# THE SAME MELODY IN ANOTHER KEY: THE METAMORPHOSIS OF IDEAS IN THE SHORT STORIES AND MAJOR NOVELS OF ABE KŌBŌ

A Thesis

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by

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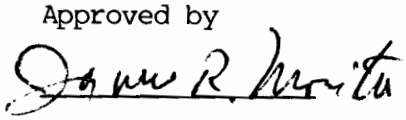

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My interest in Abe Kōbō was first aroused about six years ago when, in one of Dr. James Morita's advanced Japanese literature courses, I first read Abe's short story Mōchō. Dr. Morita has been my advisor from the time I began formal studies of Japanese; I will always be grateful for the encouragement he has given me throughout my studies at this university and for the great deal of time he has given in assisting me with this and many other projects. I would like to express my gratitude also to the other member of my thesis commitee, Dr. Gary Ebersole, for his generous assistance with this project. My sincere thanks are due also to Dr. Miles McElrath for suggestions to improve the translations; to Ms. Nikki Bado and Ms. Karen Sobul for technical assistance with word processing equipment; to Helen H. McLean for her patient reading of the manuscript and her valuable suggestions for improvement; and to Miss Ayu Shigematsu for her encouragement and for her assistance with the Japanese texts.

For the members of my family and for Ayu.

# I. Introduction

In 1817, when Franz Schubert was twenty years old, he wrote several piano sonatas. One of these is the sonata in A minor Op. 164 (D. 557). The theme of its andante movement was transformed by Schubert in 1828, the last year of his life, into the finale of a sonata in A major (Op. post. D. 959).

The earlier movement is graceful and well-wrought and at the same time youthful and vigorous. The piece is charming to be sure, but compared with the later version, the A minor movement seems immature. The later sonata is powerful, tragic music. Yet, it is supremely confident music, music so self-assured and steadfast in the face of death (Schubert knew he was dying at the time of its composition) that ultimately it communicates a message of reassurance.

The piano pieces of Franz Schubert and the writing of Abe Kōbō are the products of vastly different times and places; as different art forms they cannot directly be compared, but the two Schubert sonata movements represent two different versions of a single musical idea and this sort of reworking is extremely common in the writing of Abe Kōbō. There are numerous examples of Abe's short stories becoming novels or

plays. Time and again similar themes, images, and character types reappear. This feature of his writing must be recognized to fully appreciate his art.

Abe Kōbō is recognized in the West as a writer of importance. He must be included among the few Japanese writers that are known outside Japan. Perhaps only Mishima, Kawabata, Tanizaki, and Akutagawa are better known. However, to English-language readers, Abe is known primarily through the six of his novels that have been translated. The Woman in the Dunes (1964), The Face of Another (1966), The Ruined Map (1969), Inter Ice Age 4 (1970), The Box Man (1974), and Secret Rendezvous (1979).[1] His other writing is much less well represented in English translation.

Of Abe's many plays, only Friends (1969) and The Man Who Turned into a Stick (1975) have been translated into English.[2] Only one of Abe's numerous literary essays has been translated; Uchi naru henkyō was translated as "The Frontier Within" (1975) by Andrew Horvat.[3] Abe's short stories have also been relatively neglected. Of the nearly sixty short stories Abe Kobo has written since 1948, only six have appeared in English translation. Bō (Stick 1966) and Akai mayu (Red Cocoon 1966), were translated by John Nathan.[4] Four other stories have been translated by Andrew Horvat.[5]

Statistics such as these indicate the neglect Abe's early writing has suffered in English. European translators, especially from Eastern Europe, have been more active in making his short stories accessible to their compatriots.

To say that Abe Kōbō's short stories have not been translated widely need not necessarily imply that Western literary critics have also largely ignored these works, but this is indeed the case. In Japan as well, articles devoted to Abe's short stories are few, while pieces dealing with his novels and plays are numerous.[6] When Japanese scholars have written about the short stories, they have largely confined themselves to writing about Kabe--S. Karma shi no hanzai and Akai Mayu--an indication of how powerful the legitimizing effect of literary prizes is for the Japanese critic. For Akai Mayu,[7] Abe was awarded the Second Postwar Literary Prize in April of 1951 and for Kabe--S. Karma shi no hanzai, he was awarded the 25th Akutagawa Prize in July of the same year.

Abe's short stories have not been given the attention they deserve. The effect of this neglect is three fold: 1) because translations are rare, the reader is deprived of the opportunity easily to enjoy a body of important short stories; 2) the reader is robbed of a valuable tool for understanding Abe's later writing; 3) because the reader cannot draw upon the short stories in analyzing these later works, his view of Abe's literary production as a whole is necessarily a distorted one with no sense of proportion.

It is not difficult to demonstrate that this has been the case. In an article on The Box Man in the New York Times Magazine, Alan Levy quotes critic John Leonard (editor of the New York Times Book Review): "Kobo Abe seems never to rewrite himself, never to worry an old bone."[8] If this statement refers only to Abe's translated novels, it may be

correct, but it is not correct in reference to Abe's writing as a whole. That an obviously well-educated man can make such a statement points up the need for both more translations and for discussion of the short stories of Abe Kōbō. Once this has been done it will become clear that his novels and stories are intertwined to an extraordinary degree, and that rewriting plays an extremely important role in his work. It is hoped that this thesis will contribute in a small way to clarifying the connection between the short stories and novels of Abe Kōbō.

The discussion which follows will be divided into two sections. In the first I will attempt to show that Abe has concentrated his writing on a small number of themes, images and character types and that he has presented these over and over again in a bewildering variety of forms and settings. In the second part, while acknowledging the existence of a tendency to recast, refine, and rewrite ideas in all of Abe's writing, whether it be in short stories, novels, essays, dramas for television or the stage, for the sake of clarity, representative examples of the short stories only will be examined in detail as a means of more fully illustrating the phenomenon of rewriting. The reappearance in the novels of some of the themes, images and character types examined in the short stories also will be traced, but the emphasis will remain on the short stories. The discussion will assume the reader's familiarity with the major novels.

Before beginning the first section of the discussion it is necessary briefly to discuss the criteria used for selecting the six stories appended to this thesis. Abe's first published works were not

short stories. In 1947 he published at his own expense a 64-page collection of poetry.[9] Shortly afterward, in February of 1948, Abe's first novel Owarishi michi no shirube ni began serialization in the journal Kosei (個性) and was published as a single volume by Shinzenbisha in October of the same year.[10] Abe also wrote four short stories in 1948 and he devoted most of his energy to the short story form until around 1955 when he first turned to writing for the stage. It was during the first half of the 1950's that Abe wrote most of his short stories. By the end of 1956, Abe already had completed fully two thirds of the work he has written in this form. Yet, by the end of 1966 Abe had almost completely abandoned the form.[11]

The six short stories presented here are intended to be a sample of Abe's writing during his most active period as a short story writer. They range in date from 1949 (Dendorokakaria)[12] to 1955 (Mōchō)[13]. These short stories clearly show tendencies in Abe's writing that have persisted.

## II. The Phenomenon of Rewriting

To begin, "rewriting" must be defined. The term may be understood in a number of ways, but in the following discussion it will be used in the broad sense of "writing again." "Rewriting" will be used to encompass three related techniques—genre shift, environment shift, and auto-quotation.

Rewriting may be for the purpose of improving a work or more fully

realizing the potential of an idea. Rewriting of this type may involve only revision. Examples of such rewriting do exist (Kawabata's Yukiguni, for example) but the revision of a once-published work is rare because publication, except in the case of reference works or textbooks, is usually regarded as a finalization. More commonly an author develops an idea explored in one literary form by recasting the same idea in another literary form. This may be referred to as "genre shift." Simple revision as described above will not be dealt with here. This genre shift, however, is the first of the important types of rewriting to be discussed that occur in the work of Abe Kōbō.

The second type of rewriting that I will discuss may be termed "environment shift." Whereas genre shift implies the existence of two or more literary works with identical but expanded themes, settings, action and the like, "environment shift" is intended to describe a situation in which identical themes are explored in two or more literary works by their presentation in greatly differing environments. Genre, setting, action, character type, narrative voice and other features taken as a whole constitute the treatment of a theme in a piece of literature. An author may vary these features widely in a number of works while repeatedly exploring the possibilities of a single theme. This shift of environment around a constant central idea also occurs frequently in Abe Kōbō's writing.

The third variety of rewriting to be discussed as an important feature of Abe's work may be termed "auto-quotation." This term refers to the frequent reuse of structural devices, scenes, images,

character types, and similar features. It might be argued that often an author clings to and reemploys devices of many sorts and that these give the author his or her distinctiveness, but I would like to suggest that Abe has done this to an unusual degree.

Genre shift, environment shift, and auto-quotation are three frames of reference intended as aids in identifying examples of rewriting in this author's work. They are not to be understood as mutually exclusive. Examples of each may occur simultaneously in a single piece of writing. It is hoped that they will be useful in suggesting the wide range of rewriting in the works of Abe Kōbō.

As it is my purpose in this first section to suggest the range rather than the depth of rewriting in Abe's work, examples raised here will not be discussed in detail. Conversely, the second section of this thesis will discusss a small group of examples in detail.

It is appropriate to begin discussion of genre shift with the example of Bō. Its evolution from a short story in 1955 to the third act of a three-act play first produced fourteen years later involves no fewer than eight transformations. The short story Bō has a limited cast of characters. There are a teacher (otherwise unidentified) and two students, apparently not earthlings, who seem to be responsible for the judgment of newly-dead human beings. The immediate object of their study is a man who has just turned into a stick--a man who has died.[14] Before his death he had been in the company of his two children. In addition to these six characters there are only the undifferentiated (except for the department store guard) members of the crowd. Using

this cast, Abe leads the reader to consider the assertion that man is ultimately responsible for his own fate. Abe suggests that if people allow themselves to be treated like sticks then they will become sticks. At the same time, in his treatment of the professor and the guard, Abe pokes fun at pomposity.

In 1957 Abe rewrote Bō. It became a radio drama entitled Bō ni natta otoko which was broadcast in November of the same year by Bunka Hoso.[15] In January of 1958 a stage version with the same title appeared in Shin nihon bungaku (新日本文学 ).[16] Twelve years later the stage version of Bō ni natta otoko became the third act of a three-act stage play also entitled Bō ni natta otoko.

In his article entitled "Bō ni natta otoko," Nomura Takashi points out some of the differences between the radio drama and the stage play.[17] Not only are these versions different, they both differ from the original story. In the short story the stick announces his own transformation. Nomura points out that in the radio version a young boy in the crowd tells the audience what has happened to the man, while in the stage version the woman from hell is the informant.[18] This woman from hell is a novice "recently appointed to the Earth squad duty." Her role corresponds to that of the two students in the short story.

In both the radio and stage versions the man's children recede and other characters appear for which there are no counterparts in the short story. The radio drama includes in its cast a shoe-shiner and a disabled veteran among the members of the crowd. These two characters become a hippie boy and girl in the stage play.[19]

These casting changes are in part dictated by form, but such changes alter the effect of Abe's original ideas and there are other changes in addition to these. In the short story the stick is the narrator, while in the dramatic versions he becomes one of the characters. Most important, however, are the changes effected by the coupling of the stage play Bō ni natta otoko with two other short plays. These were Kaban (Suitcase) and Toki no gake (The Cliff of Time). Like Bō ni natta otoko, Toki no gake also began as a short story. The story version appeared in March of 1964.[20] Kaban appeared as an independent work for the stage in January of 1969.[21] The full three-act version of Bō ni natta otoko was first performed on November 1, 1969 with Abe himself directing.[22]

In his postface to the published version of the play Abe describes how this coupling came about.

> It would be untrue to say that I wrote these three plays intending from the first that they form a single work. The fact is that fairly long intervals separated the composition of the plays: the original version of The Man Who Turned into a Stick was written twelve years ago, The Cliff of Time five years ago, and Suitcase a year ago. Moreover, the order in which they are presented on the stage is exactly the opposite of that of composition.
>
> However, I do not think that joining them in this fashion was nothing more than a happy accident. Suddenly, from the midst of a thick fog, a large shape loomed up and by the time I became aware of it, the three existed before me as a single work. I accepted this combination just as it was, without hesitation, as an absolutely inevitable reality. It is almost impossible for me now to believe that these three scenes were originally not a single work.[23]

In making each of these plays one act of the longer play, Abe added the subtitles "Birth," "Process," and "Death" for Kaban, Toki no gake,

and Bō ni natta otoko respectively, which further alter the effect that each part and the parts in sum have on their audience.

The remarks quoted above and the many forms of Bō indicate Abe's willingness to use ideas in several genres. The play, less rigidly tied to its text than other forms, provides the opportunity for further change. Keene in his introduction to The Man Who Turned into a Stick describes the extent to which Abe has altered his works for the stage.

> [Abe's] close contact with the performers in rehearsal has also occasioned numerous small changes in the texts of the plays. Whenever Abe discovers that his lines present difficulties for the actors or fail to achieve the desired effects he quickly modifies them. Sometimes he expunges whole passages, but he will also add phrases or whole speeches to heighten the scene. The biggest changes in the texts have occurred when he has revived an old play; he has not hesitated to rewrite it so extensively that hardly more than the original conception remains as it was. A work which consciously or unconsciously reveals the time of composition may be revised to remove any period flavor. The central situation generally remains the same, but the changes are the despair of the conscientious translator, who cannot always keep up with the author. The grandmother in Friends (1967), for example, turned into a grandfather for the 1974 revival because of casting problems, and a third son joined the original two. The effect of these changes was to underline and clarify some aspects of the play which Abe had not fully developed the first time. The same might be said of his plays based directly on short stories he wrote years before.[24]

Nomura also mentions briefly such rewriting, specifically raising as examples revivals of Dorei gari and Yūrei wa koko ni iru.[25]

In the passage by Keene quoted above, changes made in productions of the play Tomodachi (Friends) are mentioned. This play, like Bō, also began as a short story. The story upon which Tomodachi was based, Chinnyūsha (Intruders), first appeared in November of 1951 in the

journal Shinchō (新潮).[26] Tomodachi was first performed at Kinokuniya Hall on March 15, 1967.[27]

In both Chinnyūsha and Tomodachi a young business man, engaged to be married, lives alone in an apartment in the city. One day an uninvited, extended family appears at his door. The members of the family force themselves in and take up residence. In both works they insist they have come for the man's own good, to save him from his isolation and loneliness. Slowly they take over the man's apartment and in the process he loses his fiancee, work, money and, finally, his life. All his protests are put down by the family in the name of majority rule; pleas for help are not taken seriously by lawyers, landlords, or police.

Fifteen full years separate these two works, but in important ways they are very much the same. The endings, however, are conspicuously different. In both Chinnyūsha and Tomodachi the man makes various attempts to extricate himself from the family's presence. His last effort in Chinnyūsha is secretly to make posters encouraging victims of a similar fate to unite in resistance and come to his aid. The man puts up these posters on a wall near his apartment. For this action he is scolded and fined by the family. The man ends up tearing down his posters and leaving his own home. In a short epilogue the reader learns that the man has "rested" (休んだ) his resistance by hanging himself. In Tomodachi, the poster scene has been omitted and the man is caged as he increases his resistance. In the final scene he dies like his predecessor in Chinnyūsha, but in this case he is murdered, poisoned by

a member of the family.

Abe's returning to Chinnyūsha after fifteen years suggests that he was dissatisfied with its effect or that his feelings about its themes changed during the period that separates it from Tomodachi. The titles of the two works are suggestive of such a change; "intruders" became "friends".[28] The two works remain largely the same, however. Two critics who have made this point, even if indirectly, are Ōkubo Tsuneo and Taniguchi Shigeru. In his article, "Abe Kōbō ni okeru gikyoku to shosetsu" (The Dramatic Writing and Prose of Abe Kōbō), Ōkubo briefly discusses the case of Chinnyūsha and Tomodachi in part of a discussion of views of the city in Abe's plays and novels. Ōkubo emphasizes the sameness of the two works by pointing out that in both cases a tension is drawn by Abe between two opposite and antagonistic types of human relationship. One is characteristic of human bonds formed between city dwellers and exemplified by the relationship between the man and his fiancee. The other is characteristic of communal, village-type bonds and in the two works is represented by relationships among the family members.[29]

Taniguchi's discussion is in an article comparing the writing of Abe and Kafka in which he suggests that Kafka's work is much more pessimistic than Abe's and that it has more of "the terror of art," to use Kafka's own words, because it brings to the surface the unconscious fears of the reader. Taniguchi asserts in the article that in order for Chinnyūsha to have emotional impact, the man must be able to doubt, if even for only an instant, his own conviction that he is right and the

family wrong. Taniguchi explains:

> For the man, this family is a group of fascists who absurdly trample the precious isolation-freedom he enjoys from the bonds of communalism but, at the same time, [emphasis Taniguchi's] for this man, living in fear of the real terror of loneliness, they must also be a new community that promises to bring him a true sense of existence...Chinnyūsha lacks this latter quality.[30]

Taniguchi criticizes Tomodachi saying that it fails in the same way and that it, therefore, represents no advance over the earlier work. By this argument, Taniguchi also implies a fundamental likeness of the two works that goes beyond details of plot.

Abe's most famous work, the novel Suna no onna, is also an expansion of an earlier short story and presents an interesting example because here Abe was particularly successful in developing latent ideas. Suna no onna, published in June of 1962,[31] took the 1960 short story Chichindera japana (Cicindela japonica) as its starting point but went on to develop themes only suggested there.[32]

With minor revisions and additions, the first twenty seven pages of Suna no onna (Zen sakuhin edition) correspond almost paragraph for paragraph to the first twenty pages of the twenty-one page Chichindera japana. In writing the novel, Abe abandoned the closing paragraphs of the short story and continued writing. A comparison of the final paragraphs of Chichindera japana and the corresponding passage in Suna no onna illustrates how Abe picked up where he left off. In the short story, after an unsuccessful attempt to scale the crumbling walls of sand that enclose him, the man confronts the still sleeping woman.

