

NINA HABJAN
University of Tokyo, Japan

THE 'ACT' IN THE WORK OF KÔBÔ ABE AND FRANZ KAFKA

Abstract:

This paper is an analysis of four literary works by the authors Kôbô Abe and Franz Kafka. Using the theory of the philosophy of action as the theoretical background, the paper explores the different acts the characters try to commit. Through the analysis of their action, the author of the article is trying to understand the motivation for the acts themselves, while also considering the wider social environment and how it might have affected the success or failure of the acts. The paper includes two of Abe's short stories, the first one being the story "Beyond the Curve", the English translation of which has been published in the collection by the same name and was translated by Juliet Winters Carpenter. The other short piece by Abe has not been translated to English as of yet, thus the English quotations of the work used in this paper will have been done by the author of the paper. The title of the story can be roughly translated as "The Raccoon dog of the Tower of Babel". The pieces by Kafka which are analyzed in the paper are "The Burrow" and "The Judgement". While the authors come from different sides of the planet, with different backgrounds and quite different influences, there are certain similarities in their approaches to the characters in their work. This paper explores to what degree the environment of the characters is to blame for their ultimate demise or victory, through the exploration of their willingness to act according to their own capabilities.

Keywords:

Literary analysis, philosophy of action, Franz Kafka, Kôbô Abe, act, Slavoj Žižek