

# A Study on the Structural Relationship of Natsume Soseki's Novel "Heart"

Yunqi Feng

Dalian Neusoft University of Information  
Dalian, China 116023

**Abstract**—The novel "Heart" is one of the most important representative works of Natsume Soseki. The work is divided into three parts to unfold the story, through the confession of "Teacher's last words, the lonely inner world of the intellectuals in Meiji period is described. In order to better understand the ingenious writing ideas of Soseki in "Heart", we need to straighten out the main structural relations in the novel, so that we could spell over "Heart" from the literary logic aspect, and then spell over Natsume Soseki.

**Keywords**—heart; structural relationship; Natsume Soseki

## I. INTRODUCTION

Natsume Soseki's novel "Heart" belongs to Japan's modern literature. In modern literary works, Natsume Soseki's literary works were called "classical" by Japanese scholars, and Soseki himself was also known as a great writer. Natsume Soseki was born in the first year of Keio (1865), when Japanese society was still in the Edo period. Although the Edo period makes people feel it was a long period, it ended in the 3rd year (1868) of Keio. And Japan was changed into Meiji in 3rd year of Keio, so it can be said that Natsume Soseki was associated with the entire Meiji era, and his works also prominently reflected the features of Japanese society during this period.

After the novel "Heart" serialized it caused great repercussions in Japanese society. At that time, people who read the newspaper anxiously waited for the arrival of the newspaper every day in order to read every serial of "Heart". In the era when there was no television or Internet, the novel "Heart" serialized by newspaper became people's daily expectations.

But how do today's people read this Japanese literary work which wrote more than 100 years ago? In fact, this book through a perfect description of human nature and psychological changes, it can still reach the hearts of modern people. Therefore, it can also be said that "Heart" has captured the nature of human nature very well, and until today, this book still has strong emotional impact on today's people. It is for this reason that the "Heart" was regarded as the classic of modern Japanese literature, and it has become the spiritual food for many readers today in Japan and even the worldwide.

## II. NATSUME SOSEKI AND THE OVERALL STRUCTURE OF THE NOVEL "HEART"

The structure of the novel "Heart" is roughly divided into three parts: upper, middle, and lower parts. The three parts are titled as "Teacher and I" for the upper part, "Parents and I" for the middle part, and "Teacher and Suicide Note" for the lower part. Upper part was started from the scene of the acquaintance of the college student "I" and the teacher, but the name of the teacher did not appear in the entire novel; Middle part is the story of "I" returned to my hometown; Lower part is the longest part and also is the most focused part of Natsume Soseki, it is mainly about the content of the teacher's suicide note mentioned in the upper and middle parts.

## III. HOW TO GRASP THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN "TEACHER" AND "I"

"I"m a college student. I met a gentleman teacher. After I met "Teacher", I heard a lot of things from him. However, "Teacher" was not a teacher at the school I am attending. I only called him "Teacher" on my own initiative. The relationship between us is somewhat unbelievable. However, the opinions of "humanity", "love" and "good and evil" which taught by "Teacher" have had a profound impact on my heart. I also had the desire to learn from the "Teacher" of his life. I was attracted by the charm of "Teacher" and approached him. However, at that time, "Teacher" kept a wary attitude toward me and I felt inexplicably that he had a place to avoid.

*When I separated from teacher, I asked: "Is it okay to visit you at home later?" Teacher just simply answered: "Oh, it's OK." At the time, I thought I had been quite good with him and I expected teacher respond with some heavy sentences. The result was so understated, my self-confidence received some damage.*

*Such things often disappoint me. It seems that teacher is aware of something but also it seems he did not aware of it. As myself, despite repeated slight disappointments, I didn't want to leave teacher. Or it is better to say the contrary, if I did not shaken by the worry now and then, I would want to make one step forward. I thought if I go forward, what I expect will sooner or later come to my eyes and make me satisfied. I am young, but I am not so zealous and so sincere to everyone. I do not know why I have such emotion and action to teacher, and his intention is not to alienate me. It was just a warning to me from the man with traumatized soul, warning people who tried*

*to get close to himself to stop immediately because he was not those who had value to get close. The teacher who does not seem to care about other people's good intentions despises himself before despising others. Excerpt from "Heart".*

Because "teacher" always thinks that he is not a good person and nothing of him is remarkable. Regardless of how great I think "teacher" is, "teacher" will only think "Nothing of the sort" and caused his worry. Even if others show goodwill to him, it is inevitable that one day they will find him "not a good person". To reduce the pain of "betrayed", so he to some extent guarded against "I" and intentionally maintain certain distance.

