

The Track of "Living" in "Naoko"

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Abstract—Tatsuo Hori is the representative writer of the New Psychology School of the Showa era in Japan. His work is based on the traditional Japanese literature on the theme of "life" and "death". The writer is good at portraying characters with delicate techniques, from the hero's psychological description, and discusses the character's change of choice for life and death. In the writer's life-long masterpiece "Naoko", he successfully described the different fates of the two generations of Mimura and Kurokawa in a vivid contrast. He successfully shaped the heroine Naoko — the image of an intellectual woman of the old age. In the novel, the Naoko's choice of life and death has changed several times. She has also escaped from reality and chose to live in isolation. However, the tragedy of childhood friend and the transformation of her husband finally made her choose to face the reality bravely. Her pursuit of "new birth" is like a phoenix nirvana, breaking through the ambiguity of the real environment in the novel, showing the new changes from "death" to "life" in the novel theme of Tatsuo.

Keywords—Tatsuo Hori; Naoko; death; life

I. INTRODUCTION

The writer Tatsuo Hori (1904 - 1953), who was active in the Showa period in Japan, studied from the famous Japanese writer Akutagawa Ryunosuke, the famous new psychology writer in the early days of the Showa era in Japan. He was good at describing the psychology of characters with delicate writings, and successfully shaped the female images such like Hosoki mother and daughter ("The Holy Family"), Setsuko ("The Wind"), and Naoko ("Naoko"). The protagonist in each work either experienced the death of loved ones, or wondered around the edge of sickness. In the novel, it always reflects the author's thinking about life. The setting of these plots is closely related to the author's special life experience.

II. A WRITER DANCING WITH "DEATH"

Tatsuo Hori was close to death several times in his life. The mother who died in the Great Kanto Earthquake was the first relative Tatsuo Hori lost. The death of his mother led him to understand the fragility of life and to think about the meaning of life for the first time. Three years later, the suicide of his dear teacher Akutagawa Ryunosuke once again made him in a lonely situation without any warning. In two years after Akutagawa's suicide, Tatsuo Hori published his first masterpiece in the literary world "The Holy Family", to mourn his teacher. The novel begins with "Death is like the beginning of another season (trail translation by the author)", and Tatsuo Hori's literary theme of "Place somebody in a hopeless spot and he will survive" has already begun to take shape. If the

death of the elder makes Tatsuo Hori realizes the shortness of life, the death of his fiancée Ayako makes him feel the preciousness of life. The two people who used to be patients have been plagued by tuberculosis, and the death of Ayako makes him realize his own worrying condition. The deceased wife's desire "even if she is willing to die happily, but still hopes that you can go on (trail translation by author)" makes Tatsuo Hori emerges a toughness which never with him. As written in "The Wind", the requiem for his unmarried wife, "Although there is a blast, life does not give up", which tells the thought of Tatsuo Hori at this time. On his inner stage, he has experienced the qualitative change of "rebirth after death". After that, the death of his young student Tachihara Michi accelerated the awakening of Tatsuo Hori's "life". Since then, Tatsuo Hori who has lived and died, has realized his life in his later years and pursued the true meaning of life. He has created the novel "Naoko" for 7 years. The icy and cold literary theme "death" was finally endowed by the writer as a turning point of "life". In his later years, the representative work "Naoko" is also his representative work from "death" to "new birth".

III. "WORKS OF DEATH" IN THE "DEATH OF LITERATURE"

The novel "Naoko" was published in 1941. It is the heart and soul work of Tatsuo Hori for 7 years. In the creative process, several attempts were made to interrupt the creation of this novel. From the original "The Woman with a Story" to the "The House of the Eucalyptus", "Naoko" and "The Woman Holding the Flower", the writer has overcome many difficulties. On the eve of the Pacific War, the militarism in Japan was in a period of high rise. The Japanese literary world at that time was also a special period from the "Renaissance" to the "death of literature". These also have a certain impact on the creation of "Naoko". Compared with the most literary works directly related to wars, the novel "Naoko" can be said to be a "work with different color" (described by Tatsuo Hori himself) that is wondering away from the mainstream of literary novels at that time. Even so, the dark wave on the eve of the war can be seen in "Naoko". One of the male protagonists "Mori Yukihiro" eventually disappeared in China, and it also implied a panic about Chinese battlefield for Japanese ordinary people.

