

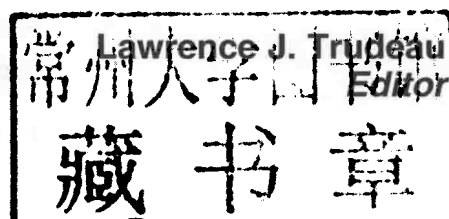
Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC 297

Volume 297

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short-Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers
Who Lived between 1900 and 1999,
from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**



**Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism,
Vol. 297**

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WCN: 01-100-101

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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER 76-46132

ISBN-13: 978-1-4144-9417-3

ISSN: 0276-8178

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Preface

Since its inception *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC) has been purchased and used by some 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. TCLC has covered more than 1000 authors, representing over 60 nationalities and nearly 50,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as TCLC. In the words of one reviewer, "there is nothing comparable available." TCLC "is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own."

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. The great poets, novelists, short-story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, TCLC helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in TCLC presents a comprehensive survey of an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Volumes 1 through 87 of TCLC featured authors who died between 1900 and 1959; beginning with Volume 88, the series expanded to include authors who died between 1900 and 1999. Beginning with Volume 26, every fourth volume of TCLC was devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers. With TCLC 285, the series returns to a standard author approach, with some entries devoted to a single important work of world literature and others devoted to literary topics.

TCLC is part of the survey of criticism and world literature that is contained in Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (CLC), *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism* (NCLC), *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800* (LC), *Shakespearean Criticism* (SC), and *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism* (CMLC).

Organization of the Book

A TCLC entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author's actual name given in parentheses on the first line of the biographical and critical introduction. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the author's name (if applicable).
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication information of each work is given. In the case of works not published in English, a translation of the title is provided as an aid to the reader; the translation is a published translated title or a

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An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of titles published in other languages and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, plays, nonfiction books, and poetry, short-story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces a paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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The examples below follow recommendations for preparing a works cited list set forth in the Modern Language Association of America's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed. (New York: MLA, 2009. Print); the first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books:

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Abe Kōbō

1924-1993

(Born Abé Kimifus; also referred to as Kōbō Abe, American style, with surname last) Japanese novelist, short-story writer, poet, essayist, screenwriter, and playwright.

The following entry provides criticism of Abe's life and works. For additional information about Abe, see *CLC*, Volumes 8, 22, 53, and 81, and *TCLC*, Volume 131.

INTRODUCTION

Abe Kōbō is best known for his avant-garde novels exploring the disorientation of the individual in modern society. His work is distinguished by its strong Western influences and lack of Japanese precursors. Abe has frequently been referred to as the "Japanese Kafka," in reference to writer Franz Kafka, whose similarly themed work concerning the terrors and absurdities of modern life has influenced generations of Western writers. Abe was also an innovative dramatist who produced his own avant-garde plays through the Abe Kōbō Studio and worked to develop a distinctively self-conscious style of theater acting. Abe's work frequently considers themes of loss of identity and the difficulty of human communication through its portrayals of bizarre, surrealistic settings and plots that metaphorically represent his characters' struggles. Abe's work bears the mark of such Western writers as Edgar Allan Poe, Rainer Maria Rilke, Lewis Carroll, Samuel Beckett, Bertolt Brecht, and Fyodor Dostoevsky in addition to Kafka, as well as the Western science-fiction and detective-fiction genres.