#### IV. THE CURRENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN "I" AND "HOME"

At the time, people who came to Tokyo from hometowns and became college students were all excellent elites. Therefore, a college student is a great honor for the family. At the same time, the whole family is full of great expectations for the future. "I" am naturally placed high hopes. The ideal situation is to graduate from college and become an enviable success person. However, I do not think that working in society is a great thing. Therefore, "teacher" has become a representative of the advanced intellectual class of the Meiji era ideology, and "parents" are very common figures in the countryside, and they are a representative of the conservative conception of the old class. Thus, there is an insurmountable gap in values between "I" and "home". Then "I" flee "both parents" and defect to "teacher" is not difficult to understand.

*There was silence in the old house, which was too spacious due to a small population. I opened the wicker basket, found out book and flip it. For some unknown reason, I always have an uncertain mind. Still, in the dazzling Tokyo dormitory, on the second floor, listening to the rumblings of the train, turning pages one by one, made me learn more and learn with happiness. Excerpt from "Heart"*

*I sleep against the table from time to time. Sometimes even take out the pillow and have a regular nap. After I wake up and hear the cicadas buzz. When I am in conscious the sound of screaming quickly disturbed the bottom of my ear. I listened motionlessly, and sometimes there was a surge of sadness. I wrote a letter to classmate A and B to write a postcard, or a long letter. Some of the classmates stayed in Tokyo, some returned to their distant hometowns, some returned letters, and some did not. I never forgot teacher, I freely thought of myself and wrote three manuscript papers in small print. Excerpt from "Heart"*

When "I" returned to my hometown, I felt bound by human relationship and customs. In Tokyo, where I studied, my admired "teacher" meant freedom. So, the same noisy, but the rumbling sound heard on the second floor of the Tokyo dormitory is far more pleasant than the buzzing sound heard from the hometown. Therefore, my desire for freedom in Tokyo is even worse, and it is very natural to write a letter to him.

#### V. "TEACHER AND SUICIDE NOTE" IN THE NOVEL

"Heart" is divided into upper, middle and lower three parts, and the lower part is "Teacher and suicide note". It can be said that this part is the most important one, and all the foreshadowing was revealed in this part. The suicide note was left in the form of a letter to me. In the upper part, I said to "teacher" that I hope to learn the lessons of his past life. For this reason, "teacher." summed up his past in the form of a suicide note, and passed it on to me. The suicide note also writes in the first person. However, the "I" in the suicide note is different from the "I" in the upper and middle parts. The "I" in the suicide note is the "teacher" appeared in the upper and middle parts. In the upper part of the book, I told the story of teacher's student time. The foreshadowing of the whole story of "Heart" was also written in this part.

*I almost forgot the word suicide, which I don't normally use. It's about to sink at the bottom of my memory and almost get rust. I only remembered when I hear my wife's jokes. I responded to my wife and said: If I suicide one day, I will die for the spirit of Meiji. My answer is of course only a joke. But at the time, I thought that the old word which had not been used was already loaded with new meaning. Excerpt from "Heart"*

*I will offer my past—whether good or evil—for reference, but only my wife is the exception. Please promise me. I do not want to let my wife know anything. It is my only wish to keep my wife's memory of my past as innocent as possible. Excerpt from "Heart"*

In this part, like the final logical analysis of the mystery novel, it revealed the past of "teacher." that has never been mentioned before and the reason of "die for Meiji". "Teacher" lost his parents early and was deceived by his uncle, so he felt deep lonely after losing his relatives and some property. When he finally felt a bit of love in his life, he discovered that his best friend also fell in love with the "lady" he loved. In order to get love, at the expense of friendship, criticized K with K's famous saying "people who are not motivated by spirit are all bastards" and try to let K stop. However, he did push K to a dead end, causing K fall into the desperation of "I am a weak person with hopeless future" and committed suicide. However, "teacher" himself was also caught in the whirlpool of "I am untrustworthy" and "nobody is trustable". Although he was married to "his lady" afterwards, but he did not feel happy as he already felt like half-dead. The guilt in his heart is even worse, and the closer he is to finding a chance to die, the more he desires to follow K in order to die with noble morality. Therefore, when he heard that General Naoki was suicide for the Meiji era, he has made up his mind. But he could not die with his secrets. Therefore, by letting "I" inherit his spirit was the origin of the suicide note.

