In the Abyss of Modification: A Semiotic Analysis of the Process of Emotional Changes in *The Woman in the Dunes*

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Abstract

The present article analyzes the Japanese novel *The Woman in the Dunes* written by Kobo Abe, the twentieth-century author. Abe in his works depicts the effects of World War II, modern society, and human confusion in dealing with these issues. Consequently, as we read the work of Abe, we encounter concepts such as identity crisis and alienation. By putting his characters in a special and exceptional situation, Abe shows that the decisions made by these people in such situations, the resulting changes that occur in the quality of their lives, and even the experience they gain from these changes represent the real crises in the society of that time. As a central theme, the writer attempts to express this crisis in his novels, poetry, and plays. However, the exact causes of these changes, their process in the course of the story, and the effects they have on his characters are different in his various works. In this article, we attempt to analyze one of his novels, to find another kind of identity change and the disappearance caused by external pressures, in which, like his other works, the confrontation of man with society forms the theme of the novel. We intend to examine the emotional changes that occur to Niki Jumpei throughout the story by drawing upon semiotics of emotion to gain a model of the inner process of emotional changes that in fact originate from the outside world and external pressures.
Key words: Kobo Abe, World War II, identity crises, semiotics of emotion.

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