



## The image of the main character in Sayaka Murata's novel "Convenience store woman"

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### ABSTRACT

This article is devoted to the main character of the famous I-novel written by modern Japanese writer Sayaka Murata – "Convenience store woman". The novel brought the writer great popularity and many literary awards, one of which is the most prestigious literary award in Japan – the Akutagawa Ryunosuke Award. Since in many ways this novel is autobiographical and based on Sayaka Murata's own life experience, she managed to deeply reveal many of the current problems of modern society in Japan by the example of the image of the main character in the novel "Convenience store woman".

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## Sayaka Murataning "Minimarket odami" romanidagi bosh qahramon obrazi

### ANNOTATSIYA

#### **Kalit so'zlar:**

Sayaka Murata,  
Ego-roman,  
"Minimarket odami",  
avtobiografik roman,  
tarjima hol,  
yapon jamiyati,  
zamonaviy jamiyatning  
mentaliteti,  
zamonaviy yapon adabiyoti,  
badiiy obraz.

Ushbu maqola zamonaviy yapon yozuvchisi Sayaka Murataning mashhur "Minimarket odami" romanining bosh qahramoniga bag'ishlangan. Roman yozuvchiga katta mash'hurlik va ko'plab adabiy mukofotlarni olib keldi, ulardan biri Yaponiyadagi eng nufuzli adabiy mukofot – Akutagava Ryunosuke mukofoti hisoblandi. Ushbu roman ko'p jihatdan avtobiografik va Sayaka Murataning o'z hayotiy tajribasiga asoslanganligi sababli u "Minimarket odami" romanidagi bosh qahramon obrazi misolida Yaponiyaning zamonaviy jamiyatining bir qator dolzarb muammolarini chuqur ochib berishga muvaffaq bo'ldi.

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# Образ главной героини в романе Саяка Мураты «Человек минимаркета»

## АННОТАЦИЯ

### Ключевые слова:

Саяка Мурата,  
эго-роман,  
«Человек минимаркета»,  
автобиографический  
роман,  
автобиография,  
японское общество,  
ментальность  
современного общества,  
современная японская  
литература,  
художественный образ.

Данная статья посвящена главной героине известного романа современной японской писательницы Саяка Мураты – «Человек минимаркета». Роман принес писательнице огромную популярность и множество литературных премий, одна из которых самая престижная литературная награда в Японии – премия Акутагавы Рюноске. Так как во многом данный роман является автобиографичным и основывается на собственном жизненном опыте Саяка Мураты, ей удалось глубоко раскрыть многие актуальные проблемы современного общества Японии на примере образа главной героини в романе «Человек минимаркета».

## INTRODUCTION

“Convenience store woman” is a novel written by modern Japanese writer Sayaka Murata, published in 2016. It reflects the atmosphere of a store familiar to the Japanese, which is an integral part of city life in Japan. The novel received the Akutagawa Prize in 2016 [6]. The work is largely autobiographical. Sayaka Murata has been working in a minimarket for 18 years. Based on her personal experience, she wrote the novel “Convenience store woman”, which became very famous.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sayaka Murata’s I-novel “Convenience store woman” was taken as an example to give more specific information about the female image in modern Japanese literature.

The main female image of the novel, Keiko Furukura, has some problems with her temper as she 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 [1]. The novel is written in retrospect. At the beginning of the novel, our narrator Keiko Furukura has been working in the same store for 18 years.

Keiko’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, “cure” her of an ailment that no one could clearly describe to her. Her only connection to the human world is her younger sister, who overcomes this gap by explaining to her why people find her behavior strange and advises her how to act in such a way as to avoid condemnation and discontent on their part. Therefore, even as a child, Keiko decides to hide her true character and put on a mask of “normality”. “I will no longer do anything on my own”, she recalls, “I will either just imitate what everyone else is doing, or just follow the instructions [4]”.

After graduation, Furukura works as a shop assistant: for most students, this is just a temporary part-time job, but for her, 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. The Japanese minimarket, like most Japanese institutions, operates in accordance with clearly defined rules: at the entrance, customers are greeted with certain phrases (greetings, offers, gratitude), and perform daily routine tasks (restocking on shelves, preparing products, helping customers). For her, this is everything she could have dreamed of, and that's why she has been working in it for 18 years. Keiko finds her destination in the store, which allows her to forget about the impulses of her extraordinary personality, and it's time to become an inconspicuous part of the service, in fact, a human robot. She has practically no life outside of her job. Keiko Furukura also relies on the personality and behavior of her colleagues to maintain her "normality" [5]. She secretly imitates them in everything. "My current self is almost completely formed from the people around me", she muses at one point. "Currently, I am 30 percent made up of Ms. Izumi, 30 percent of Sugawara, 20 percent of the manager, and the rest is occupied by previous colleagues [4]".