Abe's writing style is often described as philosophical, in the sense that it is idea-driven rather than concerned with following established literary models, a distinction that separates Abe's work from that of his best-known Japanese contemporary, Kenzaburō Ōe. Abe's style has also been described as clinical and scientifically precise, a possible reflection of his youthful background as a medical student and mathematics enthusiast. Abe's first works were published in Japan in the culturally tumultuous years immediately following World War II, and many critics have argued that his initial success can be attributed to his stylistic and thematic break with earlier, discredited modes of Japanese literature. His methods evolved significantly throughout his career, as he moved away from early Marxist sympathies to a more surrealist, absurd aesthetic notable for its distrust of nationalist ideologies. Abe achieved literary stardom with his novel *Suna no onna* (1962; published as *The Woman in the Dunes* in 1964), which was later adapted into an inter-

nationally celebrated film. His work continues to influence Japanese and world literature.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Abe was born in Tokyo in 1924 to Abe Asakichi, a physician, and his wife, Yorimi. Shortly after Abe's birth, his father returned to his post at a hospital in the city of Mukden, on the Chinese mainland in Japanese-occupied Manchuria. Abe spent most of his childhood in Mukden, an experience that many critics have linked to the theme of alienation from traditional Japanese society in his work. As a young man, Abe studied Western philosophers such as Martin Heidegger and Friedrich Nietzsche. He also exhibited a strong enthusiasm for mathematics and the natural sciences, including a fascination with entomology. Abe returned to Japan in 1941, and two years later, he entered the University of Tokyo to study medicine. After having been exempted from military service because of a respiratory condition, he returned to Mukden in 1944. He left for Japan in 1946 and graduated in 1948 with a medical degree, but he never practiced medicine.

Abe was an early member of an avant-garde artistic group known as the Night Society, led by the Japanese intellectual Hanada Kiyoteru. The Night Society was invested in combining the interests of Marxism and surrealism in art, and Hanada championed the publication of Abe's first novel, *Owarishimichi no shirube ni* (1947; may be translated as *The Signpost at the End of the Road*). Abe joined the Japanese Communist Party in the early 1950s, but he was expelled in 1962 for critical attacks on Stalinist policy after he visited Soviet-dominated Hungary. Abe won several prestigious Japanese artistic awards in the 1950s, including the nation's highest literary award for emerging fiction writers, the Akutagawa Prize, for his novella *S. Karuma-shi no hanzai* (may be translated as *The Crime of Mr. S. Karuma*), included in *Kabe* (1951; may be translated as *The Wall*); and Japan's highest dramatic award, the Kishida Kunio Drama Prize, for his play *Yūrei wa koko ni iru* (1958; published as *The Ghost Is Here* in 1993). In addition to his literary works, Abe wrote and produced plays in the 1970s and 1980s and founded the Abe Kōbō Studio for training actors in 1973. He died of heart failure in 1993.

MAJOR WORKS

Best known for his fiction writing, Abe published several popular and influential novels that have been widely

translated. In *The Woman in the Dunes*, Junpei Niki, the protagonist, becomes trapped with a mysterious woman during a visit to the desert to study insects in a village being swallowed by sand. After initially attempting to escape this situation, Niki eventually resigns himself to his fate, which is to shovel sand forever with the woman in a Sisyphean effort to save the village. The novel is most notable for its implied critiques of both traditional Japanese village society and the individual alienation inherent in modern urban society. *The Woman in the Dunes* won the Yomiuri Prize for Literature and was adapted for film by director Hiroshi Teshigahara in 1964. Abe followed *The Woman in the Dunes* with *Tanin no kao* (1964; published as *The Face of Another* in 1966), which concerns the social experiments of a man who chooses to wear a mask constantly over his disfigured face. The novel is notable for its commentary on the shifting nature of identity and the difficulty of human communication.

Abe's next novel, *Moetsukita chizu* (1967; published as *The Ruined Map* in 1969), follows the experiences of a man drifting through a surreal and vaguely threatening landscape marked by startling absurdist imagery. *Hako otoko* (1973; published as *The Box Man* in 1974) and *Mikkai* (1977; published as *Secret Rendezvous* in 1979) both present intricate yet absurd mystery plots. *The Box Man* concerns a man who chooses to live in a box on the street and becomes trapped in a circular consideration of human nature. *Secret Rendezvous* relates a man's struggle as he drifts through the terrors of a bureaucratic nightmare to discover why his wife was mysteriously abducted in an ambulance. Both novels are notable for their grim consideration of the individual's powerlessness against malevolent societal forces. *Hakobune Sakura maru* (1984; published as *The Ark Sakura* in 1988) represents Abe's turn toward more overt science-fiction themes in the story of a man building a spaceship to survive a nuclear war and deciding whom he will allow on board. Abe's final work, and his most surrealistic, *Kangarū nōto* (1991; published as *Kangaroo Notebook* in 1996), concerns a man whose bed floats away on an underground river as he approaches death.

