

# Sayaka Murata as a master of psychological fiction in Japan

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**Abstract.** This article devoted to the Sayaka Murata's novel "Convenience Store Woman" which psychological image occupies a significant amount of the work, acquires relative independence and becomes extremely important for understanding the content of the work itself, in which a special artistic quality called psychologist arises.

**Key words:** Psychologist, psychological novel, I-novel, Japanese novel, Sayaka Murata, Convenience store woman, character

## Introduction.

Psychologist is the development and portrayal by means of fiction of the inner world of the character: his thoughts, experiences, desires, emotional state, etc., and an image that differs in detail and depth. "The main forms of psychological analysis can be divided into the depiction of characters "from the inside" – that is, through artistic cognition of the inner world of the actors, expressed through internal speech, images of memory and imagination; psychological analysis "from the outside", expressed in the psychological interpretation by the writer of expressive features of speech, speech behavior, mimic and other means of external manifestations of the psyche"[1].

Naturally, each form of psychological image has different cognitive, pictorial and expressive capabilities. In the works of writers of "psychologists", as a rule, all three forms are used to embody spiritual movements. However, the leading role in the system of psychologism is played, of course, by the direct form – the direct recreation of the processes of a person's inner life. As Sayaka Murata did, revealing the inner state of the main character Keiko Furukura with the help of a direct form of psychological image.

Let's get acquainted with the basic techniques of psychologism, with the help of which the image of the inner world is achieved in Sayaka Murata's novel "Convenience Store Woman".

The narrative itself in this novel about the inner life of the main character Keiko Furukura is conducted in the first person. It creates a great illusion of the plausibility of the psychological picture, since a person talks about herself. In addition, Sayaka Murata's psychological narration in the first person acquires the character of a confession, which enhances the impression, allowing the author to introduce the reader into the inner world of the character without any restrictions and show her in the most detail and deeply, which we see in the following examples.

"By the end of elementary school, I was almost completely silent, but now it turned out to be a problem. And for me, silence became a salvation, a valuable worldly wisdom that helped me survive. The report card recommended me to "make more friends and play outside more often!", but I did not give up and did not say more than necessary. My family loved me with all their heart and cherished me – that's why they worried. I remember once I overheard a parent talking, they were consulting how to "cure" me. "Yeah, so something needs to be fixed in me," I thought then [3]."

From the above example, it is necessary to pay attention to the special character of Keiko Furukura – even as a child, she initially differs in individuality, she has her own vision of the world. The girl has a complex character, she does not suit others when she talked, following her impulses, and when she "fell silent" so that her parents decided to cure her.

The main character of the novel, Keiko Furukura, seems strange to others since childhood. Similarly, the people around her seemed incomprehensible to her. In elementary school, she commits strange inappropriate acts, such as beating the boys with a shovel to stop fighting, pulling off the teacher's clothes to make her calm down, and trying to get her mother to cook a dead bird

found in the park for lunch - the first thought was to fry it and eat it – while the other children were sad about the bird and decorated her grave with flowers.

Thus, since childhood, she has a number of features that do not allow her to fit into a number of "normal" people. She does not understand many human "conventions" and her level of empathy is quite low. And once, having received such a status of a loser, she continues to consider herself more and more different from everyone else.

One day, Keiko Furukura saw an ad about finding employees in a new combini (a convenience store where you can buy all the essentials, withdraw cash from an ATM or send a letter) and got a job. The whole family then breathed a sigh of relief: Keiko finally had something to do, now she will start communicating with people and become normal.

"When I first got a part-time job, my family was very happy. And even when, after graduation, I told them that I would not leave the minimarket, they supported me – apparently, given my unsociability, they considered even part-time work an unprecedented progress [3]."

The author includes a variety of psychological depiction techniques in the novel: lyrical digressions, dreams, etc. easily and freely flow into Murata's narrative elements.

Keiko Furukura has already become a part of this combini, she knows all its processes and routines when she is out of work – she thinks about work, she even falls asleep to the mental sounds of the combini in her head.

"Probably because I work almost every day, I often dream about standing at the cash register. Oh, there's no price on the new chips! Ah, the hot drinks are sold out, we need to replenish the showcase! I often jump up in the middle of the night from such dreams. And one day I happened to wake up from my own "Welcome!"

And here are examples of several lyrical digressions, in which the Keiko's personality is already breaking through, her personal opinion, her own judgments are displayed: "I think that we are still people, constantly "infecting" others with ourselves and "infecting" ourselves [3]."

Psychological introspection also applies to the techniques of psychological image. The essence of this technique is that complex mental states are decomposed into components and thus explained, become clear to the reader. Here, for example, is a psychological self-analysis of Keiko Furukura's condition: "The normal world works in a coercive mode, so abnormal elements are gradually squeezed out of it. The dregs of society are disposed of. Apparently, we will have to "get better". If I don't get better, normal people will throw me into the landfill. It seemed to me that I finally understood why my family is trying so desperately to "correct" me [3]."