> The man ran into the house, grabbed the woman by the hair and shook her awake.
>
> "Hey, where did you hide the ladder? Bring out the ladder!"
>
> But because of the secretions pasted on her eyes like scabs, her eyelids barely open at all. She simply shakes her head left and right like a blind man and does not even answer him. With each movement of her head, sand came pouring off her naked body, laying bare her darkish flesh stained with spots and tiny wrinkles.
>
> Suddenly the man began beating the woman. The woman made a ball of herself cowering, still unresisting. Every time a blow landed, droplets of sweat flew from the woman's body, but gradually her attacker grew weak and finally he was only pushing her.
>
> A naked woman is not something meant to be punched.[33]

In the same situation in the novel, the man suppresses the urge to hit the woman and refuses to believe what he most fears has happened--that he has been trapped like one of the insects he pursues. His response to the situation is intellectual rather than physical.

> Finally she half opened her eyes, seeming to be dazzled by the light. Seizing her shoulders and shaking her, the man spoke rapidly and imploringly.
>
> "Say, the ladder's gone! Where's the best place to climb out of here, for heaven's sake? You can't get out of a place like this without a ladder."
>
> She gathered up the towel with a nervous gesture, and with unexpected energy slapped her face with it two or three times and then, completely turning her back to him, crouched with her knees doubled beneath her and her face to the floor. Was it a bashful movement? This was hardly the place. The man let out a shout as if a dam had given way.
>
> "This is no joking matter! I don't know what I'll do if you don't get that ladder out. I'm in a hurry! Where in God's name did you hide it? I've had enough of your pranks. Give it here. At once!"
>
> But she did not answer. She remained in the same position, simply shaking her head left and right.
>
> He stiffened. His vision blurred, his breathing faltered and almost stopped; he abruptly realized the pointlessness of his questioning. The ladder was of rope. A rope ladder couldn't stand up by itself....The woman's actions and her silence took on an unexpected and terrible meaning. He refused to believe it, yet in his heart he knew his worst

> fears had come true. The ladder had probably been removed with her knowledge, and doubtless with her full consent. Unmistakably she was an accomplice. Of course her posture had nothing to do with embarasssment; it was the posture of a sacrificial victim, of a criminal willing to accept any punishment. He had been lured by the beetle into a desert from which there was no escape--like some famished mouse.[34]

The final sentence of Chichindela japana is a pregnant one. Clearly the development of some kind of relationship between the man and the woman is implied, but the idea is not developed. The man's first reaction of anger is described, but this violent and emotional response gives way to something more fruitful. The man abandons his pugilism. He realizes that it is futile and though his anger may persist, he will likely begin to consider his options. He may eventually accept his situation or he may plot to escape. At any rate, the man's reaction is not likely to be static. It is the opportunity set up by the author to chronicle the process of change in the man's psychology that gives the situation its interest for the reader. Abe seems to have realized this and in Suna no onna he fully developed the themes latent in Chichindela japana by working out one possible "ending" to the story that addresses the many questions raised by its closing paragraph.

The preceding has been a brief look at of three of the more obvious and interesting examples of genre shift in Abe's writing. To discuss to even the same limited extent the many other examples that can be cited would not be appropriate here. Yet, such examples are all worthy of further investigation and such investigation would doubtless turn up more examples. As my purpose here is simply to suggest that genre shift is extremely common in the writing of Abe Kōbō, it will be sufficient to

cite the following examples without comment.

Just as Suna no onna was based on an earlier short story, so was the novel Moetsukita chizu. This novel is an expanded version of Kaabu no mukoo (Beyond the Curve), a short story first published in January of 1966 in Chūō kōron (中央公論).[35] Some of Abe's short stories have become dramatic pieces. I have already mentioned the example of Chinnyūsha and Tomodachi. Another such example is Shijin no shogai (The Life of a Poet) which first appeared as a story in October of 1951 in Bungei (文芸).[36] Eight years later Asahi Hōsō broadcast Abe's televison version of this story.[37] Abe also rewrote the 1952 story Suichū toshi (Underwater City) as a stage play which appeared in Shinchō in December of 1977.[38] In 1972 Abe allowed the stories Dendorokakaria and Akai mayu to be dramatized for televison.[39]

It has been noted here that some of Abe's novels began as works in other genres, but Abe has also been inclined to rewrite his novels. Three of these have become films. While it is not uncommon for novels to be adapted for the screen, it is, perhaps, unusual and important to note that Abe himself wrote the screenplays for the film versions of Suna no onna, Tanin no kao, and Moetsukita chizu. All three films were directed by Teshigahara Hiroshi.[40] Another of Abe's novels, Enomoto Takeaki (Enomoto Takeaki), exists also in a later version for the stage.

Abe Kōbō has rewritten at least two other of his works as screenplays. The short story Toki no Gake (which, as noted above, also exists as a stage play) was made into a film in 1971 produced by Abe himself.[41] Rengoku (Purgatory), a television drama, was broadcast by

Kyūshū Asahi Hōsō in October of 1960.[42] It became a film entitled Otoshi ana (Pitfall), the filming of which was completed in July of 1962 and also directed by Teshigahara.[43]

Besides Rengoku, two other dramas for television have been rewritten by Abe for other genres. Jinmei kyūjohō (Method for Human Salvation) which was broadcast by NHK Osaka in July of 1961[44] was performed in a version for the stage at Abe's Tokyo studio in April of 1978.[45] Ningen sokkuri (Exactly Like a Human Being) began as the scenario for a television drama published in the February 1959 issue of Gendai geijutsu (現代芸術 ).[46] It was rewritten as a short story with the same title and serialized between September and November of 1966 in S F Magajin ( SF マガジン).[47] Yōmō jinrui (The Sheep Appendix Race), also a drama produced for television was an adaptation of the short story Mōchō appended to this thesis.[48]

Finally, at least three other dramatic works which Abe has rewritten in some fashion may be mentioned in addition to those already raised as examples. Kojiki no uta (Beggar's Song) began as a radio drama which was broadcast in December of 1958.[49] Abe rewrote the radio version as a musical in April of 1961. It was later published in that form in two parts in the May and June issues of Gendai geijutsu.[50] The play Kawaii onna (Cute Girl), originally published in March of 1959 also in Gendai geijutsu, was rewritten as a musical in August of the same year.[51] Dorei gari (Slave Hunt) was published originally as a play in two parts in the December 1954 and March 1955 issues of Bungei.[52] In December of 1967 the work was published in a revised form in Shinchō[53]

and in May 1975 a play entitled Uee--Shin dorei gari (Way--New Slave Hunt), based on the earlier Dorei gari, was published and first performed in the same month by Abe's own theatre company.[54]

Numerous as such examples of genre shift are, they represent only one kind of rewriting in Abe Kōbō's work. Environment shift is just as common. Over the years Abe has repeatedly treated a relatively small number of themes. Many of these themes appear in his earliest short stories but they also appear in his most recent novels. In this section I will identify some of these themes and some of their many appearances in Abe's writing.

William Currie is one scholar who has written extensively about this subject. In his doctoral dissertation and elsewhere[55] Currie has written on recurrences of the theme of the alienated self in modern society. This is one of several important recurrent themes in Abe's writing. Currie has said that Abe is an author

> ...whose early works give clear indications of the approaches to fiction he would be taking later as well as the major concerns which would be evident in much of his later writing. Abe's early fiction does not show the sophistication of some of his later works, but even in his early short stories we can see the sure hand of a master at creating dream narratives which dramatically express the anguish of contemporary alienated city-dwellers.[56]

As Currie's writing provides ample support for claiming the importance for Abe of the theme of alienation, I will focus here on three other important themes which have received less attention. These are: 1) the unreliability of perceived reality; 2) documentation of the process of disintegration; and 3) the individual versus the group.

The first of these themes is manifest widely in this author's writing as a sense of instability, flow, and rootlessness. Several scholars, both Japanese and Western, have noted Abe's affinity for rootlessness, very often quoting Abe himself who links his own distrust of the secure and stable to his experiences as a youth living in desert-like Manchuria. In a postscript to his translation of Uchi naru henkyō Andrew Horvat quotes an autobiographical note by Abe written in 1966:

> I was born in Tokyo and brought up in Manchuria. The place of family origin on my papers, however, is in Hokkaido, and I have lived there for a few years. In short, my place of birth, the place where I was brought up, and my place of family origin, are three different points on the map. Thanks to this fact, it is a difficult matter for me to write even an abbreviated list of important dates in my life. Essentially, I am a man witout a hometown. That much I can say. And the feeling of hometown-phobia which flows at the base of my emotions, may be attributable to my background. I am put off by anything which is valued only because it is stationary.[57]

In his article "Abe Kōbō to haisen taiken" (Abe Kōbō and his Experience of the Defeat), Ōkubo Tsuneo quotes Abe's remarks on his wartime experiences during an interview with Haryū Ichiro. Abe, who was living in Manchuria at the time of the Japanese defeat, said in that interview, "I lived in Shinyo [Chinese Shen Yang] for a year and a half. I witnessed there the complete collapse of social standards. I completely lost all trust in things constant. For me this was a very good thing." Then in answer to a question about what it was that made him feel this way Abe answered:

> For a very long time we lived in a complete state of lawlessness--there was no government, no police. That changes

> the way you look at the world! On top of that, at the time my knowledge of sociology was zero. Anyway, I learned a very realistic way of looking at things. What I felt most deeply at the time was that we could get along like this just fine, that is, that things hadn't changed a great deal.[58]

In some of his literary essays Abe has made direct reference to these feelings and discussed examples in his writing that reflect them--attempts to dismantle the reader's sense of security within a repetitive everyday routine.

In his essay Shijin tōjō--Jitsuzai shinai mono ni tsuite (Entrances of the Dead--On Things That Do Not Exist in Reality),[59] Abe explains the purpose of the many appearances in his works of ghosts, dead people, and impossible events--things that "do not exist in reality." The author says that the sudden appearance of the unexpected breaks our confidence in relying on the routine, the everyday, which he sees as untrustworthy.

> ...no stability of any kind is absolute. The scale of the intellect and the emotions, while it is always in balance, is forever swaying up and down. The maintenance of this motion within a certain range is what we call the everyday. But then, unexpectedly, new circumstances arise, for example, the sudden death of a close relative and immediately one side of the scale plunges downward.[60]

In this essay Abe mentions specifically his introduction of the impossible entity into three of his early plays--Seifuku (Uniform), Dorei gari, and Kaisoku sen (High-speed Boat), first performed in March, June, and September of 1955,[61] but in fact, Abe has used this device to pursue his questioning of the nature of perceived reality from the time of his earliest short stories until the present.

In such early stories as Dendorokakaria and Bō, Abe suggests

through the use of sudden human metamorphosis that the condition of our world is not as static as we may have suspected, that stability is illusory. In Chinnyūsha and Tomodachi the sudden inexplicable arrival of the family has a similar effect. In Suna no onna it is the man's capture in the sand pit that suddenly tips the scales of the everyday. In Tanin no kao the disfiguring accident suffered by the protagonist suddenly disrupts what until then had been an ordinary life and in Abe's most recent novel Mikkai an ambulance which no one has called suddenly appears to take away the protagonist's seemingly healthy wife. This serves in the same way to jolt the central character into a reassessment of reality.

Human metamorphosis is an effective tool for upsetting the reader's assumptions about the nature of the world because we believe such metamorphosis to be impossible. This is because it does not obey what we often consider (whether rightly or wrongly) to be immutable laws of physics. In Abe's writing the world often does not obey these natural laws.[62]

The short story Kōzui (Flood), which appeared in 1950, provides an early example in which such disobedience plays an important role. In Kōzui people turn into pools of water that flow not only downhill under the force of gravity filling holes in the street, but also out of these holes and then uphill. This unusual water changes phase at its own convenience leaving skaters and swimmers in difficult situations.

In Suna no onna the protagonist is insulted by the woman's heretical view of the sand; her description of its properties goes

against his understanding of the world.

> "If you let it go on, beams like these rot away to nothing, you know."
> "You mean the iridescent beetle?"
> "No, the sand."
> "Why?"
> "It gets in from everywhere. On days when the wind direction is bad, it gets up under the roof, and if I don't sweep it away it would soon pile up so heavy that the ceiling boards wouldn't hold it."
> "Hmmm. Yes, I can see it wouldn't do to let the sand accumulate in the ceiling. But isn't it funny to say that it rots the beams?"
> "No. They do rot."
> "But sand is essentially dry, you know."
> "Anyway, it rots them. If you leave sand on brand-new wooden clogs they fall apart in half a month. They're just dissolved, they say, so it must be true."
> "I don't understand the reason."
> "Wood rots, and the sand rots with it. I even heard that soil rich enough to grow cucumbers came out of the roof boards of a house that had been buried in the sand."
> "Impossible!" he exclaimed rudely, making a wry face. He felt his own personal concept of sand had been defiled by her ignorance.[63]

In Mikkai Abe again strains our assumptions about the laws of nature by making one of the central characters a young girl suffering from osteolysis, a degenerative bone disease that causes its victims literally to shrink and change shape much as Alice does in Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland.

Also evident in Kōzui is the sense of flow that is typical of this author's writing. Water is almost inevitably associated with flow but Abe also sees the fluidity of sand and in Suna no onna it becomes a metaphor for flow. In this flow Abe sees a freedom from the constraints of society and the conditions society imposes upon the individuals that are its elemental units.

> Because winds and water curents flow over the land, the formation of sand is unavoidable. As long as the winds blew, the rivers flowed, and the seas stirred, sand would be born grain by grain from the earth, and like a living being it would creep everywhere. The sands never rested. Gently but surely they invaded and destroyed the surface of the earth.
>
> This image of flowing sand made an indescribably exciting impact on the man. The barrenness of sand, as it is usualy pictured, was not caused by simple dryness, but apparently was due to the ceaseless movement that made it inhospitable to all living things. What a difference compared with the dreary way human beings clung together year in and year out.
>
> Certainly sand was not suitable for life. Yet, was a stationary condition absolutely necessary for existence? Didn't unpleasant competition arise precisely because one tried to cling to a fixed position? If one were to give up a fixed postion and abandon oneself to the movement of the sands, competition would soon stop. Actually, in the deserts flowers bloomed and insects and other animals lived their lives. These creatures were able to escape competition through their great ability to adjust--for example the man's beetle family.[64]

For Abe sand is the quintessential symbol of flow and rootlessness. It is a positive force. In his essay Sabaku no shisō (Thoughts on the Desert), Abe remembers his youth in Manchuria and his earliest feelings about sand.

> In the desert or desert-like things, there was always a kind of fascination that can't quite be put into words. I can't say the feeling wasn't a romantic longing for something that didn't exist in Japan, but we passed almost our entire youths in the half-desert of Manchuria (the present-day Northeast [of China]). Now I can explain it as nostalgia, but still, within my memory, I can recall that I had a strong fondness for the desert even living in the midst of that half-desert climate. The sky would be stained a dark brown on days when the sand dust stifled your breathing. The sand would cake onto the underside of your eyelids, clinging there even though you tried repeatedly to wipe it away. Somewhere in that irritated feeling was not only discomfort, I think, but always at the same time a kind of feeling of exhiliration.[65]

In an interview with Akiyama Shun in Mita Bungaku Abe once said, "Even now when in the spring sand blows up in the wind, it brings back fond memories."[66]

If sand is symbolic of flow, it also brings decay to mind. Sand, of course, is nothing more than disintegrated stone. Throughout his career as a writer Abe has been interested in the process of disintegration, degeneration, and decay, the formation of sand from stone.

This concern with disintegration shows up in Abe's chronicles of decaying human minds. Often this decay is also associated with physical deterioration. One may be a symptom of the other and often the direction of cause and effect is not clear. Sometimes it is the whole world that seems to be collapsing. In such cases Abe again reminds us of the illusory stability of perceived reality.

Dendorokakaria, Akai mayu, and Mōchō are all stories that belong in this category. Dendorokakaria is the story of a man, Mr. Komon, who turns into a specimen of Dendrocacalia crepidifolia, but unlike Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis in Kafka's Die Verwandlung, for example, this transformation is not the starting point of the story. The focus of the story is the process of deterioration that culminates in Mr. Komon's becoming a plant. The same may be said of Akai mayu. The man in this story literally comes apart. As in Dendorokakaria it is the process of deterioration--here an unraveling--that forms the core of the piece. This unraveling results in the man's becoming a cocoon. Again the transformation represents the end rather than the beginning of the

story. In Mōchō, while K's transformation begins with the transplantation of the new appendix, the operation takes place before the story begins. The real subject is K's progressive degeneration, the process of his "sheepification." These three stories will be discussed in greater detail in the second section of this thesis.

Toki no gake, already mentioned in these pages in other contexts, may again be cited here. As noted earlier, Abe explicitly labeled this piece "process" when he rewrote it for the stage, acknowledging the focus of the original short story. In this work the time frame has been severely reduced, but using a stream of consciousness-type narrative, Abe again documents decay. In this short story he chronicles the decaying confidence of a has-been boxer just before and during his final bout.

Inu (The Dog) is another example of such writing.[67] In this story, the art teacher-narrator marries a vapid model and acquires a dog along with his new spouse. The woman herself is rather dog-like, as the narrator tells us.

> When we were eating, she wouldn't feel at ease unless she sniffed her food before putting it in her mouth. The food wouldn't taste good unless she put it in just when all her saliva was flowing. Then she would chomp on it as loudly as she could. She couldn't relax without scratching some part of her body....And of course she liked any man who would pet her....[68]

On the other hand, while the dog is clearly a dog at the opening of the story, it becomes more and more human, gradually less and less like one of its own kind. The dog's taste in food, for example, hints at

this change.