Important early works by Abe include *Dai yon kanpyōki* (1959; published as *Inter Ice Age 4* in 1970), concerning the dangers of computers and human mutation, and *The Crime of Mr. S. Karuma*, a Kafka-like narrative of a man stripped of his identity and placed on trial by mysterious forces. Of his plays, Abe is best known for *Tomodachi* (1967; published as *Friends* in 1969), a political allegory in which a man's apartment is invaded by a mysterious and threatening family. Abe also wrote twenty-eight radio dramas from 1954 to 1968; fourteen television dramas from 1958 to 1964, most notably *Mokugekisha* (1964; may be translated as *Eyewitness*), a critique of oppression and reaction to oppression in a traditional Japanese village; and seven screenplays, including adaptations of *The Face of Another*, *The Woman in the Dunes*, and *The Ruined Map*,

for Teshigahara's cinematic interpretations of his novels under the same titles.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Many critics have examined *The Woman in the Dunes* as being broadly representative of Abe's aesthetic and thematic concerns. Marianne Marroum (2008) considered the interplay of water and sand in the novel, arguing that the substances represent life-draining disorder and life-sustaining order, respectively, affecting the fate of the book's protagonist. Mutsuko Motoyama (1995) argued that *The Woman in the Dunes* marks a turning point in Abe's career, away from communist influences toward a consideration of ideological freedom, which is apparent in his metaphorical use of desert imagery.

Other critics have pointed to Abe's frequent thematic treatment of individual alienation in society and his work's antipathy toward modernity. Carl Cassegård (2007; see Further Reading) proposed that Abe employed a "shock" aesthetic to expose the fear of isolation inherent in modern life. Cassegård suggested that his characters' eventual resignation to their fate represents fatigue and submission to an isolated existence. Fumiko Yamamoto (1980) examined the role of metamorphosis in Abe's short story "Dendorokakariya" (may be translated as "Dendrocacalia") and *The Crime of Mr. S. Karuma*, arguing that the characters undergo a metamorphosis into more decisive individuals in the face of a lonely and hostile existence.

Several critics have considered Abe's career as a playwright and the creative force behind the Abe Kōbō Studio. Timothy Iles (2000; see Further Reading) analyzed Abe's actor-training method, which was focused on the body and movement, and the role his chosen director, Senda Koreya, played in bringing his dramatic vision to the stage. Margaret S. Key (2011) argued that Abe's self-conscious documentary techniques in the play *Mihitsu no koi* (1971; published as *Involuntary Homicide* in 1993) implicate the audience as a culpable eyewitness to the drama's social critique.

Other critics have explored the question of Abe's disparate literary influences, with a focus on how avant-garde Western writers figure into his aesthetic. Frederick Richter (1974) compared *The Crime of Mr. S. Karuma* to Kafka's *Der Prozess* (1925; *The Trial*), proposing that Abe's work is more than an absurdist adaptation of Kafka's and bears a strong impression of the Western philosophical tradition. Michael Guest (2004) asserted that Abe's writing not only displays the influence of Irish author Samuel Beckett but also independently expands on Beckett's frequent representations of the body in bizarre transformations to explore character desires in a surrealistic context.

