



WORD PICTURES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND INTERIOR IN SAYAKA MURATA'S I-NOVEL "CONVENIENCE STORE WOMAN"

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Abstract

In this article the artistic images of the environment and interior and their features are shown in modern Japanese I-novels using the example of Sayaka Murata's work called "Convenience Store Woman". The novel is also interesting because through the prism of the interiors of shops, modern Tokyo, we are introduced to the system of shopping services in minimarkets in Japan, as well as some relationships in the Japanese family and society.

Keywords: image, interior, irony, grotesque, Sayaka Murata, "Convenience store woman", I-novel, Japanese novel

Introduction

Interior (from the French *interieur* – interior) is an image of the interior of a building. In the literary studies, the interior shows the living conditions of the characters and is thus used mainly to describe the characters, social environment [1]. In Sayaka Murata's novel "Convenience Store Woman", the interior plays one of the crucial roles, since it is through the interiors of the convenience store, the apartment of the main character, as well as the streets of modern Tokyo, that the image of Keiko Furukura is revealed. The novel is narrated in the first person, and the deliberate simplicity of the text reflects the way the main character thinks. There are a lot of colloquialism here, even a fantastic one, and the main ideas are repeated several times. The surrounding world is described mainly through sounds.

"I raise my head to a quiet rustle – someone took a bottle with a drink, and a new one rolled out in its place. Many visitors take cold drinks last, so my body involuntarily reacts to this sound. After making sure that the girl with the mineral water did not go to the cash register, but to look for dessert for herself, I lower my eyes again [3]."

The novel describes in great detail and in detail the process of study, internship and instruction for the entry into office of employees of a Japanese convenience store – *comбини*.

"Finally, an instructor appeared and handed us uniforms. We put it on and cleaned ourselves up, checking the pictures on the poster about proper appearance. The girls with long hair gathered them into a bun, we took off our watches and other accessories and, so different before, in an instant turned into employees of a minimarket. First of all, we practiced facial expressions and greetings. Looking at a poster with a smiling person, we also lifted the corners of our mouths and stretched our facial muscles, and

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then, lining up in a row, we took turns saying: "Welcome!". Here and there you could hear "One more time!" when someone spoke too softly or smiled not too naturally [3]. " Everything that the main character hears in the mini-market: greetings from sellers, the squeak of the scanner, the rustle of packaging – makes up her favorite "Symphony of Combi". The "utilitarian" style (a minimum of descriptions and reflection) exposes the author's intention and leaves the reader alone with thoughts about the nature of society. In this novel, the author managed to create a surprisingly voluminous, closed world full of sounds, smells and light – the narrative almost does not go beyond the store. The situation of the Smile-Mart convenience store corresponds to the character of the Keiko Furukura, that is, what has changed.

"By evening, the office lights line up and the landscape changes. The lighting here is not at all the same as in my area of cheap apartments – the lights here are inanimate, all shine with the same even light [3]."

The main character constantly thinks about the store, compares the round-the-clock minimarket with a box filled with light.

"I feel like the morning hours are changing each other in perfect order in this small box filled with light [3]."

And Keiko compares one of the main characters Shiraha to a wire hanger.

"At the voice of the head of store, the door quietly opened slightly, and a lanky guy, clearly over 180 cm tall, who looked like a wire hanger, slouching, entered the back room [3]."

The saleswoman Keiko serves clearly, automatically, almost like a robot, although intuition plays an important role in her profession. In the description of the goods of the store in every possible way you can find various dishes of national Japanese cuisine.

Keiko lives separately from her parents in a modest apartment not far from her place of work – combini. The interior of her home reflects the national flavor of Japanese life, for example, such an attribute as a futon – a traditional Japanese bedding in the form of a thick cotton mattress, spread out at night for sleeping and put away in the closet in the morning [2].

"When I get home, I invariably fall on the futon always spread out in my tiny apartment [3]."

The national Japanese flavor can be traced not only in the landscape and interior sketches of the store, but also in live speech, dialogues. This is demonstrated by the author on the example of dialogues with Shiraha. This character has a pretty competent speech, he likes to speculate on high topics. Using the example of this remark, one can see his reflection on the modern structure of the institution of marriage, which he compares with the Zen period of the history of the Ainu and Japanese history from 13,000 BC to 300 BC, when the patriarchy already reigned. Shiraha is convinced that nothing has changed in Japan since then and these are the laws of nature and the universe.



" Yes, after all, such an occupation is not in the male nature," Shiraha said quietly. – Don't you think so? Since the Zen era, a man went hunting, and a woman guarded the hearth and waited for his return, gathering fruits and herbs. So, this kind of work is suitable only for the female brain, it is sharpened for it [3]."

The novel is largely autobiographical and this can be clearly seen in how well the author is familiar with the work of the convenience store serving sellers and with the equipment used in these markets.

" – I take a pack of light Marlboros with menthol from the stand and run a scanner over it.

– Please confirm that you are an adult, touch the monitor.

The man touches the screen, but then I notice that his gaze has glanced at our fast-food showcase – and my finger freezes in the air above the cash register. You can, of course, ask if the buyer wants something else, but if he is clearly hesitating, it's better to just stop and wait.

– And give me a corn dog.

– I wipe my hands with alcohol, open the window and wrap a corn dog for him [3]."

The author constantly returns the reader to the idea that for the main character a minimarket is not just a place of work, it is a kind of "alive" creature.

"A neatly folded mountain of sweets, which seemed to me like a toy, turns into a messy pile by the hands of visitors. The whole store, from which there was something artificial before, seems to come to life under these hands [3]."

As for the narrative style, the author skillfully uses irony, satire, humor, as well as grotesque, which can be clearly seen in the next remark of the main character Keiko.

" – Well, look. We're animals, so we need to increase the population, right? Perhaps Shiraha and I should start mating on the sly to help the cause of the growth of the human race. What do you think? [3]"

The author's sense of humor is constantly manifested in mind-blowing scenes of family life, full of the same humor and irony.

It is the main character of the novel Keiko who uses irony especially skillfully, very accurately and naturally jokes during various dialogues.

" – I say "deal", but I don't need a reward. You can just leave me at home and feed me.

– Hmm... well, as long as you have no income, it's useless to bill you. I am also a beggar, but if you agree to eat the food that I will bring, then...

– Food?

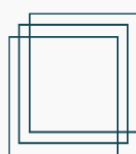
– Oh, I'm sorry. It's just the first time I keep a living creature at home, I thought about a pet [3]."

The paradox also does not bypass the deliberate narration of the novel. "Scolding Shiraha, the younger sister looked infinitely happy."

On the pages of the novel, the world of shops unfolds before us from a new angle. Combi is not just a place where we run in to buy a sandwich at lunchtime. It is a strictly ordered system, with its own hierarchy and laws.

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The system can be cruel, getting rid of elements it does not like, but it can also encourage its faithful servants. For some, combini is just a side job for losers who are not able to work more seriously. For someone, it is a deity and the meaning of life, which it is for Keiko.

To conclude, the style of the novel is very simple. And in this utilitarianism lies the author's idea – to leave only the main thing, to hide all the husks, all the false meanings. The wonderful world of Keiko is described through sounds: the conversations of sellers, the beeping of the scanner, the crackling of packaging. This is the whole world for her.

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