> She couldn't munch on bones like other dogs. Cold foods would not do; she ate only hot dishes. If the sake was good, she would drink quite a bit. The wierdest thing about the dog was that though she could be wretchedly sloppy, at times her behaviour would make you think she understood human speech.[69]

After having failed in attempts to train the dog to be more dog-like, to restore it to what he feels it ought to be, the narrator admits defeat and gives up the idea completely. He decides instead to train it to be more human, encouraging the dog's further disintegration

> ...she progressed and came to resemble people to an uncanny degree. She learned to blow her nose using a paper napkin, to smoke cigarettes, even to spit with a masterfully sullen air, then finally to nod and shake her head. It was laughter that she could not manage to learn. It was, after all, too much to expect of her to comprehend the psychology of laughter.[70]

By the end of the story, however, the dog does indeed learn to laugh. Finally it begins to speak, thus making its transpecification complete. Years later Abe was still writing works in which the process of degeneration was a central theme, for example, Tanin no kao, Moetsukita chizu, and Mikkai.

Each of these novels is written in the first person. The protagonists in all three appear at the outset to be stable human beings and reliable narrators, but in both Tanin no kao and Moetsukita chizu the protagonist quickly deteriorates. The main character breaks down mentally and finally loses his identity altogether. The protagonist in Mikkai is mad from the outset, but for much of the novel he seems to be considerably more sane than he actually is. In Mikkai it is the

reader's confidence in the sanity of the protagonist that deteriorates as the reader gradually gains a clearer understanding of the storyteller's true condition.

The accident suffered by the man in Tanin no kao is itself a kind of degeneration. It makes him somehow less than human. Near the beginning of the book he tries to overcome his own prejudices about faces--the attachment which he realizes all people have to superficial appearances--and he seeks refuge in his own seemingly stable position in society, convinced that his being is affirmed by something more than just a few millimeters of skin.

> As I removed the bandages, a leech-like mass crept out across my face...the keloid scars, swollen and distended, red and black intertwining....How repulsive! Since this was daily routine, I should be used to it soon....
>
> I was vexed even more by my unwarranted surprise. When I thought about my feeling, it seemed baseless, irrational. Why did anyone have to put up a hue and cry about anything so trifling as the skin on one's face, which, after all, was only a small part of the human capsule? Such prejudice and set ideas, of course, are not particularly strange....While such a situation would be undesirable in a pimply adolescent who lives in visions, it was ridiculous for me, the section head of a respectable laboratory, moored securely to this world by an anchor-like weight, to be afflicted by psychological hives. I realized there was no particular reason for my abbhorence of the leech-like scars, but I was unable to stop my suffering, although fed up with the whole thing.
>
> Of course, I intended to try. Rather than run aimlessly away, it would be best, I suppose, to face the situation squarely and get used to it once and for all.[71]

Very soon after this, however, the man begins to show the early symptoms of his later collapse.

> That evening when I returned home I had an unusual longing to listen to Bach. It did not have to be Bach necessarily, but in my hangnail, wound-up mood, I wanted no

> jazz, no Mozart--Bach was indeed the most appropriate....[Bach] was the best for the times when I needed spiritual balance.
>
> But for a moment, I suspected I had mistaken the record. If not, certainly the machine was out of kilter. The music sounded insane. I had never heard such Bach....It was meaningless and stupid; every phrase played seemed to me quite like a dusty, sticky lollipop....Then it appeared that it was I who was mad! Even so, I could not believe it. How should a wound on the face have any effect on one's sense of hearing? But the deformed Bach, no matter how I listened, would not go back to normal again....Apparently my philosophy about faces stood in need of fundamental revision.[72]

After the protagonist has completed his mask, he decides to buy new clothes to go with it. In this scene he finds that his creation seems to have a mind of its own. As the mask gains confidence, the man loses more and more control over himself. Gradually the boundary between mask and self becomes blurred.

> But I was really made aware of the stubborn power the mask had over me when I entered a department store to order some clothes. Though it might have been appropriate to choose something flashy to match the beard and glasses, I selected a conservative three-button suit with a narrow collar, a style which was the fad of the moment. It was unbelievable. First, the very fact that I had any awareness of fashion was itself beyond comprehension. However, that wasn't all; I deliberately went to the jewelry department and purchased a ring. The mask was apparently beginning to walk on its own and to ignore my plans. I didn't consider this particulary bothersome, but it was nevertheless strange. Although there was nothing funny, gasps of incoherent laughter came welling up one after the other as if I were being tickled, and I seemed to be in an unaccountably jovial mood.[73]

By the end of the novel the man's disintegration is complete. He has become the inhuman mask itself. Ironically, he had originally decided to make the mask with the purpose in mind of reestablishing his own humanity, of reapproaching his wife through its agency, but in the

final pages of the novel his link with humanity has become so tenuous that he, or perhaps I should say the mask, has resolved instead to murder his wife.

> So, this time, you had better be careful. The mask that descends on you this time will be a wild animal. Since you have seen through it already, the mask will concentrate on its lawlessness, unweakened and unblinded by jealousy....Suddenly I heard the sharp clicking of a woman's heels. Only the mask remained; I had vanished. Instantaneously and without thinking, I concealed myself in a lane directly at hand, and releasing the safety catch of my pistol, I held my breath. What was I doing this for? Was it only play acting to test myself, or was I plotting something in earnest? I probably will not be able to answer this question myself until the final, decisive instant, until the woman comes into my range of attack.[74]

The central character of Moetsukita chizu is a detective who undergoes the same kind of mental disintegration as that suffered by the protagonist of Tanin no kao, but unlike the earlier novel there is no precipitating crisis in Moetsukita chizu that corresponds to the scientist's disfiguring accident. In fact, the first three quarters of Moetsukita chizu might easily lead one to take the book as an ordinary detective novel. The opening scenes, for example, are reminiscent of those of the film "The Maltese Falcon."[75] In both cases the detective's first interview with his client is a frustrating one. The client seems deliberately evasive, arousing suspicion about her motives for requesting a costly investigation.

> "Well then, what about clues? Tell me in detail whatever occurs to you."
> "I can't. There's absolutely nothing at all."
> "Just anything that comes to you. Even if you don't have proof or anything to back it up."
> "Well, all right...There are the matches, for one thing."

"What did you say?"
"A matchbox. A half-used box of matches from some coffee house. It was in his raincoat pocket along with a sports paper."
"I see." Suddenly her expression changed. Looking again at her face, which quite confused me, I found it rather unpleasant..."If you think the matchbox might be some sort of clue..."
"No, not particularly. It's just that it was in the raincoat pocket, and I thought..."
"Now if I could just get you to sign this application, we'll get on with the investigation. But as I've explained to you, the deposit which you pay covers the investigation expenses for a week. In case we cannot locate your husband within one week we take no remuneration, of course; but there is no question of returning the thirty thousand yen on deposit, you understand....But I can't carry on much of an investigation with the information you have given. It's all right, I suppose, since it's our business to get it, but don't you feel as if you were throwing thirty thousand yen out the window?"
"Oh what a mess this is!"
"There must be something, something more concrete, like who you want me to tail, where you want me to look."
"If only there was," she sighed....[76]

Here at the beginning of the novel the detective is clearly in a position of authority. However frustrating the answers, it is he who asks the questions. It is he who is called upon for help, asked to search for the missing husband of a woman abandoned and at a loss for what to do. Nevertheless, the ultimate focus of the work is on the disintegration of the detective's links with the world, his loss of self and his subsequent departure on a new search, the search for his own identity, his becoming a fugitive from his former self.

The protagonist's collapse begins with an hallucination which suggests this role reversal. It occurs while he is resting at his client's apartment after being injured in a brawl.

Somewhere--perhaps in the kitchen--she was humming in a low

> voice. Since I could hear only the higher tones, I could not tell what the song was. I put on my coat and began walking...and she too began to walk...when she crossed in front of the lemon-yellow curtains, her face became black, her hair white, and her lips white too, the irises of her eyes became white and the whites black, her freckles became white spots, white like dust that has gathered on the cheekbones of a stone image. I began to walk too...muffling my footsteps, I began to walk in the direction of the door.[77]

The collapse is complete when at the end of the novel, after a tedious and fruitless search for clues to the whereabouts of the missing man, the detective loses his memory completely and along with it all sense of belonging to society. He becomes a missing person like the man he has been seeking.

Similarly, in the novel Mikkai the protagonist is conducting an investigation. At the outset of his narrative he appears to be involved in an investigation of his wife's strange disappearance. In reading his report, however, it becomes clear that the man is actually mentally ill, that he is investigating himself, and that his writing is an appeal for professional help. Once again Abe's concern is a case of human decay, but in Mikkai the point of view is reversed. We see the world through the patient's eyes. In this way Abe allows a gradual decay of the reader's original assumptions about the man, thus heightening the sense of deterioration that the protagonist's distorted observation gives.

The theme of the individual versus the group has already been touched upon in this thesis in citing Ōkubo's remarks on human ralationships in Chinnyūsha and Tomodachi. In these two works the relationship between the man and his fiancee--a relationship between two individuals--is contrasted with the relationships among the members of

the intruding family groups. Other examples of this juxtaposition of the individual and the group are common in both Abe's short stories and in his novels.

In almost every case, Abe's main characters are men socially isolated and often living alone in cramped quarters. Nearly always they find themselves in conflict with some kind of group. In some cases this group is a clearly defined social unit like the families in Chinnyūsha and Tomodachi. Sometimes it is amorphous, an omniscient "them," unnamed and unseen.

The director of the botanical gardens in Dendorokakaria is a representative of one such mysterious group. He pursues Mr. Komon knowing his every move as though tracking his victim with radar. The director is not only in league with the many assistants at the gardens but also with the employees of the library and with the "government." Together the members of these organizations form a network of vigilant operatives from which Mr. Komon cannot escape.

In Kūchū Rōkaku[78] the protagonist finds himself in a similar position. He is an unemployed worker living alone. He clings tenaciously to ridiculous hopes for employment raised by an odd help-wanted poster that offers construction jobs but gives no address for making inquiries. In his search for the Castle in the Air Construction Office, the man meets several people claiming to be one of its representatives. Each of these people has his own ideas about the function of the company. While the groups to which these people belong exist only in their minds, their words and actions are based on firm

beliefs that isolate the protagonist in an ominous, Kafkaesque world where everyone but he seems to know what is happening.

The man who turns into a cocoon in the story Akai mayu is an isolated individual shunned by the whole of society. He can find no place to rest because he has no home. He is denied even the comfort of a public park bench because "it belongs to everyone, not any one person." His individual rights are trampled in the name of protecting the rights of all. With the same twisted logic that is used against the protagonists in Chinnyūsha and Tomodachi, the man is condemned to living the life of a homeless wanderer. In Mōchō the main character K also becomes isolated and victimized by society. The lab assistant Maki, too, is victimized. He is ostracized from the group comprised of his fellow scientists simply because he does not share with them the last name Sasaki.

A somewhat later story Yume no heishi (The Dream Soldier) of 1957[79] provides another example of the individual and the group in opposition. It is the story of a young soldier who deserts in the middle of the night during cold weather endurance exercises near the village of his birth. After his desertion he is seen by no one but his father who is the one policeman in the village. Stories of the desertion spread, however, and an "animal-like" fear creeps from house to house. During the night the soldier secretly visits his father. The young man's corpse is found the next morning after he commits suicide by stepping in front of train. Shortly after this incident the policeman leaves his village.

The soldier becomes an outsider, regarded as a traitor by the two groups upon which his life has depended. The village was his community as a child and youth; the cohesion and loyalty of the army group, however artificial it may be, was his only hope for survival in the battle that surely awaited him. The soldier's father is also thrown into an irresolvable conflict with the village community. To help his son is to associate with a traitor. When he does so, he, too, becomes alienated from his group and shamed, he must leave his home.

In all of Abe's mature novels, Suna no onna and those that have followed, the central character is the same sort of isolated individual separated by choice or circumstances from a group to which he once belonged. The insect collector in Suna no onna becomes separated from his wife and his colleagues at work by his capture in the dunes. In this case the separation is an actualization of an already existing mental state--his purpose in visiting the dunes is as much to escape the bankrupt human relations of his former life as it is to collect insects. In this sense his capture is also a release.

Because of the sudden loss of his face the scientist-protagonist of Tanin no kao becomes separated not only from his wife and colleagues like the insect collector, but from the whole of society; he is feared by all who see him. While the mask provides hope for reapproaching society, the man's self-centered insensitivity toward his wife causes a deeper alienation and as the novel ends the protagonist is about to commit a murder, an act that will make his separation from society complete and also provide its members a more easily justifiable reason

for rejecting him.

The central character in Moetsukita chizu begins as a man who has already fled to the margins of society; he is separated from his wife and has become a private detective. His gradual disintegration ends in a loss of memory. After an abortive attempt to remember, to go back to who he had been, the character decides instead to sever all ties with the world and to flee into the labyrinthine city, the "bounded infinity" as Abe calls it in his epigraph to the novel.

The positon of the scientist Dr. Katsumi in Inter Ice Age 4 is similar, but in this case society forsakes the protagonist rather than vice versa. While Katsumi is the man responsible for the creation of a machine that predicts the future, he is left behind by the future that it predicts and by his fellow scientists who are better able than he to accept that future. He alone remains emotionally attached to the values of the present and the past. Because of this he has no place in the world to come. Finally the machine predicts and then has a part in Dr. Katsumi's murder at the hands of his co-workers.

The Box Man takes to an extreme the theme of isolation within a group. By choosing to become lost in the anonymity of his box, a box man withdraws completely from meaningful (from the point of view of society) human contact and relinquishes the privileges and responsibilities of one of its members. He enters a self-sufficient world of one. Yet, as in the case of Tanin no kao, the box man hopes to return to society, to remove his box. His account of his life as a box man is his attempt to do this.

The central character in Mikkai also attempts to settle a conflict between the individual and society. Like the box man he lives in a world apart. He does not understand the world in the same way that other people seem to, but he attempts to reconcile his view of the world with that of other people by exposing himself, by verbalizing his understanding of his environment. In all of Abe's mature novels and in many of the early short stories the protagonist is such a character, a man alone and at odds with the world.

In discussing the theme of the individual versus the group I have suggested that many of the characters that appear in this author's writing share certain characteristics; they are nearly always male and in some way isolated within society. Abe's repeated use of similar character types is one example of auto-quotation.

Various critics have made the point that Abe Kōbō's characters are often very similar. For example, in his chapter on Abe in Sengo sakka no sekai, Rizawa Yukio has said, "Almost all Abe's main characters are victims..."[80] Nancy Hardin wrote in the introduction to an interview with Abe in Contemporary Literature, "In both his drama and his novels Abe's characters know no nationality. They are contemporary men in contemporary times, confronting problems that have yet to be afforded solutions."[81] Donald Keene has said in reference to characters in Abe's plays that, "The persons rarely have names, but tend to be called 'the wife,' 'the student,' 'the postman,' and so on..."[82] In an article entitled "Levels of Sexuality in the Novels of Kōbō Abe," William van Wert describes characters in the novels in this way:

> All of Abe's protagonists are elitist mole-men...They are all scientists, whose analytic and self-reflective powers have reached full maturity, but whose emotional capacities have either atrophied or become fixated in late adolescence. Pathetically isolated and introverted, they prefer data over people, because figures are empirical while people are unpredictable. As narrators, they are both trustworthy (because of their ability to observe) and unreliable (because of their inability to interpret correctly what they observe).[83]

The description is a very good one, but limited in its usefulness because it takes into account only the protagonists of the novels.[84] Rizawa, Hardin and Keene all make important points about Abe's characters but there is a common factor in all the people who appear in the works of Abe Kōbō that goes much deeper than any of the elements mentioned by these critics. I would like to suggest that the terms "frame" and "attribute" as described by Nakane Chie in her book Japanese Society may be used as a key to understanding the common element in Abe's characters.

According to Nakane, people may be grouped in terms of either frame or attribute.

> Frame may be a locality, an institution or a particular relationship which binds a set of individuals into one group: in all cases it indicates a criterion which sets a boundary and gives a common basis to a set of individuals who are located or involved in it....Attribute may be acquired not only by birth but by achievement. Frame is more circumstantial....Taking industry as an example, "lathe operator" or "executive" refers to attribute, but "the members of Y Company" refers to frame.[85]

Abe's characters are personified attributes. It is in this that their commonality lies.

Even considering only the stories appended to this thesis, many such characters may be pointed out. The protagonist of Dendorokakaria is Mr. Komon. The reader is told virtually nothing about him. As his name suggests, he could be any man. He is the attribute "man" personified and is part of no frame. The narrators of Akai mayu and Bo are also such men. Algon of Mahō no chōku is a personification of the attribute "poor artist" and the central characters of Mōchō and Kūchū rōkaku may be described by "unemployed worker". In addition to the central character of Kūchū rōkaku there appears in the story a whole group of men that may be described in this way. The poet S in the same story is another example of the "poor artist". There also appear such personified attributes as "typist," "maid," "middle-aged man," and an unidentified man for whom the attribute "corrupt politician" easily could be supplied. In Mōchō there are the "professor" and four men who are the "assistant". In Bō it is the "teacher" and his two companions known only as the "student".

In every case characters are defined by attribute rather than frame. Perhaps it is this which causes critics to question Abe's Japaneseness and call him an international writer.[86] Nakane says of the Japanese, "In group identification, a frame such as 'company' or 'association' is of primary importance; the attribute of the individual is a secondary matter,"[87] and that in her opinion frame is "the basic principle on which Japanese society is built."[88] Thus, Abe's characters are defined in a way that is alien to ordinary Japanese modes of establishing identity and in this they are all of essentially the same

type.

