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Patterns of Opposition in Natsume Soseki's *Kokoro* : A tentative approach to the structural interpretation of literary works

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Abstract

This article deals with the controversial problem of literary interpretation and attempts to offer a starting point in the quest for the most appropriate way of approaching a literary work, especially in prose, which, due to its kaleidoscopic nature, tends to escape systemic examination. However, as Wellek and Warren point out, despite its chaotic appearance, a literary work is a carefully constructed structure, where all elements (plot, characterization, time, space, point of view) make an important contribution to the overall presentation.

The article has a bipartite structure. In the first part I examine the theoretical background to a possible approach to the structural interpretation of prose. I pay attention especially to the principle of opposition, which, according to the structuralists, is a fundamental principle of structures. In this respect, I discuss the theory of markedness, which refers to the asymmetric characteristic of oppositions, and which can be effectively used in tracing the elements which are predominant in the organization of a work and which determine the unique structure of literary works. Also, I examine the problem of foregrounding, which refers to the particular aspects which stand out in literary discourse, such as stylistic figures and patterns of regularity whose contribution to the general effect of the work cannot be ignored.

The second part of the article is a case study of Natsume Sōseki's *Kokoro*, which offers a practical demonstration of the way in which specific traits in the parts of the discourse are reflected in and determine the structure of the whole.

1. Structuralism and markedness.

Structuralism, which has been a controversial trend in linguistics and literary studies, is centered on the belief in the existence of a set of norms, rules, regulations which bestow signification upon things and actions, giving them wholeness and coherence. According to Jean Piaget, structure is an arrangement of entities and is subjected to three fundamental concepts : wholeness, transformation and self-regulation (Piaget 1971 : 5-16).

The concept of structure extends to the point where every reality which surrounds us is

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circumscribed by a context, therefore by a system organized according to rules and hierarchy. In linguistics, structuralism has introduced the distinction between norm and behavior, reflected in Saussure's langue/parole, or Chomsky's competence/performance distinction. While *langue* is *both a social product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty* (Saussure 1959 : 9), *parole* is the perceivable substance that appears at the surface in verbal communication. The former must precede or "generate", to use Chomsky's words, the latter. Thus individual parole or performance seems heterogeneous, without a pattern, while langue or competence, which precedes them, is organized according to a coherent, systematic pattern.

The pattern according to which an element is functionally distinct from other elements with which it may occur in combination, is that of binary or paired opposites. The principle of binary opposition is, by virtue of its occurrence in all languages, one of the "battle cries" of the linguists who have embraced the universalistic trend of thinking. According to Jakobson and Halle, the fact that binary opposition is the first logical operation of a child may be interpreted as the primary and distinctive intervention of culture into nature (Jakobson and Halle 1956 : 60-1).

Poems, dramas and novels are finite products generated according to specific sets of rules that determine their internal structure and function. This tenet is essential to the structural study of literature, which starts from the premise that since its constituent matter is language (itself a system with a coherent structure), literature is also the result of the organizing function of language. The idea that the structure of language reflects itself in all the other domains of our existence is pervasive in the controversial theory formulated by Benjamin Lee Whorf, who, because of his observations of the life and language of American Indian tribes reached the conclusion that language imposes its organization upon our intellect, and that the specific traits of a culture can be traced back to the structure of its language.

1. 1. The contribution of structuralism to the analysis of literature.

Structuralism is also indebted to Saussure, who showed that language is actually a dual entity, langue (the set of norms) and parole (the individual speech act), where langue is the matrix which generates virtually infinite strings of parole. R. Jakobson, V. Propp, A. Greimas, T. Todorov, R. Barthes and others have attempted to show that by virtue of their similarity to the system of language, poetry and narrative can be decomposed into minimal episodes and functions that combine in a multitude of ways. French structuralists suggest that the organization of narrative is analogous to that of a sentence. Two reasons sustain their opinion : on the one hand, like the sentence, the text is a meaningful whole which may

be presumed to express the author's state of mind. On the other hand, the text seems to be articulated out of parts whose meaning is influenced by events that may change it. Their conclusion is that *the text produces its meaning... by being articulated out of parts - within syntagmatic constraints, with regard for paradigmatic constraints* (Pettit 1975 : 43).