"Naoko" is named after the name of the heroine Naoko, which implies the meaning of resumption (the pronunciation of Naoko is the same as that of the resumption in Japanese). Through the comparison of mother and daughter for two generations, the novel has built two stages, Mimura and Kurokawa.

The relationship between the characters is shown in "Fig. 1" below:

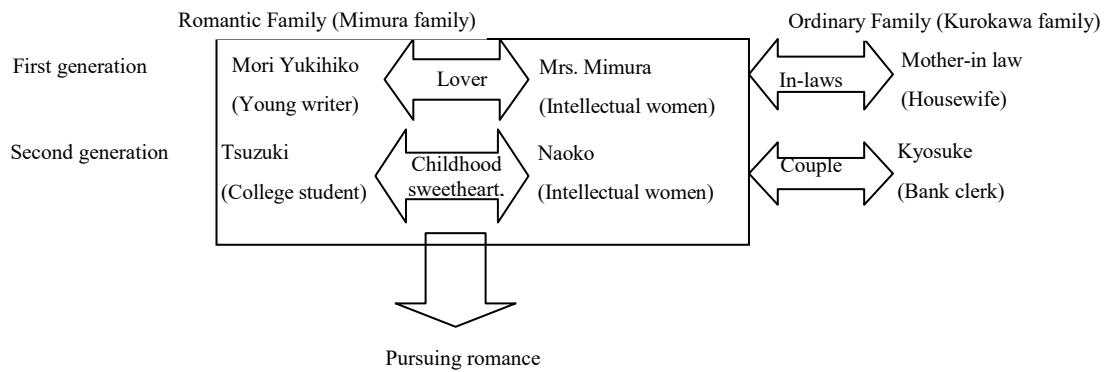


Fig. 1. The family diagram of the two generations of two families.

IV. SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVEL

There are very few intellectual women in the Showa era; Naoko once was just “a person who pursues romantic dreams from her bones” like her mother Mrs. Mimura. They all wanted to get rid of the shackles of reality and seek their own happiness. The romantic relationship between the widowed mother (Mrs. Mimura) and the young writer Mori Yukihiko is a sign of her mother’s boldly pursuing romantic love. When Mrs. Mimura’s dream of pursuing happiness is not approved, it is not only the mother Mrs. Mimura but also the daughter Naoko to feel the pain. Naoko began to panic and lose. She is not willing to give up her dream of pursuing romance and longing for happiness, and at the same time, she is not willing to fall into the desperate situation like her mother. As a result, the feelings of the mother and daughter have become subtle, even to the point where they have not talked for a long time. When Naoko gradually awake from her mother's dilemma, her mother's experience made her feel extremely uneasy about her feelings. In order to escape this uneasiness, Naoko decided to give up her childhood sweetheart Tsuzuki, and chose the bank

clerk Kyosuke who is nearly ten years older to become her husband.

However, the life of the Kurokawa family, which was regarded as a “refuge”, did not save Naoko from uneasiness. On the contrary, the husband's indifference, the mother-in-law's difficult to live with almost push Naoko to another desperate situation. The absurdity of feelings, the indifference of reality afflicts Naoko’s body and mind. Therefore, Naoko took illness as an excuse and run away from this "home" without any warmth. In the alpine sanatorium full of very sick patients, Naoko experienced the feeling of near death to the maximum. During this period of recuperation, the two visits from old friend Tsuzuki and her husband Kyosuke have become important factors in the transition of her heart. Tsuzuki’s visit completely destroyed her desire to pursue romantic dreams, and her husband's visit made her realize the change of the weak husband and saw the hope of ordinary life, which prompted her to eventually live an ordinary life willingly. The relationship between life and death of the characters related to Naoko in the novel is shown in the following figure "Fig. 2":