Craig Barnes

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Mumeishishū [may be translated as *Poems of an Unknown Poet*]. Tokyo: Privately printed, 1946. (Poetry)

Owarishimichi no shirube ni [may be translated as *The Signpost at the End of the Road*]. Tokyo: Shinzenbisha, 1947. Rev. ed. Tokyo: Tōjusha, 1965. (Novel)

**Kabe* [may be translated as *The Wall*]. Tokyo: Getsuyō Shobō, 1951. (Novellas)

†*Abe Kōbō sōsakushū: Ueta hifu* [may be translated as *Abe Kōbō: The Starving Skin*]. Tokyo: Shoshi Yuriika, 1952. (Novellas and short stories)

Chinnyūsha [may be translated as *Intruders*]. Tokyo: Miraisha, 1952. (Novellas)

Kabe: S. Karuma-shi no hanzai, Akai mayu [may be translated as *The Wall: The Crime of Mr. S. Karuma, Red Cocoon*]. Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1954. (Novellas)

Kiga dōmei [may be translated as *Starving Unions*]. Tokyo: Dai Nihon yūbenkai Kōdansha, 1954. (Novel)

Seifuku [may be translated as *Uniform*]. Seihaiza, Tokyo. Mar. 1955. Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1955. (Play)

Doreigari [may be translated as *Slave Hunting*]. Haiyūza, Tokyo. June 1955. (Play)

Abe Kōbō sōsaku gekishū: Doreigari; Kaisokusen; Seifuku [may be translated as *Collected Original Plays: Slave Hunting; High-Speed Vessel; Uniform*]. Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1955. (Plays)

R 62 no hatsumei [may be translated as *Inventions by R 62*]. Tokyo: Yamanouchi Shoten, 1956. (Plays and short stories)

Kemonotachi wa kokyō o mezasu [may be translated as *The Beasts Head for Home*]. Tokyo: Dai Nihon yūbenkai Kōdansha, 1957. (Novel)

Mōjū no kokoro ni keisanki no te o [may be translated as *The Hand of a Calculator with the Heart of a Beast: What Is Literature?*]. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1957. (Essays)

Tō-Ō o yuku: Hangarī mondai no haikai [may be translated as *Travels in Eastern Europe: Background of the Hungarian Problem*]. Tokyo: Dai Nihon yūbenkai Kōdansha, 1957. (Travel essay)

Yūrei wa koko ni iru [published as *The Ghost Is Here*]. Haiyūza, Tokyo. June 1958. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1959. (Play)

Sabakareru kiroku: Eiga geijutsu ron [may be translated as *Documentary on Trial: On Cinematic Art*]. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1958. (Essays)

Dai yon kanpyōki [published as *Inter Ice Age 4*]. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1959. (Novel)

Ishi no me [may be translated as *Stony Eyes*]. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1960. (Novel)

Otoshi-ana [may be translated as *Pitfall*]. Teshigahara Productions, 1962. (Screenplay)

Suna no onna [published as *The Woman in the Dunes*]. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1962. (Novel)

Mokugekisha [may be translated as *Eyewitness*]. RKB Mainichi Television. Nov. 1964. (Teleplays)

Mukankei na shi [may be translated as *An Irrelevant Death*]. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1964. (Short stories)

Suichūtoshi [may be translated as *The Underwater City*]. Tokyo: Tōgensha, 1964. (Short stories)

Suna no onna [may be translated as *The Woman in the Dunes*]. With Eiko Yoshida. Teshigahara Productions, 1964. (Screenplay)

Tanin no kao [published as *The Face of Another*]. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1964. (Novel)

Omae ni mo tsumi ga aru [published as "You, Too, Are Guilty"]. Haiyūza, Tokyo. Jan. 1965. Tokyo: Gakushū kenkyūsha, 1965. (Play)

Sabaku no shisō [may be translated as *The Ideology of the Desert*]. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1965. (Essays)

Tanin no kao [may be translated as *The Face of Another*]. Toho, 1966. (Screenplay)

Tomodachi [published as *Friends*]. Seinenza, Kinokuniya Hall, Tokyo. Mar. 1967. Tokyo: Kawade Shobō, 1967. (Play)