The case study is based on the above premises and aims at demonstrating that the foregrounding devices in the text, such as stylistic figures, usage of marked grammatical constructions, contribute to the structuring of the text around a set of fundamental oppositions (life-death, material-spiritual, society (group)-individual, in-out). Moreover, it will be shown that the case study is interesting through the special treatment of these oppositions, which render them different from the way they are perceived in real life.

1. 2. Markedness and the principle of opposition.

The principle of opposition is one of the fundamental principles of linguistic structures. Jakobson and N. Trubetzkoy advocated the existence of oppositions at every linguistic level, and signaled their asymmetric character. W. Nöth described markedness as a theory according to which the two poles of an opposition consist of an unmarked and a marked form. The unmarked form is genetically earlier, more natural and often more frequent. The marked term has an additional and more specific morphological feature, as, e. g., the plural vs. singular, the female vs. male, the passive vs. active form, or the past vs. present form (Noth 1990 : 76).

The characteristic of markedness relations is that they oppose a term A, which displays a feature x, to another term, B, which lacks the feature. A is labeled as marked, while B is unmarked. However, the unmarked term has a broader and more general meaning, while the marked one is more specific. For example, the pair "lion/lioness" represents a markedness relation between the unmarked and more general "lion" and the marked "lioness". Namely, "lion" denotes both a species of carnivorous animals and the male animal, while "lioness" denotes only its female counterpart. Likewise, present tense is unmarked with respect to past or future tenses, since it may denote both a present action and a past one (historical present), or a future one.

Trubetzkoy classified markedness relations into isolated or proportional, bilateral or multilateral (Battistella 1990 : 14). Furthermore, according to their logical character, oppositions fall into three types : privative, gradual and equipollent. A privative opposition is established between two phonemes that are identical except that one contains a "mark" which the other lacks (e. g., /b/ vs. /p/, where both contain the 'labial' feature, but /b/ which contains also the 'voiced' feature is marked vis-a-vis /p/ which does not display it).

Gradual oppositions manifest themselves in different degrees of some gradient property

(e. g. /i/~/e/~/æ/, where the degree of backness is the highest in /æ/ and lowest in /i/), while equipollent oppositions consist of a relation where each member has a mark that the others lack (e. g., /p/~/t/~/k/ are reciprocally contrastive, since /t/ and /k/ lack the 'labial' feature of /p/, while /p/ and /k/ lack the 'velar' quality of /t/, and both /p/ and /t/ do not display the 'aspirate' feature of /k/) (Sampson 1980 : 108).

The markedness of a binary opposition is subject to changes in the context of reference. This emphasizes the systematic character of language in all its representations, as has been emphasized by Jakobson. The terms which enter a markedness relationship are at the same time constitutive elements of a system, subordinated in a hierarchy, which functions by virtue of the reciprocal relations between parts and system and parts themselves. A modification in either element or relation brings about a modification of the whole system. Likewise, a change in system automatically reorders the elements in the hierarchy according to new rules.

Jakobson and Trubetzkoy's concepts of oppositions and markedness relationships have opened wide possibilities of new paradigms for a systematic analysis of literary texts. As Jakobson himself points out, many literary, cultural, ethnographic phenomena, which at first sight may appear ordinary, can be analyzed in the light of an 'a vs. non-a' relationship with surprising results. Markedness relations can be traced back to an author's preference for certain themes and motifs, as well as in their materialization in the literary work. In a series of analyses on a great number of poetic texts, Jakobson attempted to highlight patterns of oppositions and asymmetries that are significant for an in-frame interpretation of the text. In a letter addressed to Trubetzkoy, he expressed his hope that markedness is not confined to the study of language phenomena only :