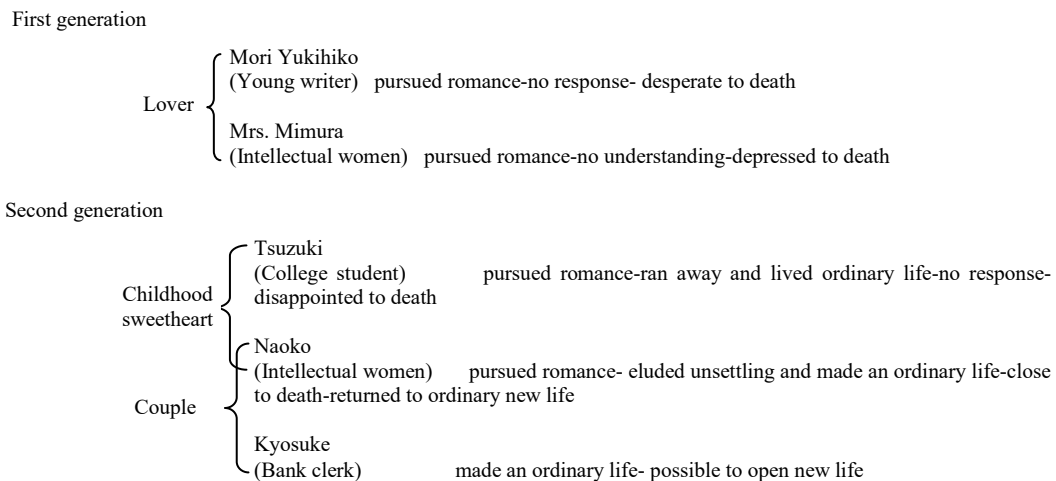


Fig. 2. Life and death selection track of the two generations of two families.

V. THE CHOICE OF NAOKO WITH LIFE AND DEATH

Summary of the heroine's life choices in the novel: pursuit romance-escape and unsettling ordinary life-close to death-return to ordinary new life.

A. *Romantic Girl of the Mimura Family*

The heroine Naoko has a hard time in her lives. Like her mother during her girlhood, she used to be a person who pursues romance from her bones. The relationship between the mother and the daughter is exactly like Akutagawa's evaluation on Tatsuo Hori: "You and I seem to be two sides of a card, seemingly the same, but it is not". Mrs. Mimura was a rare intellectual woman at that time. She was different from the ordinary women who lived a daily busy life. The seed of romance was buried deeply in her heart. When the widowed Mrs. Mimura met the young writer Mori Yukihiko by chance, Yukihiko's talent and enthusiasm awakened the romantic fire of Mrs. Mimura's heart. Soon the relationship between the two was a matter of course. However, this relationship is not acceptable, and the new relationship brings not only joy and happiness, but also unspeakable pain because they are unacceptable by the world.

The daughter Naoko spent the girlhood at the side of such a mother. The unclear relationship between Mrs. Mimura and Mori Yukihiko brought romantic love and was also the reason for them to be criticized by everyone. Daughter Naoko also fell into a dilemma. The mother's love deeply touched Naoko, and she understood her mother's pursuit romance, but she could not accept the pain caused by this love. The playmates of childhood Tsuzuki is the man she contact the most, and the two people with similar personalities soon become good friends. However, Naoko was awakened by her mother's unhappiness when the love relationship between Tsuzuki and her just begins. The similarity with the mother is the source of her panic. The ignorant Naoko attribute the source of pain to the pursuit of romance. The presence of Tsuzuki who is a friend and also a lover is undoubtedly exacerbating the uneasiness of Naoko. Gradually, her mother's unacceptable relationship was silently opposed by her daughter Naoko. The feelings of the mother and daughter have become subtle, and the uneasiness of Naoko has intensified. Even Tsuzuki has gradually realized that this childhood playmate has grown into a girl which he can't understand without knowing it. When pursuing the "romantic dream" has become the source of fear, she began to try to escape this "life" that does not know the future, and hastily decided her marriage.

At this time, Naoko has just grown up from a ignorant girl. In the face of future life, she is not willing to give up her dream of seeking romance and self-seeking, and at the same time she is unwilling to suffer the same vision as her mother. Just as the author Tatsuo Hori wants to abide by the agreement of "go on to live" with his deceased wife, but also he can't bear the loneliness to lose loved ones and the torture of disease, this contradiction and struggle are fully reflected in Naoko. The young Naoko has no way to make a major choice, so she made a reasonable decision — avoidance. This is also a silent accusation and complaint of the author

toward the times. As the war was going to happen, ordinary people have no choice but accept and obstruct themselves.