Enomoto Takeaki [may be translated as *Takeaki Enomoto*]. Kumo Troupe, Tokyo. Sept. 1967. Tokyo: Kawade shobōshinsha, 1967. (Play)

Moetsukita chizu [published as *The Ruined Map*]. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1967. (Novel)

Ningen sokkuri [may be translated as *Practically Human*]. Tokyo: Hayakawa Shobō, 1967. (Novellas)

Moetsukita chizu [may be translated as *The Ruined Map*]. Daiei/Katsu Productions, 1968. (Screenplay)

Yume no tōbō [may be translated as *The Double of Human Being*]. Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 1968. (Short stories)

Bō ni natta otoko [published as *The Man Who Turned into a Stick*]. Kinokuniya Theatre, Tokyo. Nov. 1969. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1969. (Play)

Abe Kōbō gikyoku zenshū [may be translated as *The Complete Plays by Abe Kōbō*]. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1970. (Plays)

Mihitsu no koi [published as *Involuntary Homicide*]. Haiyūza, Tokyo. Sept. 1971. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1971. (Play)

Gaido bukku [may be translated as *Guide Book*]. Kinokuniya Theatre, Tokyo. Nov. 1971. (Play)

Uchi naru henkyō [may be translated as *The Frontier Within*]. Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1971. (Essays)

- Abe Kōbō zensakuhin* [may be translated as *The Complete Works by Abe Kōbō*]. 15 vols. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1972-73. (Essays, novels, plays, poetry, and short stories)
- Ai no megane wa irogarasu* [may be translated as *The Glasses of Love Are Rose-Colored*]. Abe Kōbō Studio, Tokyo. Sept. 1973. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1973. (Play)
- Hako otoko* [published as *The Box Man*]. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1973. (Novel)
- Han gekiteki ningen* [may be translated as *Anti-Theatrical Human*]. Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1973. (Conversations)
- Midori-iro no sutokkingu* [published as *The Green Stockings*]. Abe Kōbō Studio, Kinokuniya Hall, Tokyo. Nov. 1974. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1974. (Play)
- Hassō no shūhen* [may be translated as *Around Original Ideas*]. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1974. (Conversations)
- Ueh (Shin-doreigari)* [may be translated as *The Animal Hunter*]. Abe Kōbō Studio, Tokyo. May-June 1975. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1975. (Play)
- Warau tsuki* [may be translated as *The Laughing Moon*]. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1975. (Short stories)
- Gaido bukku II: Annainin* [may be translated as *Guide Book II: The Guide*]. Abe Kōbō Studio, Seibu Theater, Tokyo. Oct. 1976. (Play)
- Imēji no tenrankai* [may be translated as *An Exhibition of Images*]. Abe Kōbō Studio, Seibu Theater, Tokyo. June 1977. (Play)
- Gaido bukku III: Suichū Toshi* [may be translated as *Guide Book III: City under the Water*]. Abe Kōbō Studio, Seibu Theater, Tokyo. Nov. 1977. (Play)
- Mikkai* [published as *Secret Rendezvous*]. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1977. (Novel)
- S. Karuma-shi no hanzai* [may be translated as *The Crime of Mr. S. Karuma*]. Abe Kōbō Studio, Seibu Theater, Tokyo. Oct. 1978. (Play)
- Kozō wa shinda: Imēji no tenrankai* [may be translated as *The Little Elephant Is Dead: An Exhibition of Images*]. Abe Kōbō Studio, Seibu Museum, Tokyo. June 1979. (Play)
- ‡*Toshi e no kairo* [may be translated as *A Circuit to the City*]. Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1980. (Interviews and lectures)
- Hakobune Sakura maru* [published as *The Ark Sakura*]. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1984. (Novel)
- Abe Kōbō eiga shinario sen* [may be translated as *Selected Screenplays by Abe Kōbō*]. Tokyo: Sōrinsha, 1986. (Screenplays)
- Shiniisogu kujira tachi* [may be translated as *Whales Anxious to Die*]. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1986. (Essays and interviews)
- Kangarū nōto* [published as *Kangaroo Notebook*]. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1991. (Novel)
- Tobu otoko* [may be translated as *The Flying Man*]. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1994. (Novel)
- Abe Kōbō zenshū* [may be translated as *The Complete Works by Abe Kōbō*]. 30 vols. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1997-2009. (Essays, novels, plays, poetry, and short stories)
- Dai mitei (Reibai no hanashi yori): Abe Kōbō shoki tanpen shū* [may be translated as *To Be Entitled (From a Medium's Tale): Collected Early Stories by Abe Kōbō*]. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2013. (Short stories)

