

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

Gender and Sexuality in East Asia 3/5

(Joint Humanities and Social Science Study Group)



July 9 (Thu), 2020, 6:30 p.m. JST
online, waiting room opens at 6:15 p.m.

Murata Sayaka's *Convenience Store Woman*

Discussing Gender Identity and Society in Contemporary Japanese Literature

Ronald Saladin (Trier University)

A convenience store is a reflection of Japan's society. The way people behave, act, react, and interact is a display of contemporary Japan's common sense. It reveals how social life is organized in terms of interpersonal relations, habits, norms, values, etc. What, however, happens when someone does not fit Japan's common sense? Author Murata Sayaka chooses a convenience store to stage and explore this question. Her award-winning novel *Konbini Ningen (Convenience Store Woman, 2016)* does not only portray and reveal the underlying structures of Japanese society, but also imagines what life is like for people who do not meet common expectations.

In this presentation, I will elaborate on how Murata addresses the fundamental question of an individual's place within society by focusing on how the novel deals with social conventions, gender constructions, and work. The analysis of these issues shows how Murata deconstructs Japan's common sense and reveals its naturalized, unspoken, and taken-for-granted rules that organize contemporary Japanese society. I will suggest that the novel is a plea for a more 'human' society that allows those who do not fit to find their niche as well.

Ronald Saladin is Assistant Professor for Japanese Studies at the University of Trier, Germany. In his research he investigates contemporary literature, popular culture, and the media focusing on gender, youth culture and society. His most recent publication is *Young Men and Masculinities in Japanese Media – (Un)Conscious Hegemony (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019)*.

About:

The DIJ History and Humanities Study Group is a forum open to scholars working on Japan in any field of the humanities. It is organized by Barbara Geilhorn. All are welcome to attend. To receive login data please register with geilhorn@diitokyo.org OR kottmann@diitokyo.org by July 8 (JST).

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