B. *Desperate Young Women*

Her mother's love is an opportunity for Naoko's awakening, and the uneasiness brought by the relationship with Tsuzuki makes Naoko gradually wake up from the dream of pursuing romance. Naoko witnessed her mother's lifestyle which is doomed to be a tragedy and felt an indescribable fear for the future. In order to escape the uneasiness of this life, Naoko chose the bank clerk Kyosuke, who is nearly ten years older than her, as the husband of marriage. In the eyes of a familiar friend, this choice seems suddenly and inexplicable; in the eyes of her mother Mrs. Mimura, it is no different from spiritual suicide. However, Naoko regard it as a life-saving straw to escape from reality.

However, the life of the "shelter" Kurokawa family did not save Naoko from the restlessness. The disappointment of life comes from the neglect of mother-in-law and husband. The Kurokawa family, who has become accustomed to the life of the mother and son, did not give this joining member care and love, but lived as always. The subtle relationship with her mother-in-law and the lack of communication with her husband made Naoko gradually realized that this family that was once used as a refuge for her was actually an emotional "hairless place" for her. The husband's disrespect, the mother-in-law's perplexity almost pushed Naoko to the desperate situation. Although the choices of the past have escaped the uneasiness brought by the pursuit of "romantic dreams", they have brought new pain and uneasiness to Naoko. The "romantic dream" brought her the fear of the real environment and the suspicion and embarrassment of self-seeking. The ordinary life of the Kurokawa family is gradually losing confidence in reality. The ideal destruction, the cruel reality makes Naoko once again choose to escape. In the end, she fled the Kurokawa family and moved to the Alpine Health Center with the excuse of lung disease.

The first choice in life made Naoko suffered a lot. The escape is just to change her into a strange environment. Inertia caused her to rekindle the idea of escaping and put it into practice. This time she would rather choose to be close to death than to live a hopeless life. In the memoirs of Tatsuo Hori's later years, there are also the same records as Naoko, who want to escape from reality and die of the disease. When Shen Xiqing commented on "Naoko", he said that in fact, Naoko is the avatar of Tatsuo Hori, and the two people are happy and sad together. Tatsuo Hori relied his struggling for being alive on Naoko, and the hero in the novel made a step that he did not have the courage to take.

C. *Lonely Patient in the Nursing Home*

Naoko fled the weak husband Kurokawa with the excuse of recuperate, left the cold "home" and chose to go to the Alpine Health Center. Between the unsatisfactory reality and the fear of death, Naoko almost chose to face death without much consideration. In the age when TB patients were been discriminated, the patients in the Alpine Health Center were seriously ill patients who were not accepted by society. This was because most of the patients in Alpine Health Center at

that time were heavy sick patients (tuberculosis patients), there Naoko experienced the feeling of near death to the maximum extent. Seeing the near-death of critically ill patients, Naoko's mental state has gradually changed. In the past, the confusion and embarrassment in front of the choice of "life" and "death" is no longer the biggest contradiction that Naoko considers at this time.

Since then, the visits of both Tsuzuki and Kurokawa have become an important opportunity for her mood transition. The visit of the playmate in her girlhood Tsuzuki completely destroyed her dream to pursuit romantic love. The frustrated Tsuzuki who have a similar spiritual world with her made Naoko realized the tragic ending of insisting on the pursuit "romantic dreams". She began to psychologically completely abandon the dream of pursuing romance since the girlhood. If her mother's misfortune shook the determination of Naoko, then the sorrow of Tsuzuki reinforced her determination of change. Let her begin to really consider changing herself and blending into this unsatisfactory real world. Afterwards, the visit of husband Kyosuke made Naoko see some changes in her ordinary husband. The reality shows that the ending of pursuing "romantic dreams" = the tragedy of Tsuzuki and the choice of "ordinary life" = the change of Kurokawa. Naoko chose the latter between the two. Kurokawa, a weak man who lived under the mother's wings, finally took the first step of change. This crucial step has completely changed Naoko's view of life, and determined the choice of "ordinary life". She began to feel the change of her weak husband and saw the hope of ordinary life, which prompted her to finally choose to live in perseverance and be willing to live an ordinary life.