Metamorphosis is another device that Abe has used again and again in some form throughout his career. It is widely known that metamorphosis is important in many of this author's early short stories, Dendorokakaria, Akai mayu, Kabe--S. Karuma shi no hanzai, Baberu no tō no tanuki, Kōzui, Suichū toshi, Mahō no chōku, and Bō, to mention only some of the many examples, but in later works, too, Abe has frequently used this device. Metamorphosis in the short stories is generally literal; in later works Abe has tended to use metamorphosis in more sophisticated ways. Niki Junpei the captured man in Suna no onna, for instance, is transformed psychologically with the discovery of a method to draw water out of the walls of sand that enclose him.

The scientist in Tanin no kao undergoes a stunning metamorphosis comparable to the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly. His accident changes his face into a mass of larva-like scars. He then goes through a period of waiting while planning his mask. During this period he remains wrapped in a pupa-like roll of bandages until finally he puts on the completed mask and emerges as another man.

The detective-narrator of Moetsukita chizu is also transformed; pursuer becomes the pursued. He becomes a missing man like the man he was hired to find. In Inter Ice Age 4, an entirely new race of fish-men called "aquans" is produced to take over the underwater world that the forecasting machine has predicted will come.

The box man's withdrawal into anonymity in Hako otoko is identical in meaning to the metamorphosis of the man in the story Bō. In Bō the

teacher concludes that the man who turned into the stick which he and his companions have found was "a stick all along," a thing "so commonplace that no one recognizes any particular necessity to single it out for study," something so common we hardly see it any more. In Hako otoko the box man tells us that

> ...a box man is certainly not one who stands out. In the right environment he is indistinguishable from trash. But being inconspicuous and being invisible are two different things. Because he is common he is often seen. Even you've had many chances to see one, but I understand your not wanting to admit it. You're not the only one who has pretended not to see him even though you really have.[89]

In both works the character's withdrawal from society is actualized by a transformation. Having lived the life of a stick, the man in Bō becomes a stick. In the case of Hako otoko the anonymous, isolated man becomes a box man taking on the exterior form of the inner life he had been leading, but the box man also implicates his audience by suggesting that he is a box man because he is allowed to be.

With the novel Mikkai Abe has returned to the literal metamorphoses characteristic of the short stories. The shrinking girl suffering from osteolysis is one example; the girl's dead mother is another. The reader is told that the girl's mother died after coming down with "Watafuki disease" (cotton-spouting disease) which causes the insides of its victims to turn into tufts of cotton. After her death the girl's mother was made into a quilt. With such devices Abe also returns to the humour so evident in his short stories and generally lacking in his novels.

Less obvious, perhaps, but no less important as an example of auto-quotation in this author's writing is the frequent occurence in his work of places that may be called "bounded infinities." The source of this term is Abe's epigraph to Moetsukita chizu which reads:

> The city--a bounded infinity. A labyrinth where you are never lost. Your private map where every block bears exactly the same number.
> Even if you lose your way you cannot go wrong.

It was in Moetsukita chizu that Abe first explicitly referred to such a place, a closed space separated from the outside world yet embracing within itself a boundless frontier. There are, however, several precedents and in Hako otoko and Mikkai which followed Moetsukita chizu, Abe again used the device.

The case of Mahō no chōku stands out among the short stories. In this story the poor artist Algon is given the opportunity to create a new world within the confines of his tiny one-room apartment. He fails to do so, but within the bounds of his blacked out, boarded up dwelling place there unfolds an infinite horizon suggesting a vast primeval wasteland. The walls of Algon's room represent potential liberation as much as confinement.

In an article entitled "Kabe," the critic Tōyama Tatsuru explains this two-sided effect of the wall image that frequently appears in Abe's writing.

> It is important to take note of the fact that in Abe's case the image of the wall is not a metaphor for the human being closed in and estranged that we see, for example, in such common expressions as "cut off by a wall" or "a wall that block's one's way."[90]

The pit in the sand dunes that traps Niki Junpei in Suna no onna is another such place. Its walls shut out contact with the outside world, but for the protagonist the pit ultimately becomes a new world as vast as the world he leaves behind and one infinitely more fertile and promising. As William van Wert puts it,

> His imprisonment engenders his freedom. Presumed missing and then dead in Tokyo, the man begins to live for the first time. He discovers a way to preserve water in the sand, a discovery of far greater importance than the rare beetle he had come to find and a discovery that could only be appreciated by the people of the dunes, his captors. Significantly, the discovery of water preservation coincides with the news of the woman's pregnancy. He stays, even when there is every chance for escape, because the woman in the dunes gives him what his wife in Tokyo had never given him: an offspring, a sanctification of sex as pure feeling.[91]

An entire city is Abe's bounded infinity in Moetsukita chizu. One scene expresses particularly well the sense of the bounded infinity. At the moment the amnesiac protagonist decides to give up looking for his past and turn his back to the woman he believes may hold the key to retrieving it, he retreats into the darkness of confined space and finds there a new beginning; he emerges looking in the opposite direction--into the face of a new world, into the face of the labyrinthine city.

> About five or six paces from the subway was a black opening like some decayed tooth....I casually walked over and concealed myself in the alley....She stood there looking into the [phone] booth and around it....She went down the street as far as the red fire alarm box and again returned to the booth and looked in. She looked uneasily around and went and stood by the fire hydrant. Once she glanced over toward me, but she could probably make out nothing in this narrow, dark

> crevice....I continued to conceal myself as I watched her....Nothing would be served by being found. What I needed now was a world I myself had chosen. It had to be my own world, which I had chosen by my own free will. She searched, I hid....suddenly she was cut off from my view and was already gone. I too left my crevice in the darkness and began walking in the opposite direction. I began walking, relying on a map I did not comprehend....I would forget about looking for the past....There was a strange eddy in the stream of cars. I saw that even the passing heavy trucks were trying to avoid the body of a cat that had been run over and crushed thin as a sheet of paper. And when, unconsciously, I tried to give a name to the flattened cat, for the first time in a long time an extravagant smile melted my cheeks and spread over my face.[92]

Likewise, the box man sees his box as not only a boundary that separates him from his surroundings but also as an opening into a new world.

> I personally feel that a box, far from being a dead end is an entrance to another world. I don't know to where,[93] but an entrance to somewhere, to some other world.

Later he suggests that the box and the human mind are one and that both are bounded infinities.

> Actually a box, in appearance, is purely and simply a right-angled parallelepiped, but when you look at it from within it's a labryinth of a hundred interconnecting puzzle rings. The more you struggle the more the box like an extra outer skin growing from the body, creates new twists for the labyrinth, making the inner disposition increasingly complex.[94]

In Abe's most recent novel Mikkai the setting is a huge hospital complex on the scale of a small city. With its tunnels, buildings built one on top of another, crumbling underground passages, rooms linked by secret panels and trap doors, and elevators that defy the laws of time

and space, the author has created another bounded infinity that confines the characters who people it but at the same time provides for them within its boundaries seemingly endless possibilities for exploration and discovery. The protagonist describes one part of the hospital as though it were a carnival mad house.

> To call it a labyrinth is neither a figure of speech nor an exaggeration. Units constructed gallery-style around a courtyard were joined together by corridors to form square wings, three units on a side, that were built around even larger courtyards. There were three such wings, laid out so that their adjacent sides formed an equilateral triangle; the entire layout had all the complexity of three overlapping honeycombs.[95]

As early as 1955 Ishikawa Jun had pointed out one instance of another important example of auto-quotation in Abe's writing--his frequent use of artifacts within the texts of his works. Ishikawa cited the example of a handbill that appears printed in the text of Kabe--S. Karuma shi no hanzai.[96] Abe has used this device to an extraordinary degree. In addition to handbills, works from every period have included such things as posters, newspaper articles, reports, letters, stanzas of poetry, signs, labels, business cards, unusual punctuation--there is even one case (Hako otoko) in which a section of text is printed sideways (upside down in the English translation)--instructions, notes, marginalia, book titles both real and imaginary and many illustrations and photographs--all included in the texts as images. These artifacts give Abe's writing a unique visual impact and they function to bring the reader into closer contact with the action and setting of the story than abstract alphabetic symbols alone possibly can.

In connection with this, Abe's frequent use of sudden tense shifting may also be mentioned. While Western translators almost invariably translate these shifts out of the English, the translations appended to this thesis maintain them in nearly all cases. This is important because the sudden use of the present tense within past tense narrative functions in the same way that the inclusion in a text of artifacts does to heighten the reader's sense of closeness to and involvement in the fictional action of a piece of literature. Present tense narration is less personal than the past tense narration out of which it occasionally erupts. Description in the present tense seems to have no connection with a human voice that the reader can easily imagine having had direct experience of the events and places described by the author. Thus, it has the effect of putting the reader directly into the action on the same level as that of the fictional character.

The use of similar character types, metamorphosis, the notion of the bounded infinity, and the inclusion of artifacts within texts are all devices Abe has used repeatedly in his writing. Other examples are so numerous that to discuss them all here would be tedious. I will close this discussion with two final examples of interest: 1) Abe's use of hallucination or a moment of altered perception as a warning sign of physiological or psychological collapse; and 2) Abe's frequent satirical treatment of the mass media and people in authority.

In Dendorokakaria Mr. Komon's troubles begin with an episode of hallucinations during which he keenly feels the pull of gravity in the way that a plant might and then sees his own face detached and hovering

before his eyes in a black void. The man in Akai mayu also has hallucinations before he begins to unravel; concrete construction pipes turn into houses as he looks at them.

I have already mentioned the strange moment of distorted perception suffered by the protagonist of Tanin no kao while listening to Bach. The detective in Moetsukita chizu hallucinates before his departure into the unknown; black becomes white and white black. The scientist Dr. Katsumi of Inter Ice Age 4 has an ominous premonition long before his actual downfall; the terrible meaning of his hallucination becomes apparent only much later.

> I was angry myself, and witnessing someone else's ill humor aggravated my own. I took off my coat and threw it onto the control panel. I had the impression that the machine had begun to function on its own. That, of course, could not be; it was clearly a hallucination. But in that instant an amazing idea seemed to be coming to me. Confused, I tried to grasp it, but it had already been forgotten. Damn, how hot it was![97]

As in Mr. Komon's case, the protagonist assumes his hallucination is only an hallucination, that is, something not to be taken seriously when in fact it signals a nightmare to come.

From the time of Dendorokakaria of 1949 to Mikkai written nearly thirty years later Abe has repeatedly treated authority and the press with a witty irreverence and shown a disdain for pompous displays and bureaucratic nonsense. The director of the botanical gardens in Dendorokakaria is comical in the pride he shows in his gardens and the festivities he has planned for "Greenification Week". In Mōchō Abe laughs at the professor and assistants. They are so sure of the

importance of their profession and the power of their theory that they are deaf to their own ridiculous manner of speech and blind to the childishness of their professional jealousies. Members of the press in Mōchō are treated as profit-mongering sensationalists.

Similarly, in Bō the teacher is a pompous imposter who relies on a false mustache to convince himself and others of his dignity. The politician of Kūchū rōkaku, who indiscreetly suggests his visitor has come to offer election bribes, is another figure of this kind.

In Inter Ice age 4 Dr. Katsumi, inventor of the forecasting machine, describes his treatment by the press.

> The popularity I enjoyed, especially among children was wonderful. I basked in glory, frequently figuring in three-color cartoon books and accompanied by a robot, with the ICT [Institute for Computer Technique] as my headquarters. (The actual machine covered 720 square feet and consisted of rows of large iron boxes arranged in the form of the letter E; however, in the cartoons, of course, the machine had to be a robot.) I anticipated all futures and dispatched villains right and left.[98]

K, in Mōchō, finds himself treated by the press in almost exactly the same sensational manner.

Mikkai is particularly rich in such examples. The ambulance drivers who take away the protagonist's wife use their postion of authority to justify the most ridiculous of notions.

> One summer morning an ambulance suddenly drove up, although no one remembered having sent for one, and carried away the man's wife.
>
> It was an utter bolt from the blue. Until the siren woke them up in surprise, they had both been sound asleep, and so they were caught completely unprepared. Indeed, his wife herself, the one in question, had never complained of a single symptom. But the two men who carried in the stretcher were

> gruff, perhaps from lack of sleep, and paid no attention: of course she wasn't ready, they said; this was an emergency, wasn't it? They both wore crested white helmets, starched white uniforms and big gauze masks.[99]

When the man goes to the hospital to look for his wife, he finds that he cannot simply walk in and inquire after her. The area in front of the hospital is surrounded by entrepreneurs symbolic of the red tape involved in hospital admission. He meets a woman there whom he takes to be a nurse until she presents her business card which identifies her as a representative of an "Official Introduction Service." She insists on helping him.

> "I'm really fine. I don't plan to be examined or anything."
>
> It doesn't have to be for a medical examination, you know. We help with any kind of problem."
>
> ...."All I want is to go to the night reception desk or whatever it's called, you know, the place where they admit the emergency patients, and check out a couple of things with whoever's in charge there."
>
> ...."You say you just want to check out a few things, but it isn't that easy. They have a reputation for strictness over there. Only ambulances can go in. They can't make any exceptions, because once they break the rules, all sorts of tramps and drunks start making up excuses to sneak in."
>
> "If I walk right in through the front door, and go through the proper procedures..."
>
> "There, that's why amateurs are no good. The front desk opens at nine. The new shift comes on at eight, and by eight-thirty the old shift has all gone home, so how are you going to get there in time?"
>
> "What time is it now?"
>
> "Two minutes after eight."
>
> "Damn."
>
> "See, I told you: 'It takes a thief...' Registration fee is seven hundred eighty yen. That's an agreed charge so I can't mark it down for you, but let's see, if everything goes all right I can hold the total cost, including a small remuneration for the other party, down to twenty-five hundred yen."[100]

In a later scene the protagonist is told about other problems that sometimes arise when patients are admitted. He is told about a recent case in which a man was brought to the hospital. The man had fainted in the street thinking he was about to be smashed between two trucks trying to avoid a young cyclist. Admission, it seems, cannot be completed until a diagnosis has been made and it is decided which specialist has jurisdiction.

> The middle-aged man, since he was still unconscious and unaccompanied by family members, represented an unparalleled boon to the crowd of specialists. Besides, according to eyewitnesses--none of whom would have dreamed of blaming a girl carrying eggs on a bicycle--it was a case of utterly unprovoked fainting. The patient was not very advanced in years, showed no signs of infirmity, had experienced no convulsions or spasms, and yet was still unconscious. It was hardly surprising that every department claimed him for its own. Ordinarily the specialists would come to an agreement after a certain amount of consultation, but on this occasion, tempers flared, and each man stubbornly pressed his own case without yielding. Finally it turned into an ugly mud-slinging contest, with allegations being hurled left and right about this one's philandering and that one's game of chess.
>
> The agent meanwhile, could not complete his papers without an answer from the diagnostic center; while he fretted away the time, the patient's condition took a sudden turn for the worse, resulting in death. And so the doctors' prize was finally snatched from them by the resuscitation department.[101]

Odd as these scenes may seem, none is too unfamiliar to us. The idiotic behavior that Abe pokes fun at and the sense of frustration and impatience which this kind of behavior evokes is also familiar.

Rewriting is a widespread phenomenon in the writing of Abe Kōbō. It may take the form of genre shift, environment shift, or auto-quotation. Such rewriting has been important in this author's

writing from the time of his earliest short stories to the present. It is important to recognize this link between Abe's short stories and his later work. This later work has been translated and is well known in the West. Unfortunately the short stories remain relatively unknown. The second main section of this thesis will be a discussion of six of those short stories. Translations of these short stories from Abe's most active period as a story writer follow.

## III. Six Short Stories of Abe Kōbō

Dendorokakaria opens with a scene in which the protagonist, Mr. Komon, becomes confused momentarily; he questions what should be a perfectly ordinary action--kicking a stone by the side of the road. This scene serves to prepare the reader (like the hallucination scene briefly mentioned earlier) for Mr. Komon's coming loss of physical integrity. The scene is reminiscent of and may be an allusion to the opening scene of Natsume Soseki's Mon. Sōsuke, the protagonist of that novel, finds himself forgetting a common Chinese character.

> Suddenly, as if recalling something, he called out to his wife, "Oyone, how do you write the character for kin in kinrai?"
>
> Oyone showed no surprise that he should have forgotten how to write this simple character, nor did she laugh the shrill laugh peculiar to young women.
>
> "It's the character for ō in ōmi," she replied.
>
> "But that's what I can't remember--the character for the ō of ōmi."
>
> She half opened the shōji and drew the character for kin on the veranda floor with her long ruler, saying only "It's this."
>
> ...."Yes, of course," said Sōsuke, without looking up at her. This lapse of memory did not strike him as particularly

> humorous and he did not laugh. Oyone too passed the incident off casually.[102]

In his book The Psychological World of Natsume Soseki, the noted Japanese psychiatrist Dōi Takeo explains that,

> Sōsuke is exhibiting, in fact, symptoms of depersonalization. Simple characters that should be permanently fixed in his mind have lost their sense of reality, and he has begun to ruminate about them in a compulsive manner. This suggests that he is experiencing some type of deep inner turmoil.[103]

That Abe should be familiar with and use in his writing manifestations of a recognizable psychopathological syndrome is not surprising; though he has never practiced, Abe was trained as a physician and he has said that as a grade school student he enjoyed reading about psychopathology.[104]

Similar scenes occur also in Tanin no kao and Mikkai. Like Sosuke in Mon and Mr. Komon in Dendorokakaria, the scientist in Tanin no kao becomes alienated from what ought to be closest to him. After eight years of marriage his wife suddenly seems peculiarly unfamiliar.

> I was terribly confused. What in heaven's name had I seen, what had I talked to, what had I felt during all the time we lived together? Was I that ignorant of you? I stood in blank amazement before the unknown territory of you, which was enveloped in an endlessly spreading milky mist. I was so desperately ashamed I could have wrapped my head with another two bandages.[105]

The protagonist of Mikkai suffers from the same kind of uncertainty. After finding a woman who appears to be his missing wife, he is distressed to realize that he cannot positively identify her.