As we can see from the example above, the narrative focuses on reflection, psychological self-assessment and introspection of Keiko Furukura.

An equally important and frequently encountered method of psychologism is an internal monologue – the direct fixation and reproduction of the character's thoughts, to a greater or lesser extent imitating the real psychological patterns of internal speech. Using this technique, the author seems to "eavesdrop" on the character's thoughts in all their naturalness, unintentionality and rawness [5].

In addition, the internal monologue usually reproduces the speech manner of this character, and therefore his manner of thinking. Here, as an example, is an excerpt from Keiko Furukura's inner monologue:

"Somewhere deep down I wanted a change. I thought that any changes – even bad, even good – in my stagnant situation will still be for the better [3]."

It should be noted that the whole narrative of the novel is imbued with psychologism, its role is key in the development, transformation and formation of the image of the main character Keiko Furukura. Maneuvering between the shelves, listening to the voice of the store and fulfilling the wishes of customers, she feels significant. She is an important component of the harmonious world of combini. But a person whose idea of happiness differs from the ideas of others inevitably faces misunderstanding.

Keiko Furukura has a character that does not fit into the usual concepts of society. She does what, in her opinion, seems "normal", but this does not allow her to become part of a society in which her normal behavior is neither natural nor rational, but represents a complete rejection and

misunderstanding of her intentions on the part of society, as it differs from the usual stereotypes by its spontaneity and individuality.

Keiko Furukura's direct and independent attitude to the world around her led to the fact that in childhood she experienced a deep psychological trauma. Everyone concentrated on bringing her to a normal state and forcing her to adapt to society, to "cure" her of an ailment that no one could clearly describe to her.

Working in a store for most students is just a temporary part-time job, but for Keiko it's all she ever wanted. This world with its easily understandable rules, in which her daily interaction and communication with people brings her pleasure.

Sayaka Murata's novel is based on traditional Japanese ideas about society as an artificially formed environment; the belief that people should serve society through work or family; people are exceptions - evil, such should be disposed of. Keiko Furukura does not refute all these social regulations with her life and actions and does not resist them. She just physically cannot be in tune with them and suffers and suffers from that.

Simply and without drama, Sayaka Murata tells the reader the story of a psychologically traumatized child who was not allowed to be herself, because he was taught from childhood to live with an eye on others. Having matured, Keiko Furukura grows a "human combini", a superhero of the new age, whose main ability is to mimic in order not to differ from the general mass [4].

The reader expects that a turning point will happen in the Keiko's life: the "savior" will come, pull her out of the clutches of everyday life, and the Cinderella story will repeat. But Murata understands very clearly how expectations are formed, and treats them mockingly. The personal choice of the main character is important to her - no matter how strange, absurd and incomprehensible it may be to people chasing mythical social success.

"Forgive me or not – I will not stop being an employee of a minimarket. Maybe, from a human point of view, it's better for me to have you around. In this case, both family and friends calm down and, it seems, take me for their own kind. However, as an employee of a minimarket, I absolutely do not need you [3]."

There are legends about Japanese workaholicism as a national trait, but here this workaholicism is in the name of itself. Display exactly the product. Bend in a practiced slight bow, greeting customers. Make sure that the price tags are in place. Eighteen years in a row, part-time at the starting position - not out of hopelessness, but because it is her own choice.

"Convenience Store Woman" is a book about Keiko and her kind, through the images of which a person's collision with his own fear is shown. The more the book pushes for a reassessment of values, the more obvious it is how much a person is subordinate to the social order. Looking at Keiko, who tries, albeit clumsily, to control herself, the reader inevitably realizes how much he is influenced by society and the life principles imposed on him by this society.

In modern society, many people, like Keiko, define themselves through work. In this case, the book can also be read as a warning: when you do something for a very long time - for example, eighteen years – it completely absorbs you from the inside and deprives you of flexibility. A profession defines a person more than anything else. It's hard to imagine how Keiko Furukura would have found a new job (and herself) if all the stores in Japan had replaced the sellers with robots at once. On the other hand, concentration, even painful, in one case allows you to achieve perfection, which is clearly seen in the main character [2].

People tend to devalue the work of others. The role of others in society. Their talent for a business that seems ordinary and nothing outstanding. Keiko Furukura suffers until she clearly realizes that this store for her is much more than a place of work. And not because she has worked in it for a significant part of her life, but because she actually lives with the combini in piece. Sayaka Murata herself calls Keiko Furukura an "animal from the store", that is, a creature devoted to its owner. But in fact, Keiko found her place and purpose here in the store and eventually found herself, became a self-sufficient, confident person with high self-esteem and a professional manager of the combini, which can be traced even by the change of tone of the main character by the end of the novel.

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To sum up, for Sayaka Murata, there are no secrets in Keiko Furukura's soul – the author knows everything about her, can trace internal processes in detail, explain the causal relationship between impressions, thoughts, experiences.

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