Same life has different ending. The living example in front of her eyes touched the heart of Naoko. Is it to insist on the pursuit of romance and die, or willing to fell into the ordinary to seek a glimmer of life? This is the doubt of Naoko, and it is also the shackles of Tatsuo Hori. The inner struggle has intensified and it has reached an unprecedented climax. If you don't solve your inner entanglements, there is no way to continue your life. Naoko in the story is seeking; in reality, Tatsuo Hori is also seeking. Just as the trend of socialist literature that had just risen at the time of the Japanese literary world. A new woman is about to wake up, a new era is coming, and there is such confidence in the heart of Tatsuo Hori.

D. Awakening Under the Dead Tree

The visits of both Tsuzuki and Kurokawa have shaken the romantic dreams of Naoko. But the ultimate turning point is the emotion brought by half-dead tree. By chance, once Naoko found a large tree on the side of the road while walking, half of which was withered and yellow leaves, but the other half of it was lush. Naoko who came along the road suddenly realized that her own life was just like the big trees in front of her - there are only two roads in front of her: or insist on her romantic dreams as always, and the future in front of her was as tragedy as Tsuzuki; or give up the goal of stubbornness, the future life may be like the tree with half green. Therefore, she silently recited in her heart: a little patience...a little patience..." The consciousness of seeking

"life" hidden in the heart began to wake up and rekindled hope for life. At this point, Naoko was no longer insisting on the pursuit of romantic dreams in the past, nor is it negatively degraded to the ordinary reality, but with the mood to change her husband's weakness and hope for the future, once again she returned to the Kurokawa family.

The novel was end here, the experience of heroine Naoko depicts the sorrow of being a woman in that era. The image of intellectual women looking for a way out, eager to change the status quo is vividly presented on paper. The mother's fate ended in death, how does the daughter's fate turn around? Naoko has experienced the ignorance of the girlhood, and has faced various unsatisfactory realities, and to a certain extent she gave up the dream of pursuing romance. Even so, the abandonment of her pursuit of "romantic dreams" is a compromise on the premise that the husband changes his weakness and the mother-in-law changes her indifference. This not only shows that she will adopt a life attitude of forbearance, but also implies her husband's gradual change, revealing the possibility of husband and wife developing a new life together. For this reason, Tatsuo Hori said that the fate of Naoko is "awakening from an unrealistic dream, the life of forbearance is the fate of the living".

VI. THEME SUBLIMATION OF "REBORN" AFTER "DEATH"

The protagonists in the novel each have their final destination, and the Kurokawa couple who are about to move into a new life, Tsuzuki disappointed and eventually end up dead, single mother-in-law gradually begin to accept the daughter-in-law. Tatsuo Hori arranged the endings of each character in the novel. No matter how Naoko wishes to die in order to avoid the pain of the world, under the contrast of the fate of the two male protagonists, under the half dead half green tree, Naoko's awake also represented the awake of Tatsuo Hori. In his late years of cultivation, he had such a dialogue with his wife "Am I willing to die like this? No, I want to live. What do I live for? For literature, to prove myself". In the war-themed era, the work to explore human heart like "Naoko" is indeed a special existence. Writers like Tatsuo Hori are not the absolute mainstream of the literary world at that time. However, under the pen of writers who rarely involved with current social situation there is such image as Tsuzuki who disappeared in China. It can be seen that the pre-war atmosphere in Japan at that time was already strong enough to be neglected. The author said that Tsuzuki is the embodiment of idealism and is an idiot who is born to pursue romance. Then the war that Japan is about to face is also such a dream that is too idealistic, and is it also meant to be broken?

VII. CONCLUSION

The reality is cruel, whether it is in the novel where Naoko exists, or the Showa era in which Tatsuo Hori lived. No matter how cruel the reality is, people still have the good expectations of pursuing a new life. Just like the half-wilted tree still emits dense branches, Naoko who wish to be dead for several times also jumping out of the cage of thought. The protagonist of Tatsuo Hori's works is unfortunate, but even they faced so many unfortunates, they still have the

courage to go on with so many sufferings. The theme of Tatsuo Hori's novels is clearly on paper, and there is bound to be a "new birth" after the "death".

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