> ...again I thought what a beautiful, well-proportioned body she had. She did look a great deal like my wife. But if it was really she, then just a glimpse from behind ought to be sufficient to be sure. What could be the reason for this vague uncertainty?[106]

After his moment of confusion, Mr. Komon feels himself becoming plant-like. He then sees his own face reflected in the darkness about him as though mirrored in the window of a train; his face begins to turn inside out. Abe uses this hallucination to further heighten the feeling of uncertainty about the future created by Mr. Komon's doubting the good sense of his own very ordinary actions. By giving him two faces and thus, two selves, Abe anticipates the divided selves that appear again in Mōchō, Tanin no kao, Dai yon kanpyōki, Hako otoko, and Mikkai.

In Dendorokakaria Abe gives no explanation for Mr. Komon's metamorphosis. Mr. Komon himself does not appear to be responsible. By not telling the reader why Mr. Komon is transformed, Abe forces the reader to concentrate on the process of Mr. Komon's transformation--his initial resistance, his weakening and finally his succumbing to the unknown force that causes it.

This force is not identified, but it is a powerful, elemental force and one that is not easily resisted. Abe emphasizes its irresistable power by linking it with the inexorable cycle of nature; Mr. Komon's spasms come in the spring when all plants are stirred to renewed activity. This sense of irresistability is furthered strengthened by the note Mr. Komon receives which tells him that to meet K is his "destiny."

This note is important for several other reasons: Abe allows himself a pun by having Mr. Komon and K meet at a coffee shop called "The Cabbage;" the note is an early example of Abe's use of artifacts in his texts (this story includes another note, two stanzas of poetry, two book titles and a label that is tacked to Mr. Komon's stem after his transformation is complete); and because of the note, Mr. Komon jumps to conclusions about K's identity--he naively assumes K is a woman and that she was once his lover. Mr. Komon's assumptions are incorrect, but they dictate his subsequent actions until new evidence renders the assumptions no longer plausible. The note is also a warning that Mr. Komon will soon have another bout with his unruly face.

Before K arrives at The Cabbage, Mr. Komon inspects the interior of the shop. This shop is another example in Abe's writing of a bounded infinity. It is a small, enclosed space but Mr. Komon's excited mental state causes all that occupies the room to seem larger than life. It seems to Mr. Komon that the room can barely contain its contents. He feels he must look outside because his eyes are "saturated with the view." He feels as though his eyes are being "forced out of the room."

After K arrives, Mr. Komon's sensual perception is further altered. K seems to be a giant. Time accelerates and becomes tangible--Mr. Komon feels it slipping through his fingers like sand. The atmosphere, too, becomes tangible. Mr. Komon loses his ability to focus on the motion of the world; everything around him seems to move forward and he is left behind. Finally, his ability to distinguish objects is lost and the world fuses into a band of brilliant light.[107]

Mr. Komon's "lagging consciousness" is an apparent allusion to a remark made by Franz Kafka during a conversation with Gustav Janouch about Kafka's story Die Verwandlung. When Janouch called the story "a terrible dream, a terrible conception," Kafka replied, "The dream reveals the reality, which conception lags behind. That is the horror of life, the terror of art...."[108]

Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis in Die Verwandlung shocks the reader because it causes the reader's consciousness to lag behind; the view of reality it implies is one step ahead of the everyday view of reality to which most readers cling. Similarly, the appearance of K in Dendorokakaria causes Mr. Komon's consciousness (and at one remove, the reader's consciousness) to be left behind. K's appearance creates a gap between expectation and the consciousness of reality. With this jolt Mr. Komon first doubts that K is his lover and first suspects that his understanding of reality may be flawed.

As a consequence of having gained this new perspective, Mr. Komon becomes isolated. The people in the coffee shop suddenly are transformed into a group of "thorn-like eyes;" Mr. Komon flees. Outside the shop he is again alone, surrounded by but separated from each of the members of the streaming crowd.

After leaving The Cabbage, Mr. Komon wanders aimlessly until he reaches a burned and abandoned area atop a small hill. Here once again his face threatens to turn inside-out. Too tired to resist, Mr. Komon gives in to the transforming force; he decides to become a plant, to resist no more. His resistance, however, has been half-hearted all

along and his giving in to his second self lacks the power of similar scenes in Tanin no kao which is an expansion of many of the ideas latent in Dendorokakaria.

In the novel, the scientist-protagonist is seduced by the possibilities his mask provides him to escape from his former existence; he loses sight of the mask's original purpose--to provide a way back to that existence. Yet, he is conscious of his own decision making; he watches one self choose to shun the other. Mr. Komon's struggle, however, is not internal; he has no such freedom to choose even his own estrangement from humanity. From the start his defeat by an omnipotent outside force is inevitable. Dendorokakaria thus fails to involve the reader in the psychological disintegration that Tanin no kao vividly depicts. Mr. Komon's disintegration is described in physical terms. His body parts begin to function independently. While his face seems determined to turn inside-out, his hands are "of different opinion." They pick up K's gleaming army knife while Mr. Komon himself stands idly by, watching but not comprehending. Mr. Komon then watches as his legs run away without him. Because a corresponding psychological breakdown does not occur in Dendorokakaria, these instances of physical deterioration do not function as the ominous harbingers of mental collapse that Abe learned to use masterfully in later works--works like Tanin no kao, Dai yon kanpyōki and Moetsukita chizu.

Just as it is an unidentified and unyielding force that causes Mr. Komon's transformation, it is mere chance, that gives him a temporary reprieve after the first time he abandons his resistance to the

metamorphosis. K's violent attempt to collect Mr. Komon (now indistinguishable from a specimen of Dendrocacalia crepidifolia) accidentally restores Mr. Komon to his human form. For K this is a temporary set-back, but his relentless pursuit continues; he lurks outside Mr. Komon's apartment, waits for him at the public library (knowing somehow that he will come), and then approaches his prey once again with a note stuck in the crack of Mr. Komon's door. K is as inescapable as the transformation.

Mr. Komon eventually turns to Dante and the Greek myths in an attempt to understand his affliction. These literary sources form the basis of the assumptions that dictate his actions from this point until the end of the story when, utterly exhausted, he gives in to the metamorphosis for the last time. The conclusions Mr. Komon draws from events as seen filtered through these assumptions are illogical, unlikely, and again show his naivete; he believes that he is dead (having committed suicide), that K is a harpie (ignoring the fact that K is a man), and that Greek gods are responsibile for his metamorphosis. K insists that the gods are not responsible, that people commonly become plants.

In several ways Abe encourages the reader to accept the notion that anyone may become a plant at any time. In an early scene, the people in the library momentarily become plants. Mr. Komon's name reinforces the idea; "Komon" suggests "common." Mr. Komon becomes a Dendrocacalia crepidifolia, a common-looking plant.[109] Abe again encourages the reader to accept the idea by referring to the work of Timiriazev. In

his The Life of the Plant Timiriazev devotes a chapter to a comparison of plants and animals that stresses the sameness of the two groups.[110] Accepting the proposition that plants and animals are essentially the same makes the idea of movement from one group to the other much less strange than it otherwise would be. Abe's suggestion that this is possible is made explicit near the end of the story when the narrator tells Mr. Komon that his disease is "a whole world's disease."

Abe thus sets the stage for implicating Mr. Komon in his own transformation, but, curiously, Abe balks. There is no indication that the transformation is an actualization of a pre-existing inner state; the story does not treat Mr. Komon's inner state in any detail. Mr. Komon's collapse is described in physical terms. In the short story Bō, the reader is told that the man was "a stick all along," in Dendorokakaria, however, there is nothing to suggest that Mr. Komon was "a plant all along". The reader is left to wonder whether or not Mr. Komon was indeed the victim of the whims of capricious gods. Dendorokakaria concludes ambiguously.

Like Dendorokakaria, Akai mayu is a story of metamorphosis--one of many such stories by Abe. It is about an alienated individual in conflict with society--a common theme in this author's writing. At the same time, it is a light-hearted expose of human folly; Abe uses the fallacious logic of his characters to poke fun at the muddled thinking that often supports our assumptions about the world.

Akai mayu is the story of a man's loss of identity in an anonymous

world. Searching for a home among the people of a nameless city, the man, known only as "I," becomes lost to the human world. As William Currie has said, the hero of the story

> is the nameless, faceless twentieth-century Everyman who wanders around looking for a place to call his own, a place where he can lead a truly human life...the hero ends up with a perfect shelter, his very own resting place, but he ceas[es] to exist as a person. In the process of scrambling for a place in an inauthentic society, the hero completely los[es] his identity, los[es] his soul.[11]

To heighten the contrast between the alienated individual--the narrator "I"--and society, Abe juxtaposes unstable and stable elements. The opening paragraph of the story suggests flow: the man asks himself a question that has haunted him from times past and he continues to ask himself the same question; the man walks and continues walking, never resting. The sense of relentless motion that this paragraph achieves underscores the man's homelessness, but at the same time, the man walks among houses that line the streets of a neighborhood. These houses are symbols of a sedentary existence, of people rooted to stable lives.

In the middle of the story, the central ideas of the opening paragraph are repeated in a very short, two-sentence paragraph.

> Night begins to fall. I keep on walking.

Night brings the time of rest, the time of day when everyone returns to the roost. The man, however, unlike all other people, must keep walking. In these two simple sentences are flow and permanence juxtaposed again. This short paragraph is immediately followed by

another such juxtaposition; houses are contrasted with the road. Houses, as before, are used as symbols of stability and permanence; they are described as houses that "do not disappear, that do not change, houses standing on the earth, houses that do not move." The road is used as a symbol of flow, motion and changeability. The road has cracks "none with an unchanging face." The road is mutable, transformed by the weather.

> The road--on rainy days, standing on end like a brush; on snowy days, narrowing to the width of the passing cars; on windy days, the road flowing like a belt.

The man's predicament is clear; he wants "nothing more than to rest," but cannot. He is denied a place to rest first by the distorted logic of a woman who says that her house is not his house simply because it is hers. While we may sympathize with the woman, her argument is not logically sound. Later the man is harassed by a police officer. "He," the policeman, uses similar logic to chase the man from a public park bench. The man is twice the victim of faulty logic but the logic he himself uses is no less faulty than that of his adversaries. He reasons thus:

> Night comes every day. When night comes, you must rest. In order to rest you need a house. If that's the case, then there is no reason for my house not to be here, is there?

It is not difficult to see that this argument is fallacious. If the man's first two assumptions ("Night comes every day." and "When night comes you must rest.") are taken to be true, the only valid

conclusion that may be drawn is expressed by the sentence "You must rest every day." This conclusion taken as an assumption in a second argument with the man's third assumption ("In order to rest you need a house.") can lead only to the conclusion, "You need a house every day." Instead, the man concludes, "My house should be here." Nothing justifies this conclusion. It is entirely unrelated to the two assumptions from which it is supposed to follow.

Certainly Abe was conscious of the faults in the man's argument. He has always been keenly interested in mathematics and logic. Abe has said, "Although I went to medical school, I might have gone into pure mathematics."[112] Abe has also acknowledged his debt to Lewis Carroll whom, he has said, "I like very much, perhaps next to Edgar Allen Poe."[113] Lewis Carroll was, of course, a logician. While Akai mayu has its serious side--the man's dilemma is real; the story questions the reader's assumptions about an individual's rights and place in society--the overall tone of the piece is light. Abe uses the illogical logic of his characters to both censure and entertain. Much in the story is humorous--the man's sudden decision to knock on someone's door to ask if, perhaps, the house isn't his; his meek politeness as he asks this absurd question; and his metaphor-adorned excitement upon seeing a woman's smiling face emerge from her window, for example. This is not to mention the man's absurd metamorphosis itself. Abe's detailed, life-like description of the unraveling man contrasts sharply with the strange event described; this too is comical.

In the brief conversation between the man and the woman at the

window, both characters use twisted logic to support their assertions; the man argues that the woman's house is his because she cannot prove it is hers, the woman argues that the house is not his because it is hers. Both arguments are unconvincing. The man's folly is two-fold in that he sees the senselessness of the woman's argument but is blind to the faults in his own.

The man's confrontation with the policeman also centers around a problem of logic. The man reasons that if a park bench belongs to the public, then it belongs to each individual. The policemen, however, concludes the opposite. He reasons that if a park bench belongs to the public, then it belongs to no individual.

Both the woman in the house and the policeman win their skirmishes with the man not because of superior powers of reasoning but because their claims are backed by a source of authority. The woman's position is strong because she can claim squatter's rights; the policeman has the backing of legal authority. Like the central characters in Chinnyūsha and Tomodachi, the man in Akai mayu is an individual victimized by a society that claims to protect all individuals equally. Abe's treatment of the policeman and the woman are two more examples of his typically satirical depiction of figures of authority.[114]

With the beginning of the narrator's disintegration, there is a shift in mood in the story. The man begins to describe the process of his unraveling. The tone becomes more serious; the description is detailed and realistic. This section ends with the man transformed into a glowing red cocoon.

The transformation, the central metaphor[115] of the story, is similar in effect to the actions of the policeman which are based on a logic that sacrifices the ideals it purports to uphold. The policeman's idea of his democratic society denies comfort to the man who is one of that society's members. In an anologous example of irony, the man's transformation provides him with a place to rest but he is denied its comfort by his loss of a normal human form.

The story ends with another shift of tone. In the final paragraph the man/cocoon is suddenly seen from a more detached perspective, suddenly becomes objectivized, something found by the railroad tracks and pocketed by a passerby. With this the man/cocoon undergoes a role reversal. He is freed from his homeless wandering through rows of stable houses that mock his rootlessness. He himself becomes as fixed and unchanging as the houses. Within the glowing cocoon even time stops.

> Inside the cocoon, time stopped. Outside it grew dark but inside the cocoon it was forever dusk; with the colors of the sunset shining through, the interior glowed red.

Like Mr. Komon in Dendorokakaria, Algon, the hero of Mahō no chōku, is a naive young man living alone in a small apartment. Algon is one of several poor artists that appear in Abe's stories (others include S in Kūchū rōkaku and the would-be astronomer of Kōzui). As is nearly always the case in this author's writing, Algon is alienated from the rest of his society.

Algon's lot is a sorry one. Penniless and starving, he lives in a crumbling apartment building which, ironically, has become dilapidated because of the steam from cooking. He is an artist but poverty has compelled him to sell the tools of his trade.

His future is as precarious as his present. At the beginning of the story, the reader is asked to consider how long even Algon and his chair--his one remaining possession--are likely to last. Abe suggests that one day Algon will be forced to sell his chair and eventually depart his tiny room. With this expectation the reader follows the events that lead to Algon's departure at the end of the story. Abe ends the story with a twist, however; Algon does leave his room, but he is not evicted, he departs his human existence altogether as he disappears into the wall that has nourished him.

No description of the protagonist is given. He is presented as a caricature of his own mental state. Artist that he is, Algon is peculiarly sensitive to color. Starving artist that he is, he exists also in a state of abnormal sensitivity to food and so, not surprisingly, Algon sees the colors of the enticing food odors that waft into his room from outside. He gives the colors the common names of artist's colors--yellow ochre, chrome yellow, cerulean blue.

Algon's preoccupation with hunger not only mixes with his innate artistic sense to affect his color perception; it also causes him to exaggerate the size of the food he draws. He draws an apple so big that one would make an entire meal, rolls as large as baseball gloves, and a pat of butter the size of a brick. His coffee cup he draws the size of

a beer stein and the sugar for his coffee comes in cubes the size of matchboxes. Algon's dreams, too, are filled with sugar-plum fairy-like images of magic food-filled landscapes; he sees a "sea of milk" and "sugar-crystal beaches," for example.

When Algon first encounters the chalk's magic he suddenly becomes analytical. His initial reaction to the magic is one of disbelief. He is convinced of the veracity of the phenomena only after he carefully observes the food that appears before him and then tests his observations by smelling, touching and tasting. His final acceptance of the magic comes with a pseudo-scientific experiment. After repeating his first drawing and observing the second magical appearance of an apple, Algon is willing to declare the magic "real" by virtue of its being "repeatable fact"--the wording undoubtedly a barb aimed at scientists and the scientific method.

While Algon and the reader are thus persuaded of the magic's efficacy, no explanation is given for the sudden appearance of the chalk itself. Algon does not question its appearance. Once he is satisfied that the Magic is not illusory, he accepts the chalk as a new given in the equation of his life. The reader, however, is likely to be more critical. To lend the story plausability, Abe clothes the events of the story in details that persuade the reader to accept the chalk as real and cause his attention to be drawn away from the question of its origin.

Early in the story Abe establishes the laws of the magic chalk; the chalk's magic is effective only in the absence of natural light and the

chalk drawings take on real form at the moment they are completed. Once these laws are established, all subsequent events are made to conform to them.

Algon realizes the chalk is magic when, at nightfall, his first drawings suddenly materialize and drop from the wall with a thud. On the first night of his encounter with the chalk, Algon sleeps in a new bed only to fall to the floor when his magic bed disappears from beneath him at the break of day. Abe is careful to give Algon "the sort of pain you'd expect to feel after falling out of bed." When Algon touches the sheets on the drawing of the bed that has reappeared on the wall, they are still warm in places as though they had been slept upon. When Algon tries the chalk again the following evening, he is careful to avoid further accidents by drawing a table under the bread and sardines he magically produces. For the same reason, Algon holds with one hand a can opener as he draws it with the other. In each of these cases Algon adjusts his behavior to the laws of the chalk; he acts much as a child does as it gradually becomes aware of physics while playing with blocks, for example. This attention to detail on Abe's part gives the feel of our ordinary reality to the unreal world of the story; it allows the reader to suspend disbelief.