Principal English Translations

- The Woman in the Dunes*. Trans. E. Dale Saunders. New York: Knopf, 1964. Print. Trans. of *Suna no onna*.
- The Face of Another*. Trans. Saunders. New York: Knopf, 1966. Print. Trans. of *Tanin no kao*.
- Friends*. Trans. Donald Keene. New York: Grove, 1969. Print. Trans. of *Tomodachi*.
- The Ruined Map*. Trans. Saunders. New York: Knopf, 1969. Print. Trans. of *Moetsukita chizu*.
- Inter Ice Age 4*. Trans. Saunders. New York: Knopf, 1970. Print. Trans. of *Dai yon kanpyōki*.
- The Box Man*. Trans. Saunders. New York: Knopf, 1974. Print. Trans. of *Hako otoko*.
- The Man Who Turned into a Stick*. Trans. Keene. Tokyo: Tokyo UP, 1975. Print. Trans. of *Bō ni natta otoko*.
- Secret Rendezvous*. Trans. Juliet Winters Carpenter. New York: Knopf, 1979. Print. Trans. of *Mikkai*.
- "You, Too, Are Guilty." *Modern Japanese Drama: An Anthology*. Trans. Ted T. Takaya. New York: Columbia UP, 1979. 1-40. Print. Trans. of *Omae ni mo tsumi ga aru*.
- The Ark Sakura*. Trans. Carpenter. New York: Knopf, 1988. Print. Trans. of *Hakobune Sakura maru*.
- Beyond the Curve*. Trans. Carpenter. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1991. Print.
- §*Three Plays of Kōbō Abe*. Trans. Keene. New York: Columbia UP, 1993. 2-70. Print.
- Kangaroo Notebook*. Trans. Maryellen Toman Mori. New York: Knopf, 1996. Print. Trans. of *Kangarū nōto*.
- The Frontier Within: Essays by Abe Kōbō*. Ed. and trans. Richard F. Calichman. New York: Columbia UP, 2013. Print.

*Includes the novella *S. Karuma-shi no hanzai* [may be translated as *The Crime of Mr. S. Karuma*].

†Includes the short story "Dendorokakariya" [may be translated as "Dendrocacalia"].

‡This work also includes examples of Abe's photography.

§Includes English translations of *Mihitsu no koi* [published as *Involuntary Homicide*], *Midori-iro no sutokingu* [published as *The Green Stockings*], and *Yūrei wa koko ni iru* [published as *The Ghost Is Here*].

CRITICISM

Frederick Richter (essay date 1974)

SOURCE: Richter, Frederick. "A Comparative Approach to Abe Kōbō's *S. Karuma-shi no Hanzai*." *Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese* 9.2-3 (1974): 1-13. Print.

[In the following essay, Richter compares Abe's early tale *The Crime of Mr. S. Karuma* to Franz Kafka's *The Trial*. Richter asserts that although the texts are similar in terms of plot and theme, Abe's work is more than an absurdist adaptation of Kafka's. Richter examines the philosophical traditions underlying Abe's novella and the work's connection to Western literature through its protagonist's search for authenticity and identity.]

Only our concept of Time makes it possible for us to speak of a Day of Judgement by that name; in reality it is a summary court in perpetual session.