> ... your thought about correlation as a constant mutual connection between a marked and unmarked type is one of your most remarkable and fruitful ideas. It seems to me that it has a significance not only for linguistics but also for ethnology and the history of culture, and that such historico-cultural correlations as life-death, liberty-non-liberty, holidays-working days, etc., are always confined to relations *a* - non-*a*, and that it is important to find out for any epoch, group, nation, etc., what the marked element is. For instance, Majakovskij viewed life as a marked element realizable only when motivated ; for him not death but life required a motivation.... I'm convinced that many ethnographic phenomena, ideologies, etc. which at first glance seem to be identical, often differ only in the fact that what for one system is a marked term may be evaluated by the other precisely as the absence of a mark (Jakobson VIII : 93).

While some express their skepticism that anything can be translated into an 'a vs. non-a' pattern, the merits of this theory in providing a coherent scheme of hierarchically and

systematically organizing semiotic information are incontestable.

2. Foregrounding. Definition and application in language and literature.

The use of marked terms or constructions can be considered a foregrounding device. The term "foregrounding" was introduced by P. L. Garvin in his translation of the Czech "aktualisače", a concept employed in the works of several Prague scholars. It defines *the kind of deviation which has the function of bringing some item into artistic emphasis so that it stands out from its surroundings* (Chapman 1973 : 48). Foregrounding was intuitively anticipated by Shelley and also by Coleridge, who pointed out that the merit of bringing the expression to the foreground is that it *rescues the most admitted truths from the impotence caused by the very circumstances of their universal admission* (in Miall & Kuiken 1994 : 391).

J. Mukařovský pointed out that foregrounding is systematic in literature and is oriented towards bringing an artistic expression into focus ; at the same time, the referential expression is backgrounded. Literary foregrounding (in poetry especially) makes use of stylistic figures (metaphor, metonymy, rhyme, rhythm, parallelism, anaphora, assonance), which are features, words, and expressions that appear in less expected contexts, or whose usage produces rhythmic effects, or are deviant from the ordinary usage.

Foregrounding is defined by Halliday as *prominence that is motivated* by its relation to the meaning of the whole (Freeman 1981 : 334). This means that it is easy to find prominence patterns in a poem or prose text, which offers a new aspect useful for interpretation, but if they are not cohesive with the text as a whole, they are irrelevant. Prominence is the deliberate action of highlighting some parts in an utterance, text, poem, so that they stand out from the ordinary. At first sight one should judge highlighting as a process of departure, or deviation from the norm, in which the author chooses to employ certain devices in order to break the established norms and open new interpretative possibilities. However, the natural tendency to judge all highlighting phenomena as deviations may lead to so-called "counter-grammars", or "a science of discards", as Wellek emphasizes. He warns against the danger of disintegrating the work of art and forgetting that it is a whole, emphasizing that, *we are likely to accumulate isolated observations, specimens of the marked traits,... to over-stress "originality", individuality, the merely idiosyncratic* (1956 : 171). Moreover, as Angus McIntosh points out, there are not a few cases, especially in prose, when, although the impact of the work as a whole may be enormous, there is nothing deviant about the words, phrases, clauses, sentences (1965 : 19). He continues,

> It is at least clear that any approach to this kind of problem which looks at anything less than the whole text as the ultimate episode has very little to contribute. Whatever it may

> be in linguistic analysis, the sentence is not the proper episode here. If there are any possibilities of progress, they must, I think, be on the lines of the old recognition, e. g. by the rhetoricians, of elements or strands of something or other which permeate long stretches of text and produce a gradual build-up of effect (1965 : 19).