In the same way that he unquestioningly accepts the chalk, Algon accepts the world after the chalk--which is a changed world--as Algon himself realizes. He muses,

> The laws of the universe have changed. Fate has changed and unhappiness gone away. Oh age of satiety, world wherein desire becomes reality....

A lingering skepticism remains in Algon's mind, however, and Abe hints at the possibility that the chalk is not the thornless rose that it at first appears to be. When Algon lies down in his new bed only one eye can relax sufficiently to sleep. The other eye can't sleep because of "anxiety over the unknown tomorrow seen against the satisfaction of today." Years later Abe reused this discordant eye motif in Tanin no kao to express the scientist's anxious and divided feelings about his wife when, wearing the mask, he attempts to seduce her.

> While my left eye looked longingly at you, like at some spoils of war, at your fingers that were crumbling bread--at your soft, sleek fingers, except for the cut from your button work--what I saw with my right eye made me writhe in pain.[116]

Later, as Algon prepares to begin his new life locked with the chalk in his blacked-out, boarded up room, he is exhilerated, but at the same time he is uneasy.

> It is a great and brilliant moment. Yet what is it that rests faintly aching with grief at its depths? Perhaps the gods felt this at the instant before the creation of the heavens and the earth--it must be that grief. At the corners of his smiling flesh a tiny muscle faintly trembled.

The promise of that faintly trembling muscle is quickly fulfilled as Algon realizes that to live within a new world he must also take on the overwhelming responsibility of creating a new world from scratch. Algon finds that indeed, it was the anxiety of the gods at the creation of the world that had troubled him only moments before this realization. Thrust into a difficult position, Algon takes refuge in concentrated thought; he devotes himself for a week to planning the new world. When

this fails, he turns to the temporary relief of corporeal satiety; he flees from his problem by spending a week of drinking and gluttony.

While attempting to design his new world Algon thinks of the many types of scenery with which he might endow his window. Scenery "like the photographs on picture postcards" flits before his eyes. He is intrigued by the many possibilities but even knowing that he must choose one from among them, he finds it impossible to do so. Daunted, he at one point considers leaving everything to chance, but then chides himself for considering an option that amounts to nothing more than fleeing from his responsibility. The protagonist of Tanin no kao finds himself in a similar position when he must choose a face for his mask. After a long process of elimination, he must decide on one of two facial types. At this juncture, he has an experience nearly identical to Algon's.

> Well, since the materials were all at hand, I might as well choose the one I liked best....my iritation became all the more greater as my choice grew clearer. The peacable type had the merit of peacableness, but the unpeaceable type had its own virtue. There was no room here for value judgement. The more I knew, the more I was interested in each type. Hard-pressed and despairing, I thought many times how much better it would be to settle the whole thing with a throw of the dice. But as long as there was even a slight metaphysical significance to the face, I could not possibly commit such an irresponsible act.[117]

The scientist in Tanin no kao is a more mature character than Algon; ultimately he makes a decision that creates for himself a new, if violent, existence. Algon proves unable to make such a decision; eventually he does let Chance decide the shape of the new world. Chance provides for him only the line of a desolate horizon, but he is saved

from the prospect of facing the creation of the world for a second time also by Chance when he comes across a newspaper he has purchased weeks before. In the paper Algon finds a giant photograph of Miss Japan.

With the appearance of Miss Japan Mahō no chōku becomes a broad parody of the materialism of postwar Japanese society. Miss Japan is unrelievedly self-centered and will not stop at murder to get what she wants. What she wants is money. Whereas Algon sees his chalk as something necessary for his survival--it provides him his food and promises him a new and more wholesome environment--to Miss Japan, the chalk means wealth. "We'll really be rich, won't we?" she asks excitedly when she first sees the magic at work. When Algon explains that "money has nothing to do with it," she is utterly astonished.

Abe also alludes to Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking Glass in this section of the story. Miss Japan is substituted for Alice in a scene which, if not conscious parody, is identical in spirit. In Mahō no chōku Algon explains to Miss Japan that to open the door of the sealed room would be fatal.

> "But what about this door?" she asked pointing to the real door covered with blankets. "This one's different isn't it?"
>
> "No, that one can't be used. The old world would erase everything--that food, the desk, the bed, and even you, yourself. Now you're the Eve of the new world. We must become the father and mother of the new world."
>
> "How horrible. I'm a firm supporter of birth control, you know. I mean, children are such a pain. And anyway, I'm not going to disappear."
>
> "You will disappear."
>
> "I will not disappear. I know best about myself. I am me. Disappear? What strange things you say."
>
> "My dear, you don't know. If we don't remake the world then what's in store for us at the end is starvation."
>
> "What's this? Suddenly 'you' has become 'my dear'. That's rather rude, considering. I'm going to starve, you

say? Don't scare me. This body's high-priced stuff, you know."

"No dear, your body is nothing more than my chalk.

..."Nonsense."

"Opening the door" in this excerpt is analogous to "waking the King" in the Lewis Carroll passage.

"He's dreaming now," said Tweedledee; and what do you think he's dreaming about?"

Alice said "Nobody can guess that."

"Why, about you!" Tweedledee exclaimed clapping his hands triumphantly. "And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?"

"Where I am now, of course," said Alice.

"Not you!" Tweedldee retorted contemptuously. "You'd be nowhere. Why you're only a sort of a thing in his dream!"

"If that there King was to wake," added Tweedledum, "You'd go out--bang!--just like a candle!"

"I shouldn't!" Alice exclaimed indignantly. "Besides, if I'm only a sort of a thing in his dream, what are you, I should like to know?"

"Ditto" said Tweedledum.

"Ditto, ditto!" cried Tweedledee.

He shouted this so loud that Alice couldn't help saying, "Hush, you'll be waking him, I'm afraid, if you make so much noise."

"Well, it's no use your talking about waking him," said Tweedledum, "when you're only one of the things in his dream. You know very well you're not real."

"I am real!" said Alice, and began to cry.[118]

Later, armed with a gun she has drawn with the magic chalk, Eve becomes a parody of formula hold-up films. Sounding like a small-time gangster, she warns Algon not to interfere with her plans to break out of the room.

Eve was already clutching a small pistol in her hand. She raised it and aimed it directly at the middle of Algon's chest.

"Move and I'll shoot. Put your hands over your head. Foolish Adam, don't you know that promises are the beginning

of deception? It was you who made me lie."
"What are you doing? Now what are you drawing?"
"A hammer. I'm going to break down the door."
"No, you musn't!"
"You move and I'll shoot."
The same instant that Algon lunged at her, the pistol rang out. Algon pressed a hand to his chest, his knees bent, and he fell to the floor.

The beauty queen also provides Abe with a choice opportunity to lampoon the printed media. A Miss Japan would be inconceivable without mass exposure. The newspaper presents her in a large, half-nude photograph that dwarfs such headlines as "Breakthrough at the 38th Parallel." Abe suggests that newspaper editors have no sense of proportion but know what catches the eye.

For Algon the various headlines refer to the goings-on of a faraway world; to him they are meaningless. Years later in Abe's Suna no onna a similar scene appeared in which the protagonist receives a long-awaited newspaper only to find that the news he had been so hungry for seems no longer of any importance. It is the news of another world.

> Tokyo Olympics Budget Trouble. Phantom Stabs Two Girls Again Today. College Youths Poisoned by Sleeping Pill Spree. Stock Prices Feel Autumn Winds. Famous Tenor Sax, Blues Jackson, Arrives in Japan. Rioting Again in Union of South Africa--280 Fatalities. Co-ed Thieves School Has No Tuition Fees--Graduation Certificate Issued on Successful Completion of Examination.
> There wasn't a single item of importance. A tower of illusion, all of it, made of illusory bricks and full of holes.[119]

The photograph of Miss Japan does catch Algon's eye and in another example of his mental state distorting his view of the world, he sees not a sensationally presented beauty queen, but Eve, the quintessential

woman. So desperate is he to find a solution to the problem of the window that not only is Miss Japan transformed in his mind into Eve, but Algon begins to call himself Adam.

Algon's Eve functions in the story in much the same way that Eve functions in Genesis. Into Algon's Garden of Eden she brings a sort of original sin--death she calls it--which brings the downfall of the artist's new world, destroying forever his chance to paint the vast canvas that had lain blank before him.

This downfall is final. Algon is resurrected with the return of daylight, but his existence has already become illusory. For four weeks Algon had been nourished with promissory notes of magic food. His transformation at the end of the story into a chalk drawing puts right his account. Failing to successfully create a new world, he meets the starvation he feared; he pays back his debt with his life.

On the first page of Kūchū rōkaku, before seeing any text, the reader encounters a poster. If the reader is a careful one, he will begin to puzzle over this poster unaided before turning to the protagonist/narrator's monologue which follows. He will experience the poster directly, in the same way that the protagonist of the story does and like the protagonist, he will probably find the poster strange. He will be disappointed, however, if he hopes to find an explanation for the strange advertisement in the tale which follows it. From the beginning to the end of Kūchū rōkaku, the poster remains a mystery.

Without doubt, the poster is absurd; it solicits workers but

provides potential employees with no way to contact the solicitor. The protagonist--known only as "I" until he later identifies himself as "Mr. Karaki"--reacts to the solicitation in a manner that is no less absurd than the poster itself; he assumes that the poster's strange offer is to be taken seriously, that it is no mistake, that somewhere there is a real company called The Castle in the Air Construction Company and that it needs workers. He is also convinced that he is the man for the job.

These assumptions on Mr. Karaki's part quickly become deep-seated conviction and in much the same way that mistaken assumptions dictate the actions of Mr. Komon in Dendorokakaria, Mr. Karaki's faith in the poster functions to channel his behaviour into a single, narrow line of advance aimed directly at the construction office (which, of course, may not exist.)

While the reader is likely to question the authenticity of the poster, Mr. Karaki does not and by not doing so, he makes himself suspect. The narrator's credibility is propped up by the author, however. The protagonist's ruminations about the poster at the beginning of the story do much to persuade the reader that he is lucid. Mr. Karaki speculates about the nature of the work, qualifying his speculation by saying, "If you assume they really want someone..." By causing him to qualify his speculation, Abe strengthens the protagonist's credibility, but Mr. Karaki's doubt is a double-edged sword; while it serves to strengthen the reader's confidence in the protagonist, Mr. Karaki really does believe the poster is real; his behaviour is undeniably questionable.

Mr. Karaki is a difficult character. Though his behaviour is oddly motivated, he often has lucid moments. On several occasions Mr. Karaki hints that he feels his own thinking is absurd. He describes the poster as having the "smell of deception." With a hint of incredulity, he tells the reader that before his unemployment insurance ran out he had "almost begun to put [his] faith in [the job] completely" [emphasis mine]. He admits that he is humiliated when, making inquiries about the consruction office, people treat him with suspicion. He calls his belief in the poster a "deluded state of mind" and while trying to imagine what the Castle in the Air might be, Mr. Karaki allows himself to consider for a moment the possibility that the poster is fraudulent. He calls his imaginings "daydreams" and compares the pattern of his thinking to a maze. Presumably an insane person would be unable to assess his own mental condition.

For the reader, Mr. Karaki's encounter with the cat is also disarming. The incident at first seems to dispel all doubt about the question of the narrator's good sense; it seems clear that he has none when he takes a train to its last stop because the cat gives him no sign to get off along the way. When Mr. Karaki confesses that the sight of boats worries him because there is "the possibility of being told to jump into the sea at some point," it is not hard to imagine that he would actually do so if the cat were to give him a sign. It is Abe who has the last laugh, however, when the cat actually leads Mr. Karaki to its owner--a man who claims to be connected with the Castle in the Air.

The question of his madness or sanity aside, Mr. Karaki is immature

and naïve. He is naïve in his failure to question the authenticity of the poster. He shows his immaturity when, angered, he throws a matchbox at the typist who lives beneath his apartment and again shortly afterward when, gritting his teeth, he kicks K's chair in a fit of pique.

Structurally, Kūchū rōkaku may be likened to a theme and set of variations. Mr. Karaki's search for his castle in the air is repeated four times in slightly varied form. In each case (the cases of K, the politician, the poet S, and the unemployed middle-aged worker), a character chases his own vision of the Castle in the Air. These four characters are all flat characters. Like Mr. Karaki, each is a personified attribute and the shape of his castle in the air is determined by the attribute he personifies.

Living alone in a cramped apartment, Mr. Karaki is a poor, underfed, unemployed workman. As such, his castle in the air takes the shape of a fabulous construction project, the sort of project that a worker would be proud to participate in, a job for which the pay is as high as the work is prestigious--literally an unemployed worker's dream.

K, presumably a meteorologist, works at the weather observatory next door to Mr. Karaki's apartment. He is portrayed by Abe as a condescending self-important scientist of the type that would reappear in Abe's later writing, notably in Mōchō. K puts all his faith in the power of his profession and in scientific progress. For him, the Castle in the Air is the product of the most recent advances in the science of meteorology which he claims has succeeded in making the weather no more

mysterious than bricks and mortar. His description of the Castle in the Air is nonsensical, but, couched in pseudo-scientific language, it makes the project sound like the fruit of legitimate scientific inquiry. Mr. Karaki is taken in completely--again showing his naïveté.

The politician is a personification of the attribute "corrupt politician." Abe makes him rude and snobbish. Like K, he is ruled by his faith in the saving power of his profession. The politician sees the Castle in the Air as a great political movement designed to unify public opinion and of such importance that, if successfully undertaken, it would fulfill "the dreams of statesmen since the days of Babylonia."

Poet that he is, the poor poet S gives the Castle in the Air a suitably poetic touch. S's goal is to express in writing a vaguely-defined tower built of the dreams of childhood.

With the middle-aged worker the idea of the Castle in the Air comes full circle. This man, like Mr. Karaki, has been waiting for notification of employment from the construction office; his castle in the air is the same as Mr. Karaki's. Therefore, he wants nothing to do with the younger man, his competitor for the construction job--whatever it might be. Mr. Karaki's confrontation with the older worker functions to suggest that Mr. Karaki is not crazy after all; it shows that he is not alone in his conviction that the poster's offer is genuine.

In her book Literature and Possible Worlds, Doreen Maitre discusses the ways in which readers react to the absurd in literature. Her comments are relevant here.

> If the world contains only one character who has impossible experiences, we may decide that he is "mad" or "abnormal;"

> whereas if all the characters have impossible experiences, we will decide that it is the world they inhabit which is impossible.[120]

If not an impossible world, the world of Kūchū rōkaku with its oddly motivated characters and bizarre coincidences is certainly a puzzling one. As he has done so often in his work, Abe uses the strange occurences in this story to encourage the reader to question his own assumptions about "reality;" if Abe's fictional world seems impossible, the reader can only reject it as that (the most common response and the one noticed above by Maitre) or he can adjust his thinking about the "real" world. Forcing this kind of adjustment has often been Abe's aim.

In discussing his later work, Abe has said that he believes the reader should not expect writing to be easily understood, that literature today demands the reader's active participation.

> The modern novel, I think, is not necessarily like a train which is to be ridden on and takes one from here to somewhere else. That's where it is different from the 19th century roman. I dislike the dependence on authority that says, "If I get on, then I ought necessarily to arrive somewhere." People say, "If there is no source of authority behind a phenomenon then that is a diseased phenomenon"--that kind of dependence is impure. I would like to discourage that kind of reader.[121]

The reader independence of which Abe speaks is required also by Kūchū rōkaku. Rather than label Mr. Karaki or his world a "diseased" world, Abe's hope is that the reader will accept the action of the story as possible and also the attendant responsibility of considering the implications of this acceptance.

Kūchū rōkaku closes with a twist--a postscript to the theme and

variations section in which Mr. Karaki meets a group of striking laborers and, taken for a strike breaker, is murdered by them. This final section of the story is different in mood from what precedes it. While the sudden twist does not destroy the comic elements and the clipped, fast-paced style of the prose which alone make Kūchū rōkaku memorable, it causes the story to seem somehow disjointed. The events of the two parts do not mesh well, making the story very difficult of interpretation. The ending raises and leaves unanswered many questions, giving the impression that Abe, unsure of how he should conclude his tale, escaped from his uncertainty with the ambiguous dream-delerium scene and the death of Mr. Karaki that come in the final paragraphs.

The strikers cause a sort of reawakening in Mr. Karaki. "Little by little, things I had forgotten came back to me" he says when he hears the singing and the slogans of the workers and then sees their eyes "spitting smoke." Mr. Karaki's eyes smolder too, but one wonders why. Are the workers showing their hatred for Mr. Karaki, an outsider? Is he then remembering past rough handling by strikers when he says, "Things come back to me"? Is this why Mr. Karaki's eyes react? Or is it that they burn in sympathy with the oppressed labourers? The answers to these questions are not made clear.

Mr. Karaki is attacked by the strikers, suggesting that his relationship with them is adversarial, but he then says his impending death may be "a wonderful end" for one like himself who has "forgotten the battle" Is he chastising himself for wasting his time chasing castles in the air while his brothers needed his support on the picket

line or has he forgotten the fight against the disloyal picketers, adversaries of one like himself who wants nothing more than to work, to belong to a company group? These questions also remain unanswered.

The final paragraph of Kūchū rōkaku is dream-like. Mr. Karaki loses consciousness as he is attacked by the leader of the strikers; the story ends with the protagonist swimming in a sea dotted with bobbing towers--castles in the air, one presumes. One of these towers is in front of Mr. Karaki's apartment building. Here he watches a man paste up a poster in exactly the same place he had seen the poster with which the story begins. Mr. Karaki stabs this man only to be stabbed himself by the same man who bleeds sand instead of blood.

