

The Emotional Void: Analyzing Readerly Trauma in Sayaka Murata's "Satsujin Shussan"

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on "Satsujin Shussan," a dystopian short story by Sayaka Murata. She is a contemporary Japanese author, known for her unsettling exploration of gender roles, social conformity and the human body. The story depicts a future of Japanese society, designed to fight population decline, in which if any person gives birth to ten children, they have the legal right to kill one person. This study is about how the narrative affects human psyche. While many scholars analyze the gender roles, reproductive technology, and the genderless birth, this research argues that Murata uses a 'Flat Affect' to create a world in which there is absence of emotions in the characters, and murder becomes a happy moment for them. By applying Narrative Empathy theory this research shows that this emotional void shifts the emotional burden entirely upon the readers. This research employs the concept of The Uncanny by Sigmund Freud to analyze how Murata changes a warm experience of birth and motherhood into a sterile, clinical process which triggers a visceral sense of dread in the reader. The key finding of this research that the 'trauma' is not found in the characters or the story but in the narrative technique of Murata is the trauma for readers.

Keywords: Flat affect, Human psyche, Narrative empathy, Sayaka murata, Uncanny.