Although Mukařovský has minimized the role of foregrounding in ordinary communication, other linguists have stressed its importance. Basically, linguistic foregrounding stems from the binary opposition between theme and rheme, or topic and comment. Unlike poetic language, where foregrounding is the manipulation of specific devices towards deautomatization, in linguistics it depends on the organization of utterance in topic/comment and the emphasizing of one of them. Harris (1989 : 2) sees it in terms of "manipulation of linguistic entities", which alters not only the form of the utterance (as in poetic foregrounding), but, what is more important, its overall meaning, while, simultaneously, giving important clues as to the intention of the speaker. According to Stockwell, language is an *optimal system of providing devices for foregrounding new information and backgrounding old one* (1977 : 147). These two processes are possible by virtue of the fundamental dichotomy between code and message, where code is the form in which the message is represented, that is, its surface structure, and message is its abstract logical structure, or its deep structure. The process of foregrounding, or focussing, unfolds according to rules that assign prominence to the part of the message which the speaker wishes to foreground. Since the surface structure of the message presents itself as an accumulation of features (phonetic, morphologic and syntactic), the rules of focusing manifest themselves at three levels. Thus one can speak of focussing which occurs in intonation, morphology and serial word order. In a sentence like "John likes music a lot" one can change the unmarked intonation where the emphasis is on "lot" to a marked intonation by emphasizing "music", or even "John". The use of marked constructions (cleft or pseudo-cleft constructions of the type "It's music that John likes a lot", or "What John likes a lot is music"), object fronting ("Early Mozart my quartet can play" from the unmarked "My quartet can play early Mozart"), passive constructions (full or agentless passive) and adverb fronting constructions ("Tomorrow I must get down to serious work" from "I must get down to serious work tomorrow"), is aimed at shifting the focus from the typical *"who is doing what ?"* question to a multitude of other ways of expression (Stockwell 1977 : 157-158). Thus, (a) *Tom kicked Harry*, can be rewritten using a passive construction as (b) *Harry was kicked by Tom*. Or, using a cleft construction, as (c) *It was Harry whom Tom kicked*. It can be noticed that although the three examples convey the idea that Tom kicked Harry, the relation of predominance between topic and comment is changed in (b) and (c) compared to the neutral (a). Again, the expression in both (b) and (c) is marked compared to (a), which does not imply anything other than a simple statement of a situation.

The second and third sentences are two different examples of what Halliday calls "thematization", or the organization of the sentence in clauses, where the element selected by the speaker as "theme" is placed first in the sequence (Kress 1976 : 179).

3. Case study analysis : *Kokoro* by Natsume Soseki.

The analysis of the case study follows a structural method of dividing the text into significant episodes. I divided the novel into 35 episodes,[1] or subplots, which are all subsumed in the general plot, and analyzed elements of time, setting, characters and motifs in each of them, in order to find elements which may point to an organizational principle based on a play of oppositions in the novel. Moreover, I argue that the novel is built on a set of oppositions, which create markedness relationships that are sometimes, in the context of the novel, reversed from their original values. For the analysis of the novel I have used the following edition : 夏目漱石全集第 7 巻筑摩書房 1986

From the overall analysis of the novel a series of analogous pairs can be deduced. They derive from an opposition which was underlying the Meiji society and intellectual world - that of ego, or individual versus society. This opposition is a salient feature of *Kokoro*, and it further sustains a series of oppositions such as impulses or freedom vs. duties, spirit vs. matter, content vs. form, love vs. marriage, faithfulness vs. betrayal, depth vs. surface, hidden vs. obvious, introvert vs. extrovert, death vs. life, and despair vs. hope.

First I will discuss the oppositions which are traceable at the levels of setting, time, characterization and point of view.