One clue to understanding Abe's design may lie in his novel Moetsukita chizu. Sixteen years after writing Kūchū rōkaku Abe included in the novel a scene based on the short story. In that scene the detective protagonist of Moetsukita chizu comes to the conclusion that his client's missing husband had

> come upon a poster pasted on some wall or telephone pole...a broadside telling of a great festival, inconspicuous with its faded colors, and blanched white by the wind and rain. The time and place were blank, but that only served to stimulate his hopes. Without looking behind, he set out in search of the festival that was announced...he went toward an eternal festival, one that would end only with death, one that was different from the pseudo-fetes each night that only the darkness and neon lights could cover up.[122]

The husband runs away from his meaningless existence. Unlike those who do so temporarily by visiting clubs and cabarets in the night, he departs on a search that only death can end. Discussing the novel in

his doctoral dissertation, William Currie calls the festival image (analogous to Mr. Karaki's construction office) a positive image, saying that it stands for,

> ...a life that is different from, superior to, the deadening routine of the "filing cabinet" life where people experience themselves as objects and treat others as objects. "The eternal festival" seems to point to an ideal era of human socialization in which people really respect themselves and one another.[123]

Mr. Karaki's quest may be interpreted as a search for a group to which he can belong, a group that will provide for him a sense of shared humanity. K, the politician, the poet S, the middle-aged worker and the striking laborers all put their faith in empty dreams that cannot provide Mr. Karaki with any such feeling of human worth. Each of these dreams is a castle in the air, as is Mr. Karaki's own search. To quote William Currie again, Mr. Karaki is one of the

> ...mapless people, people questioning both their map and the city outside, people clinging neurotically to a useless map...[124]

The protagonist of Kūchū rōkaku never goes beyond making his feeble attempt to find a true existence. His naïveté sidetracks him immediately; he becomes lost in searching for a place to belong that does not exist. By the end of the story he realizes that he has "forgotten the battle." Years later, in Moetsukita chizu, the husband, in the same position as Mr. Karaki, does not give up. He takes the bold step of severing all ties with his inauthentic existence. He walks out of one world into another, takes definitive action--the first step in

search of an eternal festival. Moetsukita chizu develops ideas that Abe was, perhaps, unable to pursue at the time Kūchū rōkaku was written, ideas whose blossoming he forestalled with the dream sequence that concludes the story.

Mōchō is another of Abe's stories of metamorphosis. K, the central character becomes a sheep-man. Like Dendorokakaria, the focus of the story is not the metamorphosis itself but a process of gradual disintegration. Also like Dendorokakaria, the story is narrated in the third person. In Mōchō, there is no mystery about the cause of K's metamorphosis. It is the work of the human intellect. Modern science is the transforming force. While K is a willing participant in the experiment, he becomes its victim; though K's appendix is removed and he is supposedly restored to his former self by the second operation, he is forever a changed man. His assailants are the abstract "theory" and the scientists who seek to prove it.

As the story opens, K has just recovered sufficiently from a transplant operation to resume eating solid food. His first meal is to be of a special straw that is vitamin fortified and meticulously prepared for him. Abe uses K's reaction to this first meal to establish that K functions at the outset of Mōchō as an ordinary human being; K reacts to the straw as anyone might. He finds it difficult to chew and generally unpleasant. Its smell is so bad, the reader is told, that it could be used as an instrument of torture. The taste is described not as a flavour but as a "wierd stimulus" like "the inside of the mouth

being scraped out with a boar-bristle brush."

Immediately after K begins his new diet of this strange material, he begins to evolve. The shape of his body changes in response to his new means of taking nourishment; his jaw begins to swell as he chews the elastic fibres. At the same time, K's ability to speak like a human being is drastically reduced. To emphasize these changes Abe has the narrator speculate about K's future. "If things continue like this," he says, "perhaps he will go dumb, his jaw will develop for the purpose of chewing only and maybe at some point even his whole appearance will change." These comments also prepare the reader for K's continued disintegration.

After a week of subsisting on the straw, K begins to exhibit more signs of evolution, signs that he is becoming something new--something no longer wholly human. The smell of the straw, which at first he finds so horrible, now no longer bothers him. After ten days, the taste is no longer a "wierd stimulus;" K is used to it and sometimes he even thinks it is "tasty." After two weeks his swollen jaws no longer hurt. In the end, his face becomes completely expressionless.

K's personality undergoes changes too. After he switches to the diet of straw his personality becomes "timid and dull." K's psychological deterioration begins long before these changes take place, however. K begins to lose contact with the rest of humanity when, near the beginning of the story, he finds that he has lost interest in talking.

K's loss of the desire to use speech, the one form of communication

unique to his kind, is symbolic of his isolation. K is caught between two forms of existence; he is neither wholly sheep, nor is he truly human any longer. He exists simultaneously in two worlds. "Which me is really me?" he asks in one scene, "The me with the sheep's appendix or the me before it was attached?"

This scene in Mōchō functions as Mr. Komon's hallucination does in Dendorokakaria; it serves as a warning sign of decay. It also raises similar questions. When, in the earlier story, Mr. Komon sees his own face staring back at him from the darkness, his human self and his self-as-plant come into conflict. Both Mr. Komon and the reader become uncertain about the protagonist's identity. "Which self is Mr. Komon's real self?" becomes an important question. K's question in Mōchō, "Which me is really me?" is equally important.

Not only the protagonists of both Mōchō and Dendorokakaria have two selves and Abe has treated the theme of the double self frequently in other works from Bō, written shortly after Mōchō in 1955, to Mikkai. The protagonist of Tanin no kao struggles with a divided self; simultaneously he is the scientist before his accident and the disfigured wearer of a mask. In Dai yon kanpyōki Dr. Katsumi is split into a self of the present and a future self projected by the forecasting machine. A similar situation arises in Hako otoko. The narrator-writer depicts himself as a man in a box and as a man out of a box, as a man writing about himself living in a box and as a man in a box being written about. The protagonist of Mikkai investigates himself and is therefore both the pursuer and the pursued, both the writer of

his report and the subject of it.

K is portrayed as a hero utterly alone in his struggle with his new appendix. When he leaves the laboratory for the first time, "the heroic pride of one who believes he has transcended the self" can be read in his posture. His operation gives him a peculiar growling of the stomach that sets him apart from all others; he is literally alone in the crowds on the streets. His struggle chewing the straw is described in the language of chivalrous battle; he engages the straw in "single combat."

K's relationship with his spouse is one of intimacy and mutual love. His wife devotedly soothes his aching jaw with wet towels; the couple sobs together, sharing their anguish. This and the heroic coloring given to K's struggle would seem to show a sentimentality that is uncharacteristic of Abe's writing. Indeed, Abe has been noted for his lack of the sentimentality often associated with Japanese writing. Mishima Yukio has characterized Abe's work in this way:

> ..the distinctive element of Abe's poetic sensibility is the hollow, dessicated and blank glare of high noon...In fact, in the history of Japanese literature since the Tale of Genji, a thousand years ago, it would be difficult to find any writer who has eradicated so successfully the high "humidity" content of tradtional Japanese literature.[125]

In an article entitled "Abe Kōbō no kenkō" (Abe Kōbō's Good Health), Kawamoto Saburo has called Abe one of the few modern writers in Japan who do not suffer from what he calls "Nihon byō" (Japan Sickness) which he describes as a tendency toward excessive sentimentality.[126]

If at first blush K's struggle with the new appendix and his relationship with his wife seem to come dangerously close to showing

symptoms of Nihon byō, Abe preserves his reputation as a cool, detached observer with his ironical treatment of the K's situation and the society in which he lives. K, ostensibly less human than the average human being, sees himself as the first true human being, as better than the average human being because, as long as the theory is correct, he expects he will be able to use food more efficiently than others; K sees himself as the answer to the world hunger problem. He compares his feelings with those he imagines the first monkey to evolve into a human being must have experienced upon realizing that it was different--better--than all others of its kind.

K is celebrated in the press as the saviour of mankind rather than as the progenitor of a new race of sheep-men. That is, he is valued as a special human being yet, at the same time, K is treated like a dog--the members of K's society, the whole human beings treat him inhumanely.

K's wife proves to be a fair weather friend; when public attention and curiosity become too much for her, she takes her son and abandons K. She adds insult to injury by changing her name, severing herself completely from her husband at his time of greatest need.

K is exploited by members of the mass media whom Abe depicts in Mōchō with his usual disdain for such people. From the moment K is ready to leave the laboratory for home he is hounded by the press--first by a reporter from a magazine called Psychology Monthly who is described as blacker than a "blackness like the inside of an animal's belly." Later, K is used by the press, scholars and even movie-makers. These

people exploit K's unique physiology in their various ways; he is photographed and interviewed for the newspapers and popular journals, scholarly books are written about the promise of K "the new human being," and a film is made starring K in "living color".

The doctors and assistants who perform K's operation are portrayed as grossly insensitive to K's feelings, unscientific in their attitude toward research, self-important and ridiculously embroiled in professional jealousies. On the first day that K is well enough to leave the care of the research team, one of the assistants hires a reporter to get a story on K's feelings. When K protests the action because he has not been consulted, the scientists show no sympathy. Shortly afterward, K begins to feel that he is no longer one person, that he has two selves; he wonders which self will have control when it is time to speak publicly of his feelings. Hearing of K's plight, the professor concerns himself not with K's emotional conflict but with ensuring that he won't be embarassed at the research society meeting where K is scheduled to speak. Maki, one of the assistants, treats K with a similar insenitivity when he tries to explain that he is mistreated by the other members of the research team becasuse he doesn't share their last name--a complaint K feels is petty considering his own situation.

The researchers are a parody of their type. The professor puts great faith in "the theory." He has definite ideas about the role this theory and theories in general should play in scientific investigation, but these ideas are not what the reader is likely to

expect of a man called "the professor." "A theory," the professor says, "is something to make certain of, not something to have doubts about." He does not regard a theory as an hypothesis to be tested against observable fact, he regards it as fact to be reconfirmed through experiments whose results he has already predicted.

The professor relies on a mysterious Dr. Elex as his ultimate authority. No one but he has ever met Dr. Elex, but the Doctor agrees with the professor that "Because the theory is the point of departure, the theory represents the conclusion." In other words, in the opinion of Dr. Elex, the theory is not to be questioned.

The professor is very impressed with his profession and his position as a respectable scientist. He makes every effort to disassociate himself from the common man. In reference to the apparent success of the operation he says,

> In ordinary circumstances we'd probably be drinking and carrying on in celebration, but because we are scientists, we believe the reward for the suffering we have endured until today is the fruit of our labor itself.

In another scene the professor avoids unrestrained laughter that he feels would be unbecoming; the professor begins to laugh, but "professor that he [is], [he] quickly regain[s] his calm."

In spite of their own exalted opinions of themselves, the researchers prove to be childish in their behaviour. They laugh at K behind his back like a group of teasing schoolchildren. Maki tells K that he is treated badly by the other scientists simply because his last name is not Sasaki. The professor is mortified when K's transplanted

appendix must be removed again, but the narrator implies that he is upset mostly because he has lost the "battle of the two theories" just when victory seemed certain. The professor is concerned more with personal glory than with scientific discovery.

As is the case in some of Abe's other short stories, (see the above discussions of Dendorokakaria, Akai mayu, and Kūchū rōkakau, for example), Mōchō ends abruptly. K suddenly becomes too ill to survive with the sheep appendix and it must be removed. The cause of K's suddenly becoming ill is unclear, but Abe leaves sufficient room for the reader to conclude that Maki has taken certain measures, measures he earlier tells K would cause him "to die of starvation within three days unless [he had] the appendix removed again." This interpretation further emphasizes the absurdly childish behavior of the scientists. Maki sabotages the experiment out of spite, to get back at his fellow researchers for their poor treatment of him.

More likely, however, the abrupt ending of Mōchō indicates uncertainty on Abe's part. His novel Dai yon kanpyōki published years later takes the theme of the remade man to a much more interesting conclusion which Abe's expressive powers were, perhaps, insufficiently developed to handle at the time he wrote Mōchō.

In the later work, a new race of fish-men ("aquans") is created. Like K, the sheep-man of the earlier work, the aquans are separated from ordinary human beings by their altered physiology. Like K, the aquans are superior because they promise to be uniquely adapted to the living conditions of the future. K (had his transplant been successful) would

have been a more efficient human being able to use low-grade foodstuffs for nourishment and thus well-prepared for projected problems of overpopulation. The aquans of Dai yon kanpyōki, because they are good swimmers and equipped with gills, are better prepared than ordinary human beings to survive in the underwater world the forecasting machine has predicted will come. Aquans reproduce. Each successive generation becomes still better adapted to water and progressively less human in form and psychology. At the close of the novel it becomes clear that the forecasting machine has accurately predicted the future; the world floods and is left to those who are best fit to inhabit it--the aquans. The aquans are allowed by Abe to develop in Dai yon kanpyōki in a way that K never can because of the aborted experiment.

Bō, the last of the six short stories to be discussed in this thesis, is also a story of metamorphosis. The central character, "I," turns into a stick. As in the case of Mōchō, the agent of the protagonist's transformation is not some abstract and unknowable force. Abe implies that the man himself is responsible for his metamorphosis or, at least, that the agent of change lies within the realm of human activity.[127]

The man becomes a stick because he has lived a stick-like life all along, or, as the teacher says, the man "was a stick" even before his metamorphosis. His transformation from man to stick reconciles his outer form with his inner state; he takes on the form of a stick, symbolic shape of the stick-like existence he has led.

When the teacher and his students describe the stick, they also describe the man, the way he has lived and been treated. The stick is stained where it has been handled, its lower portion has been worn away and it "appears to have been treated rather roughly;" its entire surface is "covered with scratches." The students describe the stick as extremely well-suited to being used for a variety of purposes--to lead a blind man, train a dog, move heavy objects or attack an enemy with. Shortly after finding the stick the teacher casually uses it as a cane--another use to which it is well-suited.

The man who becomes a stick is another of Abe's Everyman characters; he is ill-treated by a society that does not fully accept him. As Currie puts it, the man is the product of "depersonalization brought on by the pressures of a hostile and unfeeling society."[128] The narrator is a typical father out with his children on a Sunday afternoon. The opening paragraph of the story, which describes a common scene at the rooftop amusement area of an ordinary Japanese department store, emphasizes the man's equally ordinary position in society; he could be any father out with the children during a weekend vacation. Abe frames the story with scenes such as this one that point to the man's unexceptional status; the opening scene emphasizes the narrator's fatherhood as does the closing scene in which a child's voice calling "Daddy" is the dominant element.

Dream elements also frame the story. Before his metamorphosis the protagonist admits that at the time of his transformation he was "simply daydreaming." The end of the story has the feeling of a reawakening

from a dream-like state; the narrator becomes conscious of voices calling "Daddy," the same voices he hears at the opening of the story as he falls from the department store roof.

Currie's comments on these opening and closing parallels raise an interesting question about the story. Is it meant to be interpreted as a dream sequence? Currie has said:

> Abe makes effective use of the child's repeatedly yelling "Daddy" at the beginning of the dream narrative and then again at the conclusion of the story. The repeated screams at the beginning and the end give us a perfect frame for a daydream, and although Abe never specifically says that the action described is all a dream, he offers clear justification for such an interpretation.[129]

As Currie suggests, the structure of Bō makes a dream interpretation possible, but it has never been Abe's habit to produce work that is readily understandable in terms of common assumptions about the nature of reality. That is, to accept Bō as a daydream sequence is only one way--the easist way--to understand the events of the story. It is also to reject the odd events as impossible without considering their implications. Abe's remarks above (see my discussion of Kūchū rōkaku) indicate that such an interpretation alone is unacceptable.[130]

The teacher and students refer several times to such things as "the courts of the Earth" and to themselves as "we" as opposed to "the people [on Earth]." These references make it clear that these characters are not of this world. The contrast between the world of the stick-man and those who sit in judgment on him is still greater in the later version of the story, the play Bō ni natta otoko. In the stage version the

teacher and students become a Man from Hell and a Woman from Hell assigned to Earth duty.[131] The appearance of these non-human characters and the narrator's metamorphosis itself are typical of Abe's use of the startling and unexpected in his writing. Suggestions that the action of the story is part of an ordinary daydream do not fit with what is known of Abe's style. Allowing an interpretation that reduces these strange appearances to the realm of the ordinary negates completely the effect Abe usually seeks to create in his work--the effect of jarring the reader into a state of uncertainty about his environment, of causing in the reader's mind a reassesment of his assumptions about reality.

If interpreted as a daydream sequence, Bō must be considered an anomaly in Abe's writing. One alternative to this interpretation is to understand Bō as a brief look at a world in which people reduced to a stick-like existence actually take on an exterior form that reflects their inner selves. Abe suggests that a person complacent and separated from meaningful human interaction by submissive acceptance of the routine of contemporary life must be prepared to reexamine his assumptions about what it means to live or risk the peril of spontaneous transformation, reduction to a complete state of passivity wherein he may be used and hear his users speak about him, be voiceless, armless, legless, impotent and no longer able to establish any kind of contact with his peers. It may be more difficult for the reader to make complete sense of Bō if it is taken as literally true, but to do so is to make it far more Abeesque in its implications.

Bō ni natta otoko, the stage version of the story, unequivocally

demands that its audience accept its world as literally possible. The play closes with the Man and Woman from Hell reassuring the stick that he is not alone, that the members of the audience may be just as much a stick as he.

Man from Hell:

(Steps forward and points his finger around the audience.) Look--there's a whole forest of sticks around you. All those innocent people, each one determined to turn into a stick slightly different from everybody else, but nobody once thinking of turning into anything besides a stick...All those sticks...You know, I wouldn't want you to think I'm saying these things just to annoy you. Surely you don't suppose I'd be capable of such rudeness...(forces a smile.) Its just the simple truth, the truth as I see it...

Woman from Hell:

(Goes up to The Man Who Turned Into A Stick and speaks in pleading, rather jerky phrases.) Yes, that's right. You're not alone. You've lots of friends...men who turned into sticks.

