

“Murakami Haruki, World Literature and Kafka on the Shore”

Reiko Abe Auestad



December 11th, 17:00~18:30

Building 10, Room 301, Sophia University, Yotsuya Campus

Pocketbook versions of “Murakami Haruki” are seen everywhere we travel, and his status as the most internationally visible and commercially successful Japanese author is beyond doubt. But does that make his work part of the so-called world literature? If so what does that mean? How should one read a work of literature with a cultural and historical baggage different than one’s own? These questions are especially relevant for Murakami’s literature, because of its rich intertextual and surrealistic resonances that permit a wide range of affective reactions, with no obviously “correct” way of responding, as Murakami himself repeatedly reminds us. In my talk, I would like to use *Kafka on the Shore* as a case study to shed light on some of these questions by introducing several contextual interpretations of the novel, in the hope of engaging the audience in discussion.



Reiko Abe Auestad received a BA in English and American literature from Sophia University, MA in Japanese literature from University of Wisconsin, and a Ph.D. from University of Oslo, where she currently works as professor. She is the author of *Rereading Sôseki: Three Early Twentieth Century Japanese Novels*, originally published in 1998; its digital version is forthcoming from the CEAS Occasional Publication Series at Yale University. She has recently published two articles on Sôseki’s *Kokoro*, and is currently involved with editing Japanese and English anthologies of essays on Natsume Sôseki. Her most current research project, “Affect and Speech Act in Modern Japanese Literature” (working title), examines novels by among others Natsume Sôseki, Ôe Kenzaburô, Kirino Natsuo, and Kawakami Mieko.