3.1. The setting in *Kokoro*.

The setting carries important information about the characters that are revealed in it. Setting is intrinsically metonymic, or metaphoric, it is the expression of character. The setting may be the expression of human will ; moreover, the descriptions of landscapes are indicative of a character's moods and actions. In *Kokoro* there is a marked preference for interior scenes rather than exterior ones. Out of the thirty-five episodes, only six take place outside ; however, they are significant for the symbolic load they carry. Thus, episode five, which takes place in Zoshigaya cemetery where the protagonist of the novel, Sensei, pays monthly visits to the grave of his dead friend, K, deals with the problem of life and death, and displays two different attitudes towards them. While Sensei is tortured by the memory of his guilt (he blames himself for pushing K to suicide) and suicidal thoughts, the young and inexperienced narrator, who has not been confronted with the reality of death, curiously examines the inscriptions on the funerary stones. The diversity of names in the cemetery -

some of them of Christian resonance (Isabella, Andre), and also the curious gathering of people from various paths of life ("Minister Plenipotentiary..." as well as the usual ordinary people) creates the image of the absolute power of death, which levels out functions, religions, ambitions and fortunes, reducing them to simple graves. The younger man finds the diversity amusing and entertaining, situating himself as far as possible from a serious consideration of the reality of death. This makes Sensei scold him :「貴方は死という事実をまだ真面目に考えた事がありませんね」(p. 8).

The scene where the two look at a gingko tree whose numerous yellow leaves almost hide the sky is underlined by the presence of such verbs as「隠す」,「埋める」(same page), which add solemnity to the atmosphere. The leaves of the tree, which are still hiding the sky with their yellow-green color, will soon bury the earth with their richness of gold, which may be interpreted as a sign of Sensei's approaching end. The impression is also intensified by Sensei's words when referring to the tree, which, after losing its leaves becomes as bald as a Buddhist priest (空坊主) (p. 10). It is an allusion to the requirement that Buddhist priests shave off their hair when entering the priesthood as a sign that they have given up worldly life in favor of religion. The metaphor is significant for its religious implications, which hint at K's strong inclination towards religion, and even to his sacrifice for his Buddhist ideals.

Another exterior scene which carries a symbolic significance for the development of the novel is episode nine, when the young narrator and Sensei, while walking around Ueno Park, watch a beautiful young couple walking under the blossoms of the cherry trees in the park. This again brings forth Sensei's comment, this time about love, which he depicts as "sinful and sacred" :「然し…然し君、恋は罪悪ですよ。解っていますか」(p. 18),「とにかく恋は罪悪ですよ、よござんすか。そうして神聖なものですよ」(p. 19). He criticizes the young man's superficiality, who judges the couple after appearances :「仲が好さそうですね」(p. 17). Apparently inoffensive, the young man's words refer to a pretty ordinary, amiable relation between people, which does not necessarily include love, while Sensei refers specifically to love when he says :「新婚の夫婦のようだね」(same page). Translated in English, the difference is more poignant : "They look like they are just married", says Sensei, and Watakushi answers "They seem to be getting along well". Watakushi's unconscious judgement is based on appearances, while Sensei refers to a deeper relationship, which is based on love, and exists only between newlyweds. The very special relationship is translated into unconditional surrender ; moreover, love is seen as a feeling which ties the man down to the woman's long, black hair, turning him into a passive, helpless creature :「君、黒い長い髪で縛られた時の心持を知っていますか」(p. 19). It is not a coincidence that the author chose the same Ueno Park as the scene described in Episode thirty-two, where after K confesses his desperate love for Ojosan, the young Sensei, who was also secretly in love with her, launches his merciless

destruction :「K が理想と現実の間に彷徨してふらふらしているのを発見した私は、ただ一打で彼を倒す事が出来るのだろうという点にばかり眼を着けました。」(p. 125),「無論策略からです」(same page). However satisfied with the effect of his cruel words, the young Sensei cannot help feeling cold when he sees a dead tree in the park, which reminds him of K :「ことに霜に打たれて蒼味を失った杉の木立のや茶褐色が、薄黒い空の中に、梢を並べて聳えているのを振り返って見た時は、寒さが背中へ嚙り付いたような心持がしました。」(p. 127).