#### VI. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN "TEACHER" AND "K"

"K" entered as a friend of "teacher" in his student time. He was born in a monk family and his personality is closer to a monk than an ordinary monk. He is also a very stubborn person. Later he was adopted by a doctor family and became the doctor's adopted son and entered a school in Tokyo. This figure does not have a name as "teacher". K and "teacher"

attend the same university and study in the same profession. However, at the time of his sophomore year, K had problems both at economy and spiritual level. So "teacher" took K to stay at his boarding house. K was originally an energetic person and once said that "people who are not motivated by spirit are all bastards". When "teacher" faced K when he was a child, he had a low self-esteem mentality. Regardless of whether it is the origin or ambition, there is always a sense of inferiority in front of K. For K, "Tao" is very important. "Teacher" said to K who believe "Cultivate the willpower and become the strong man is my idea" that "We live together, I want to work together with you", and then he take K back to his residence.

*Regarding K's character, the book also mentioned "In this way, he was terrible. It was extraordinary. From the results, his greatness was only manifested in the sense that he personally destroyed his own success. However, this is by no means an ordinary move. I know that he is from deep heart, so I did not say anything at all. In addition to what I have said--as I have said beforehand--he seems to be somewhat nervous. Even though I convinced him, he must also be very impulsive. I am not afraid of arguing with him, but I can't bear to let this friend fall into the kind of lonely situation I once had, and even less willing to push him into the abyss than me alone." Excerpts from "Heart"*

It can be seen that "teacher" initially treated K as a true friend and wanted to help K cure his solitude, so he asked "Lady" to be more close to K. However, as K and the "Lady" became acquainted with each other, the "teacher"'s heart became uneasy. At this point, his idea was to find ways to alienate "Lady" and K who wanted to get close to her. He even emerged more crazy and more vicious ideas.

*I often think that if the one sit quietly next to me is not K, but "Lady", I am sure I will be happy. If that is the way then its fine, but sometimes I feel skeptical: Can it be that K also wants to sit on this cliff with my same hope? In this way, I couldn't look at it safely. I suddenly stood up and yelled without fear. I can't come to poetry to enjoy the kind of leisurely things, just like a savage bark. Once I suddenly grabbed K's neck from behind and asked him how he would do if I push him to the sea. K is not moving, still carrying his body, and replied that it will be just fine and go ahead push him down. I immediately let go of my hand on his neck. Excerpts from "Heart"*

At this time, because of the "Lady" thing, "Teacher" has been very jealous with K. When K showed his love for "Lady" to "teacher", all he thought was "Oops, I was beat to it", and it had lost room for calm thinking. A few days later, K chats again with "teacher" with the content of "How does teacher look at the K who has fallen into love?" This move actually seeks the criticism of "teacher". At this time, K's words are "I am a weak person and I am actually very shameless", "I am not aware of myself when I am in deep confusion", "It is a step forward or a step back. I am very confused", "(Should I back off?) This question is very painful". When "teacher" re-enforces K with his own life creed "people who are not motivated by spirit are all bastards", K has already decided to die in his heart. In fact, "teacher" put his own academic and love rivals on the death path because of self-interest.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The background of the novel "Heart" is the Meiji era in Japan, which is in stark contrast to the values of today's society. The values of the Meiji era are also very different from those in the past. "Heart" can be seen as the vacillation of people's inner values in the alternation of the old and new times. At the same time, between friendship and love, both "teacher" and "K" have appeared shaken and contradictory. In the end, no matter K's death for Keio, or "teacher"'s death for friend are all the ways to resolve their contradictions. At the same time, they become the tragedies of love, and also they have become the Meiji death of Japanese society.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Natsume Soseki (author), Lin Shaohua (translation). "Heart" [M]. China Aerospace Press. 2008 (7). 夏目漱石 (著), 林少华 (译). 心 [M]. 中国宇航出版社. 2008 (7)
- [2] Ishihara Chiaki. "Heart" Minor Teacher [J]. misuzu\_shobo. 2005(10). 石原千秋. 《心》未成年的先生 [J]. misuzu\_shobo. 2005 (10)
- [3] Jun Eto. The brilliance and darkness of "Heart" [J]. Yuhikaku Publishing. 2004 (9). 江藤淳. 《心》的光辉与黑暗 [J]. Yuhikaku Publishing. 2004 (9)
- [4] Meng Qingshu. An Introduction to Comparative Literature in Japan [J]. Yanyu yanwen Literature Research. 2014(2). 孟庆枢. 日本比较文学概论 [J]. 言语言问文学研究. 2014 (2)
- [5] Zhao Jinghua. The Portrait of a Japanese intellectual [J]. Extensive reading. 2006 (10). 赵京华. 一位日本知识分子的肖像 [J]. 博览群书. 2006 (10)