and companion to her during the storm of her life. Their relationship evolves from estrangement to empathy, friendship and unbreakable bond. Through his shared wisdom she comes to understand that,

It's important to stand still sometimes. Think of it as a little rest in the long journey of your life. This is your harbor. And your boat is just dropping anchor here for a little while. And after you're well rested, you can set sail again. (Yagisawa 31)

She is reminded by her uncle that love is wonderful. He proclaims, Don't be afraid to love someone. When you fall in love, I want you to fall in love all the way. Even if it ends in heartache, please don't live a lonely life without love. I've been so worried that because of what happened you'll give up on falling in love. Love is wonderful. I don't want you to forget that. Those memories of people you love, they never disappear. They go on warming your heart as long as you live. (Yagisawa 65)

In addition, Sabu, a long-time friend of her uncle and a regular at Morisaki Bookshop for around twenty years, gently nudges Takako toward the world of books. He inquires whether she reads, and when he finds out that she does not, he utters, Young people today, they don't read books anymore. They just play computer games. It's hopeless. And even if they do read books, it's just manga or these shallow little stories on their cell phones. They're only seeing the surface of things. And if you don't want to be a shallow person, then you should try reading some of the books in this place. (Yagisawa 18)

The Morisaki Bookshop is presented by Yagisawa as a symbol of mindfulness, mirroring peace in sharp contrast to the chaotic, pervasive noise of digital culture. The scent and warmth of paper, the weathered feel of aged covers, and the tranquil stillness within the lines evoke presence, encouraging Takako to embrace the immediacy of the moment. She rediscovers the restorative cadence of life, one grounded in contemplation and soulful connection rather than the ceaseless digital distractions. Her uncle leads her toward the quiet realization that, "It's funny. No matter where you go, or how many books you read, you still know nothing, you haven't seen anything. And that's life. We live our lives trying to find our way." (Yagisawa 31)

In Morisaki Bookshop, instead of taking refuge in sleep, Takako immersed herself in the realm of books to change her routine and to keep herself occupied apart from working there. The act of reading, grounded in serene introspection became a means of emotional renewal and psychological healing for her. She admits, It was as if, without realizing it, I had opened a door I had never known existed. That's exactly what it felt like. From that moment on, I read relentlessly, one book after another. It was as if a love of reading had been sleeping somewhere deep inside me all this time, and then it suddenly sprang to life. I read slowly, savoring each book one by one. I had all the time in the world then. And there was no danger I'd run out of books, no matter how much I read. I'd never experienced anything like this before. It made me feel like I had been wasting my life until this moment. (Yagisawa 35)

Takako mentions, I have no doubt that my new routine helped brighten my mood. Things were still knotted up inside me, but it felt like the more I walked, the more they loosened

up. Perhaps, as a result, it was that time I started to get to know more people around the neighborhood. (Yagisawa 38)

After Takako starts working at a cafe near the bookshop she meets Wada, who offers new insight to live her life fully. He listens to her without judgement and lets her open up at her own pace. Wada's friendship and constant attention helps her to rebuild trust and encourages to reconnect with the world outside her solitude. Through their shared experiences and genuine conversations regarding books and life, Wada uplifts her spirit by reminding her the warmth of human connections. He teaches her that it doesn't matter whether you know a lot about books or not. What matters far more with a book is how it affects you.

Even before she realises it, Takako's life flutters forward into a zone of transition. She discovers the bibliophile in her, makes new friends, confronts her insecurities and forges genuine human relationships. The circle of life manifests itself in the relationship Takako shares with Satoru. She learns about Satoru's depressing teenage phase and how her birth led him to "a kind of epiphany" around that time. "Mystery of life" filled his heart with warmth and excitement to break out of his cage.

This revelation changes Takako's feelings towards her uncle. It gives her the courage and inspiration to face her fear and step into the real world with an honest heart. Uncle and niece gradually build a solid bond, which becomes the source of Takako's strength. Satoru is struggling with a personal loss as well. His wife Momoko left him without any apparent reason. The second part of the book deals with Momoko's reappearance after five years. This subplot details the tenderness and fragility of human relationships. Takako's maturity and sensitivity help the couple reunite.

Momoko reconnects Takako with the natural world by taking her on a rejuvenating trip to the mountains. She makes her realize that, "People can live anywhere if they put their mind to it." (Yagisawa 116)

Momoko believes in finding comfort in small, living things. These include flowers in bloom, sunlight streaming through the bookshop windows, and the steady passage of time. This perspective helps Takako reconnect with the real, sensory world. It draws her away from digital numbness and emotional withdrawal. The depth of this connection is articulated in Takako's own narration:

Outside the window, we were surrounded by dense green foliage. The trees swayed gently in the breeze. Now and then we heard a bird call that might have been a thrush. The mountains in the distance were shrouded in mist. Up above, drifting slowly across the aqua-blue sky, was a group of little, dappled clouds that looked like a school of fish. As I stared at

the view, I felt myself losing all sense of time...Listening to the soothing sound of water in the dappled light that streamed through the trees eased my weariness a little.(Yagisawa 115,125)

Under Momoko's gentle influence, Takako's anxieties about missing out on the fast-paced, digital world gradually evolve into a serene appreciation for simplicity — a shift from FOMO(fear of missing out) to JOMO(joy of missing out). Through her mountain trip and moments of quiet reflection, she learns that fulfillment arises not from constant engagement but from the joy of being present and connected with nature and self.

The novel's setting, Jimbocho, Tokyo's renowned "book town," holds profound symbolic significance. It represents the unyielding essence of literary tradition amid the encroachment of the digital age. The labyrinth of secondhand bookshops and narrow streets stands as a living vessel of remembered lives and lingering words where stories are *experienced*, not merely *consumed* online. Through this setting, Yagisawa situates his narrative there to remind readers that reading is not an outdated ritual, but a necessary antidote to the speed and instability of contemporary life—a means of restoring focus, depth, and calm.

By the story's culmination, Takako undergoes a nuanced but profound change. She emerges from solitude by embracing reality and accepting the truths she once denied. Instead of wasting time in anguish, she shifts her perspective towards life and gradually attains tranquility and joy. Her emotional renewal and zest for living signifies that healing is not about forgetting the past but about deriving meaning within it. The books, and the relationships she nurtures shed light on the spaces where imperfection is acknowledged rather than concealed, as part of human existence.

To conclude, Satoshi Yagisawa's *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop* elevates the notion that digital detox is not solely about disconnecting from technology rather, it's about mindfully fostering calmness within self and cultivating genuine, heartfelt bonds. *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop* isn't merely a tale of healing ; it serves as a gentle reminder that beauty and peace lies in slowing down. As well as, tuning in and mindful presence plays a vital role in rediscovering the self. Satoshi Yagisawa encourages us to disconnect from the glare of the screens and reconnect with wisdom, solace that lives within the walls of literature.

References:

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