I mentioned that the majority of scenes are interior ones, which coincides with the preoccupation of the author with that which lies inside the characters' hearts, rather than their physical appearances. This fact makes one consider the opposition in-out, where inner world here can be viewed as unmarked due to the frequency of scenes that happen inside a house, and also for the reason that the detailed and complex descriptions of characters' feelings (the young narrator, Sensei) tilt the focus on to the inner rather than the outer world. Moreover, the settings contain features that stress the character of the people who inhabit them. Thus Sensei's house, which is always very silent, like his wife, whose name is Shizu 静(from 静か, which means "silent"), also conveys a feeling of loneliness「高い笑い声などの聞こえる試しは丸でなかった。」(p. 12). Sensei's study is placed in the quietest part of the house, which is a telling location considering his tendency to isolate himself from the world, and even from his wife.

The motif of the house seems to be given great importance in the novel, in the sense that a change of houses signifies a change in a character's life and emotional balance. Thus, in episode twenty-four, the young and unsuspecting Sensei, who is emotionally attached to his parents' house, keeps dreaming of it :「心の眼で、懐かしげに故郷の家を望んでいました。」(p. 78). However, after he finds out that his uncle cheated him of almost all his inheritance, he decides to sell everything he has and move to another place in Tokyo. The fact that he moves to another house is symbolic of his advancement from past to present, from childhood to youth. Later on, after K commits suicide and Sensei marries Ojosan, they again move into a new house, again as if to escape past memories and start a new period of life. Thus the three houses in Sensei's life may symbolize his childhood, youth and maturity. Similarly, his landlady, Okusan, has left the large house in which she had lived with her husband and moved into a smaller one - partly to save money and maybe partly to escape the memory of her husband's death. Again, the young narrator relates his experiences in his parents' old house with a thatched roof, which he finally abandons in order to go to Tokyo to see Sensei. This change of houses always seem to be motivated by two forces - an external force (usually a material one) and an internal one (related to the problems of the heart). Maybe the most poignant impression is given by K's moving into Okusan's house, which marks the beginning of the confrontation between two principles : spirit and matter. K will reach a point where

the attraction towards the material world (in this case expressed in his love towards Ojōsan) becomes stronger than his power to keep his spiritual ideals unblemished, and he will chose the supreme sacrifice rather than surrender to matter.

Young Sensei's gesture of bringing K into Okusan's house marks a change in the external and internal balance of forces. The position of K's room, which separates Sensei's room from those of the two ladies, is important not only for its external implications (Sensei must cross K's room before entering his own room), but mostly for the changes K's presence between himself and the object of his adoration bring to Sensei's feelings.

The setting may be significant in the light of the spirit/matter opposition. Thus K, who is not interested in the material side of things, but rather in spiritual enlightenment, is described by Sensei as living in a small, damp room facing north :「彼の今迄居た所は北向きの湿っぽい臭いのする汚ない室でした。」(p. 102). However, his friend tries to bring him to normality, which in young Sensei's mind is reflected in the material side of life (the quality of food and lodgings), not in one's integrity. The orientation towards north (which is always a reference point on a map) is significant, for K prefers spiritual light and warmth rather than the more physical light and warmth of the sun. Therefore, the presence of K in the nice room facing south, enjoying the warmth of the sun and the attention of the two ladies is a big step towards normality as it is perceived by ordinary people (including the young Sensei) :「私の家へ引き移った彼は、幽谷から喬木に移った趣があった位です。」(p. 102) ; he even becomes more human, or「人間らしく」. However, for K, who pursues spiritual rather than material goals, moving to this house brings about his self-destruction.

3. 2. The time dimension in *Kokoro*.