CURTAIN[132]

Finally, it is worth noting that Bō provides more examples of Abe's irreverent treatment of figures of authority. In the opening scene, the parents, taking their view from the roof very seriously, are made to look childish as they jostle for a good position at the railing. The department store guard takes his job very seriously and appears comical as he enthusiastically carries out his duty. The teacher proves less dignified than he at first appears behind his thick glasses and white mustache when the mustache turns out to be false. Abe makes fun of self-appointed authority by having the teacher and students insist on regarding the stick as an object of study which they feel they must

judge and sentence and then contrasting this seriousness of purpose and method with the teacher's wordy emptiness.

## IV. CONCLUSION

In the first major section of this thesis it has been my purpose to show that rewriting is a widespread phenomenon in the writing of Abe Kōbō. As an aid in identifying occurences of the phenomenon, three types of rewriting--genre shift, environment shift, and auto-quotation--have been proposed and examples of each examined.

During this discussion it has been my aim to demonstrate that the roots of Abe's rewriting lie in his earliest writing and extend into the present; character types, themes, scenes and stylistic devices identifiable in one early Abe short story can often be found in other short stories of the same period and his early concerns remain an important part of his most recent writing.

Abe's short stories often provide a view of his later writing in embryonic form. This offers the reader the opportunity to examine Abe's development as a writer and the development of the ideas that have concerned him throughout the thirty-six years of his literary career. Regrettably, Abe's short stories have not been widely tanslated into English or discussed by Western scholars. Abe's novels, of course, are widely known in English translation and appreciated by readers of English. Recognizing the strong links between this author's short stories and novels, it becomes clear that knowledge of Abe's early

writing is extremely important in the study of his later writing and, for the lay reader, a valuable aid in appreciation.

Abe Kōbō's short stories deserve to be better known in the West. In the second major section of this thesis I have introduced four of Abe's short stories for the first time in English, two new translations of previously translated stories, and offered comment on these stories. The stories date from 1948 to 1955, from the author's most active period as a short story writer.

On the whole, my approach in analyzing the selections presented here has been content-oriented. It has been my intention to lay bare the architecture of each story and suggest how the author has used various structural elements to develop a central idea. To avoid redundancy as much as possible, I have not explicitly referred to the categories genre shift, environment shift, and auto-quotation in discussing the stories, but in the course of each discussion it should have become clear that these stories provide many examples of rewriting as outlined in the first section of this thesis.

While it is my hope that this paper has suggested the wide range of rewriting in Abe Kōbō's work, the important link it establishes between his early and later writing, and the need for more translation and discussion of this author's early work, it is also hoped that the reader will enjoy the stories that follow for their own sake. They are not always completely successful pieces of literature, but they are characterized by an interest in the many sides of human behaviour, a challenge to the intellect and a comic flair that makes them well worth

reading regardless of their importance in connection with the later work of this writer.

NOTES

I. INTRODUCTION

[1]Abe Kōbō, The Woman in the Dunes, trans. E. Dale Saunders (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964); The Face of Another, trans. E. Dale Saunders (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966); The Ruined Map, trans. E. Dale Saunders (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969); Inter Ice Age 4, trans. E. Dale Saunders (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970); The Box Man, trans. E. Dale Saunders (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974); Secret Rendezvous, trans. Juliet W. Carpenter (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977; a Perigee Book, 1977).

[2]Abe Kōbō, Friends, trans. Donald Keene (New York: Grove Press, 1969; Tokyo: Tuttle, 1971); The Man Who Turned into a Stick, trans. Donald Keene (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1975).

[3]Abe Kōbō, "The Frontier Within," trans. Andrew Horvat, The Japan Quarterly 22 no. 2 (April-June 1975): 135-43; The Japan Quarterly 22 no. 3 (July-September 1975): 255-65.

[4]Abe Kōbō, "Stick," trans. John Nathan The Japan Quarterly 13 no. 2 (April-June 1966): 214-17; "Red Cocoon" trans. John Nathan The Japan Quarterly 13 no. 2 (April-June 1966): 217-19; The stories also appeared in Mishima Yukio, ed., New Writing in Japan, trans. Geoffrey Bownas (Harmondsworth:Penguin Books, 1972).

[5]The stories are "The Dog," "The Dream Soldier," "The Deaf Girl," and "The Cliff of Time." Two of these, "The Dog" and "The Dream Soldier" appeared in The Japan Quarterly 19 no. 1 (January-March 1972): 51-61; The four stories appeared together as Four Short Stories of Abe Kobo, trans. Andrew Horvat (Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1973).

[6]Each of Japan's major literary journals has prepared at least one special issue devoted largely or wholly to the works of Abe Kōbō. Articles in these publications deal largely with Abe's novels and plays. For example: Mita bungaku (Special Issue: "Abe Kōbō," March 1968); Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kanshō 36 no. 1 (Special Issue: "The Avant-garde of the 1970's--Abe Kōbō," January 1971); Kokubungaku 17 no. 12 (Special Issue: "Abe Kōbō--Literature and Thought," September 1972); Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kanshō 39 no. 3 (Special Issue: "Mishima Yukio and Abe Kobo," March 1974); Yuriika: Shi to hihyō 8 no. 3 (Special Issue: "Abe Kōbō--The Literature of a Lost Homeland," March 1976).

[7]The story appeared along with "Kōzui" and "Mahō no chōku" in Ningen (人間) in December 1950 as part of "Three parables." Tani Shinsuke, ed., Abe Kōbō goi jiten (Tokyo: Seiunsha, 1981), p. 208

[8]Alan Levy, "The Box Man Cometh," New York Times Magazine (17 November 1974): 68.

[9]The title of the collection was Mumei shishū (A Collection of Nameless Poetry). Goi jiten, p. 206.

[10]Ibid., p. 207.

[11]See the yearly record of Abe's life included in Ibid., pp. 204-34.

## II. THE PHENOMENON OF REWRITING

[12]The story first appeared in August of 1949 in Hyōgen (表現). Goi jiten, p. 207.

[13]The story first appeared in Bungakkai (文学界) in April of 1955. Goi jiten, p. 210.

[14]The man is dead, but at the same time, he maintains a consciousness that allows him to comment on his situation. It is also possible that he is dreaming. See the discussion of Bō in "Six Short Stories of Abe Kōbō," above.

[15]Goi jiten, p. 213.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Nomura Takashi, "Bō ni natta otoko," Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kanshō (Special Issue: January 1971): 126-27.

[18]Ibid., p. 127.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Abe Kōbō, Abe Kōbō zen sakuhin, 15 vols. (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1973); vol.8, p. 328.

[21]Goi jiten, p. 225.

[22]Donald Keene, Introduction to Abe Kōbō, The Man Who Turned into a Stick, trans. Donald Keene (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1975), p. x.

[23]Ibid., p. 83.

[24]Ibid., pp. viii-ix.

[25]Nomura Takashi, "Bō ni natta otoko," p. 126.

[26]Zen sakuhin, vol. 2, p. 314.

[27]Goi jiten, p. 223.

[28]This point is made also by Taniguchi Shigeru, "Abe Kōbō to Kafka," Yuriika: Shi to hihyō (Special Issue: March 1976): 201.

[29]Ōkubo Tsuneo, "Abe Kōbō ni okeru shosetsu to gikyoku," Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kanshō (Special Issue: March 1974): 51-53.

[30]Taniguchi, "Abe Kōbō to Kafka," p. 201.

[31]Zen sakuhin, vol. 6, p. 331.

[32]Chichindera japana, in Zen sakuhin, vol. 7, p. 309. The story first appeared in Bungakkai in September of 1960; Ibid., p. 330.

[33]Chichindera, pp. 328-29. This author's translation.

[34]Woman in the Dunes, p. 49.

[35]Zen sakuhin, vol. 8, p. 328.

[36]Ibid., vol. 2, p. 314.

[37]Goi jiten, p. 215.

[38]Ibid., p. 232. The story "Suichu toshi" first appeared in Bungakkai in June of 1952; Goi jiten, p. 209.

[39]Goi jiten, 228.

[40]Ibid., pp. 222 and 225.

[41]Ibid., p. 228.

[42]Ibid., p. 216.

[43]Ibid., p. 219.

[44]Ibid., p. 218.

[45]Ibid., p. 233.

[46]Ibid., p. 215.

[47]Ibid., p. 222.

[48]Ibid., p. 219.

[49]Ibid., p. 214.

[50]Ibid., p. 218.

[51]Ibid., p. 215.

[52]Ibid., p. 210.

[53]Ibid., p. 224.

[54]Ibid., p. 230.

[55]For example, in the articles listed in the bibliography of this thesis. Currie's doctoral dissertation was entitled "Metaphors of Alienation: The Fiction of Abe, Beckett and Kafka" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1973).

[56]William Currie, "Red Cocoon," in Approaches to the Modern Japanese Short Story, ed. by Thomas E. Swann and Kin'ya Tsuruta (Tokyo: Waseda University Press, 1982), p. 1.

[57]"The Frontier Within," p. 143.

[58]Ōkubo Tsuneo, "Abe Kōbō to haisen taiken," Kokubungaku (Special Issue September 1972): 144.

[59]Abe Kobo, Sabaku no shisō (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1965), p. 29.

[60]Ibid., p. 31.

[61]Goi jiten, pp. 210-11.

[62]It is interesting to compare Abe's thinking here with that of Kyōkai in his treatment of early Japanese myth and folklore in the Nihon ryōiki in which strange occurences and human metamorphosis are often viewed as a kind of proof of the laws of nature—the laws of karma and transmigration. See, for example, William R. La Fleur, The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1983), Chapter 2. I am indebted to Dr. Gary Ebersole for this observation.

[63]Woman In the Dunes, p. 26-27.

[64]Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[65]Sabaku, p. 261.

[66]"Watakushi no bungaku o kataru," Interview with Akiyama shun, Mita bungaku (Special Issue: March 1968): 9.

[67]See note 5 above for facts of publication for the English translation. Abe's story first appeared in March of 1954 in Kaizō (改造); Goi jiten, p. 210.

[68]"The Dog," p. 55.

[69]Ibid., p. 53.

[70]Ibid., p. 54.

[71]Face of Another, pp. 12-13.

[72]Ibid., pp. 16-17.

[73]Ibid., p. 111.

[74]Ibid., pp. 236-37.

[75]The screenplay by John Huston was adapted from the novel by Dashiell Hammett. The film was released by Warner Brothers in October 1941.

[76]Ruined Map, pp. 15-16.

[77]Ibid., pp. 271-72.

[78]The story first appeared in October of 1951 in a special number of Bungei shunshū (文藝春秋 ). Goi jiten, p. 208.

[79]See note 5 above for facts of publication for the English translation. The story first appeared in June of 1957 in Bungakkai; Goi jiten, p. 213.

[80]Rizawa Yukio, ed., Sengo sakka no sekkai (Tokyo: Arachi Shuppansha, 1971). p. 43.

[81]Nancy Hardin, Introduction to "An Interview with Abe Kōbō," Contemporary Literature 15 no. 4 (Autumn 1974): 440-41.

[82]Donald Keene, Introduction to The Man Who Turned into a Stick, pp. vi-viii.

[83]William F. van Wert, "Levels of Sexuality in the Novels of Abe Kōbō," International Fiction Review 6 no. 2 (1979): 129.

[84]Even if discussion is limited to the novels, it is hard to justify the claim that all Abe's protagonists are scientists except in the broadest sense, taking scientist to mean "one who inquires." Though the protagonist of Suna no onna is obviously very knowledgable about the beetles he collects, he is only an amateur insect collector. The central characters of Moetsukita chizu, Hako otoko, and Mikkai are not scientists in the usual sense of the word.

[85]Nakane Chie, Japanese Society (Berkeley and Los Angeles:

University of California Press, 1970), pp. 1-2.

[86]See, for example, Keene, Introduction to The Man Who Turned into a Stick, p. vii; Hardin, "Interview with Abe Kōbō," p. 440-41; Wert, "Levels of Sexuality," p. 129; Horvat, "About the Author" appended to "The Dream Soldier," p. 61; and "Translator's Note" appended to "The Frontier Within," pp. 142-43.

[87]Japanese Society, p. 3.

[88]Ibid., p. 7.

[89]This author's translation.

[90]Tōyama Tatsuru, "Kabe," Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kanshō (Special Issue: January 1971): 81-82.

[91]"Levels of Sexuality," p. 130.

[92]Ruined Map, pp. 298-99.

[93]Box Man, p. 19.

[94]Ibid., p. 178.

[95]Secret Rendezvous, p. 149.

[96]Ishikawa Jun, "Abe Kōbō no bunshō--S. Karuma shi no hanzai ni tsuite," Gengo seikatsu 49 (October 1955): 37-38.

[97]Inter Ice Age 4, p. 6.

[98]Ibid., p. 12.

[99]Secret Rendezvous, p. 8.

[100]Ibid., p. 20.

[101]Ibid., pp. 57-58.

## III. SIX SHORT STORIES OF ABE KŌBŌ

[102]Natsume Soseki, Mon, trans. Francis Mathy (London: Peter Owen Ltd., 1972), p. 6.

[103]Doi Takeo, The Psychological World of Natsume Soseki, trans. and with an introduction by William Jefferson Tyler (Cambridge: East Asian Research Center at Harvard University, 1976), p. 55.

[104]"Watakushi no bungaku o kataru," p. 7.

[105]Face of Another, p. 91.

[106]Secret Rendezvous, p. 168.

[107]Yamamoto (Yasaka) Fumiko, cites this as an example of Mr. Komon's mental derangement exhibiting itself outwardly, but I feel that the condition of his inner self is not sufficiently developed by Abe to make this claim. "Metamorphosis in Abe Kōbō's Works," Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese 15 no. 2 (November 1980): 175.

[108]Gustav Janouch, Conversations with Kafka with an introduction by Max Brod, trans. Goronwy Rees (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1935), p. 35.

[109]The plant is a real one and much as the author describes it in the story. The leaves are like those of a chrysanthemum (a member of the family Compositae, it is related to the chyrsanthemums). Typically, it is a man-sized plant--large for a weed, but not large enough to be called a tree. Common in appearance, it is, however, not a common plant; it was first identified in 1935. Crepidifolia is the only member of its genus. Ellen R. Farn, Jan A. Leussink, and Franz Staflew, eds., Index Nominum Genericum, 3 vols. (Utrecht: Bohn, Scheltema, and Holkema, 1979).

[110]The chapter is entitled "The Plant and the Animal;" it occupies pages 252-78 of C. A. Timiriazev, The Life of the Plant, Trans. from the Revised Seventh Russian Edition by Anna Cheremeteff (London: Longman's Green and Co., 1912). Timiriazev points out that the categories "plant" and "animal" are artificial and that we have (wrongly) come to assume that the separation between the two is clear-cut. His argument is based on a variety of observations: the motile slime-molds; motile reproductive cells, day/night posture changes, stimulus/response movements, and insect-eating in plants; mistaken notions about gas exchange in plants and animals (notably, that plants "inhale" only carbon dioxide and "exhale" only oxygen); and the example of fungi (which ingest their food like animals instead of producing nourishment by photosynthesis). All these and other observations are cited by Timiriazev as examples of plant and animal characteristics that cause traditional ideas about differences between the two groups to break down. Timiriazev's discussion is more convincing than my summary can make it sound. I do not know, however, how it would stand up to the scrutiny of a present-day botanist. Specious or otherwise, it is easy to see why it interested Abe; like so much of his own writing, it depicts a world in which everyday notions about reality cease to function meaningfully.

[111]William Currie, "Red Cocoon," pp. 1-2.

[112]Hardin, "An Interview with Abe Kōbō," p. 451.

[113]Ibid., p. 450.

[114] A similar point is made also by Currie. See "Red Cocoon," pp. 2-3.

[115]I am indebted to Currie for this descriptive phrase. That Abe tends to develop his works around a single metaphor was the topic of Currie's doctoral dissertation. His later writing on Abe (the articles in Approaches to the Modern Japanese Short Story, for example) has continued to stress this point.

[116]Face of Another, p. 192.

[117]Ibid., p. 57-58.

[118]Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass, New Edition in One Volume (New York: A. L. Burt, n.d.), pp. 230-31.

[119]Woman in the Dunes, pp. 93-94.

[120]Doreen Maitre, Literature and Possible Worlds (London: Middlesex Polytechnic Press, 1983), p. 55.

[121]"Watakushi no bungaku o kataru," p. 14.

[122]Ruined Map, p. 246.

[123]"Metaphors of Alienation," p. 157.

[124]Ibid., p. 138.

[125]Yukio Mishima, ed., Introduction to New Writing in Japan, trans. Geoffrey Bownas (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 19.

[126]Kawamoto Saburo, "Abe Kōbō no 'kenkō'," Yuriika: Shi to hihyō (Special Issue: March 1976): 62.

[127]Yamamoto (Yasaka) Fumiko takes the man's metamorphosis as an indication that metamorphosis in Abe's work is generally of this nature, saying, "The hero's change into an abstract, general stick signifies that his metamorphosis takes place within the boundary of human affairs. There is no superhuman power to change man, but man has fallen into a pit of his own digging." "Metamorphosis in Abe Kobo's Works," p. 185. (See note 107 above.) The vague and superhuman nature of the metamorphoses in Dendorokakaria, Mahō no chōku, and Akai mayu argue against this interpretation. Bō and Mōchō, however, do fit this pattern.

[128]Currie, "The Stick", p. 5.

[129]Ibid., p. 6.

[130]Currie, of course, does admit of other interpretations.

[131]Currie also points this out. Ibid., p. 7.

[132]Keene, The Man Who Turned into a Stick, p. 82.

# Appendix: Six Short Stories of Abe Kōbō Translated

Pages 106-211 omitted due to copyright.

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