You do not need to leave your room. Remain sitting at your table and listen. Do not even listen, simply wait. Do not even wait, be quite still and solitary. The world will freely offer itself to you to be unmasked, it has no choice, it will roll in ecstasy at your feet.

Franz Kafka *The Great Wall of China Stories and Reflections*

To a considerable extent Abe Kōbō's novel, *S. Karuma-shi no Hanzai* (or *The Crime of S. Karma, Esq.*), for which Abe won the Akutagawa Prize in 1951, offers itself for systematic comparison to the philosophic focus and assumptions contained in the two quotations above as well as to a specific novel by Kafka, namely, *The Trial*. The discovery of the direct influence of one fictional work upon another in terms of philosophic emphasis and events that make up a plot, however, does not complete the task of comparison. One novel is not a mirror image of another, and this is especially true if they are products of different philosophical and cultural traditions; thus in this sense, and in this context, an effort toward comparison is bound to meet with limited success. Baldly stated, even, Abe's novel could be termed a surrealist adaptation of *The Trial*, although apparently not in any deliberate manner as is Gide's well known dramatization for the stage. But as will be seen later, as events and character situations are matched from Kafka's novel to *S. Karuma-shi no Hanzai*, it becomes apparent that an exercise in simple comparison leads to further considerations that go beyond the novel after which it is apparently modeled. For while there are obvious similarities, intimations of other works of contemporary literature begin

to play upon one's consciousness. A simple comparison is complex enough, but then the complexities compound and multiply. This will also be seen later as I attempt to move beyond a specific comparison and begin to explore the implications of relating a Japanese work to philosophic traditions, East and West, and to seek analogues and echoes in the broad morass of contemporary Western literature. But first, a brief plot summary of *S. Karuma-shi no Hanzai* and references to specifics in *The Trial* are in order.

The opening pages of Abe's work are similar to *The Trial* as well as to other works of modern fiction: the hero awakes in the morning from dream to reality, or actually, the inverse, for the world has been turned upside down. The similarities to *The Metamorphosis* are obvious, or even Gogol's *The Nose*, or *The Double* by Dostoyevsky. It must be pointed out, however, that in *The Metamorphosis* and *The Nose* the hero has been transformed at the outset; in *The Trial* and *S. Karuma-shi no Hanzai* the world is transformed and the new relationship between the self and the world is explored for the changes effected on the former. The self is thrust into a new environment where its autonomy and stability are radically challenged.

Thus in Abe's novel our hero awakes in the morning feeling a strange emptiness in his chest. He then goes to a cafeteria where he forgets his name and finds that it has also been erased from his documents. He returns to his room and discovers the box for his name cards is empty. At his office he finds a name tag with the name S. Karma. When he approaches his desk he sees that someone resembling him is dictating to Y-ko, the typist. He sees through this other self and discovers that it is his name card. The name card slips away and Karma feels shame as the emptiness spreads.

He then goes to a hospital near the zoo, where, as he sits in the waiting room, he picks up an illustrated magazine and looks at a picture by Dali consisting of a broad plain and a sand dune. He is strangely attracted to it, and it "seemed like a window that opened to the bottom of his memory." Finally, after an examination by the doctor and a girl called Goldfish Eyes, he is tossed unceremoniously out of a window. A short time later he is captured by two strongmen and taken through the back of a polar bear's cage into a dark and slippery cave.

It is perhaps interesting to compare this to Joseph K.'s first interrogation on the fifth floor of the tenement. Joseph K. ascends; Karma descends. In contrast to the magistrate and the seedy group of the Right and the Left encountered by Joseph K., Karma is met by the following group: Five people dressed in green and wearing glasses (the two with gold rims are legal scholars; the two without rims are philosophers; and the one with steel rims is a mathematician). In addition, there is a girl from the cafeteria, Y-ko the typist, the dark complexioned doctor, Goldfish Eyes, and others, including some with faces resembling his dead mother and sister.