She can't understand why her friends, family, and even coworkers think that she has probably been tired of working in a convenience store for a long time and that someday she would like something more than just being an employee of this store. Her long-term work as the most junior staff in the service no longer meets the ethical standards of the environment to which she belongs. Furukura's sister, who has been a support for her since childhood, helps her come up with bizarre stories about her parents and ill-fated love relationships to explain her long stay in the minimarket and the status of an unmarried woman. But the older Furukura gets, the less convincing these arguments become for others.

Furukura herself would be happy working in the store for the rest of her life, but that would be unacceptable to the society she lives in. "If it's very difficult to find a good job, then at least you should get married," her classmate's boyfriend says at a meeting she attends [4].

However, everything begins to change when she meets Shiraha, a new employee of the minimarket, working for a short time, who did not fit into the automated environment of the store at all. His sullen, negative attitude to everything did not allow him to work in the store for a long time. He is convinced that society has turned away from him and that everyone is hounding and persecuting him. Therefore, he does not even try to seem normal, and very soon he is fired from the minimarket. But when the main character gets to know him better, it becomes clear that Shiraha's initially seemingly hostile attitude towards people is actually rooted in his inability to fit into society. The reason that prompted him to get a job in the store was, as he himself admits, "hunting for a bride" [4].

Shiraha is a pathetic and at the same time quite typical image of that kind of youth who cannot understand why he is such a loser in life but has neither motivation nor the slightest desire to do anything about it, to change his current situation. Furukura, under her friends' pressure and family, to find a partner, thinks about dating Shiraha: their fictitious marriage will force her friends and family to stop constant interrogations about her, as relatives and friends will be calm about the fact that she has arranged her personal life. And Shiraha's only requirement is that she allows him to completely isolate

himself from the outside world and live in her bathroom and feed him like a pet. In this case, he no longer needs to try his best to justify his existence in a world where society and established stereotypes put pressure on him as well as on the main character. Here we see a modern example of the gender division of labor: Furukura is expected to interact with society, work and provide for both of them, while Shiraha will stay at home and play with his tablet.

For a workaholic Keiko, this is an opportunity to create the imitation of a romantic relationship, for a loafer man, life with Keiko is an excellent shelter from the injustice of a cruel world. But their life together violates the fragile mental balance that Keiko has maintained and strengthened in herself throughout these eighteen years [2].

The sarcastic remarks of the roommate expose her emptiness, the gaping emptiness of her personal space, which Keiko refused to notice for so many years. Refusal, or denial is a primitive mechanism of psychological defense, a subconscious attempt to ignore a problem whose existence is obvious to any outside observer. And the one who denies the obvious looks infantile and eccentric in the eyes of others.

The head of the minimarket and Furukura's coworkers also find out about her relationship with Shiraha, and they begin to be very insistently interested in her not just as another employee of the minimarket, but as a woman who wants to start a family. This overly heightened interest in her personal life eventually prompts Furukura to leave the store. Although her colleagues consider her decision a reason for congratulations, thinking that she is leaving the convenience store for a better life and will finally be able to get married.

Then Shiraha tries to find a permanent job for Furukura on the Internet, but on the day of the scheduled interview, Furukura accidentally finds herself in some store where there is no order, to which she is so used to in the former store where she worked for many years. And after seeing this in a store, the main character impulsively begins to rearrange the goods and give reasonable and worthwhile advice to the staff, for which they are very grateful to her. Shiraha literally drags her out of the store, but Furukura understands that she can truly function and realize herself in life only as a "minimarket person".

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

As discussed above, the main theme of this work is the struggle of a lonely person for his place in society. But to become a part of it, you need to be able to adapt to it, fit into its framework. Following this logic, Keiko Furukura, wearing a mask of "normality", tried to fit into society and adapt to it. This is the price she had to pay to be accepted in society, to hide her identity deeply from the outside world, and thoughtlessly comply with all the rules of society. But it was thanks to the meeting with Shiraha that she felt even more keenly that her vocation was to be a part of the minimarket, its employee, and she was finally happy to understand what her purpose was. Now her choice has become conscious and no Shiraha needs to create the appearance of well-being. She found her identity.

## **CONCLUSION**

To sum up, the autobiographical method in literary studies has not lost its significance. Many writers continue to be influenced by autobiography, including Sayaka Murata, whose work "Convenience Store Woman" is directly related to this genre.

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