The novel is narrated in the past tense by the young narrator, Watakushi, and later on by Sensei himself in his testament. Generally speaking, past tense is marked vis-a-vis the present ; however, it is an intrinsic feature of narrative discourse, and in this case it is unmarked. However, the past tense in *Kokoro* is not merely an artistic convention, but a motif itself. Thus, most characters in the novel live with past memories. Sensei is incessantly tormented by his sense of guilt, which is perceived like the threatening black shadow of a bird by the narrator, who observes him :「今云った通り先生は始終静かであった。落付いていた。けれども時として変な曇りが其顔を横切る事があった。窓に黒い鳥影が射すように。射すかと思うと、すぐ消えるには消えたが。」(p. 9). The memory of his dead friend is the negative force that prevents Sensei from leading a normal life「寧ろ二人の間に立って、自由の往来を妨げる魔物のようであった。」(p. 21),「魔の通る前に立って、其瞬間の影に一生を薄暗くされて気が付かずにいたのと同じ事です。」,「もし其男が私の生活の行路を横切らなかったならば、恐らくこういう長いものを貴方に書き残す必要も起こらなかったでしょう。」(p. 96). In the latter,

the presence of the verb「横切る」, which means "to traverse", but is made up of the characters which denote "horizontal" and "cut" may be interpreted as an anticipation of K's violent death, and also as a reference to the fact that K's presence and death severs in a figurative sense Sensei's otherwise vertical ascension towards a respectable life.

Sensei feels that the spirit of the Meiji era is over together with the death of the Meiji emperor :「明治の精神が天皇に始まって天皇に終わったような気がしました。」(p. 144), so he himself, who lived in and was influenced by it, feels that by continuing to live he would become a kind of old-fashioned thing :「生き残っているのは必竟時勢遅れだという感じが烈しく私の胸を打ちました。」(same page).

Past is a marked feature in the young narrator's life. After he graduates from university, he returns to his parents' home and makes no attempt to find himself a job ; he even refuses a post offered by a friend. His attitude is in sharp contrast with that of his family, who expect him to be more future oriented than he appears to be. His father criticizes his lack of interest, and shows that he is incessantly concerned with the neighbors' opinion「然し卒業した以上は、少なくとも独立して遣って行って呉れなくっちゃ止方も困る。人からあなたの所の御二男は、大学を卒業なすって何をして御出ですかと聞かれた時に返事が出来ない様じゃ、おれも肩身が狭いから」(p. 56). His elder brother, who is a materialist, asks him about his future plans :「御前是から何うする」(p. 67), but his answer is vague and does not reflect a real concern for his future :「一体家の財産は何うなってるんだろう」(same page).

The narrator's father, old and ill, is no longer able to continue his contribution to society ; he makes plans for the future, but his condition gradually deteriorates, and he loses hope. Furthermore, as his health grows worse, people start visiting him even from remote places and speak to him with encouraging platitudes :「何かと思ったら、この様子じゃ大丈夫だ。話も自由だし、だいち顔がちっとも痩せていないじゃないか」(p. 62). The father clings desperately to the real world ; he insists on seeing and talking to everyone who comes to visit. Also, he becomes an avid reader of the newspaper in a gesture of clinging to the world which bids him farewell.

3. 3. The characterization in Kokoro.

The main characters of the narration develop along a series of oppositions, such as individual/society, material/spiritual, freedom/convention, appearance/reality, and their transition from one pole to the other of the oppositions can be traced along these fundamental lines. For example, in their youth, both Sensei and the narrator are social creatures, who have friends ; are less inclined to consider the spiritual matters of life and stick to the more material aspects ; respect, in a blind sort of way, the traditions and conventions imposed by society, are more or less extroverted, and have a superficial sort of judgement. They

gradually become more and more introverted, self-reflective, and end up almost totally submerged in their egos, which paralyzes them to the extent that they have no wish or no power to make a contribution to society.

There are a few sets of characters that make up opposite pairs in the novel. These are Sensei vs. the narrator, Sensei vs. the narrator's father, and young Sensei vs. K. The first pair reflects the intrinsic opposition between experience and innocence. In the first part of the novel the narrator, who repeatedly qualifies himself as「若い私」「経験のない私」, observes Sensei, and his relation to the world with the eyes of an inexperienced examiner, and what he gets is the incomplete and superficial image of a man, who, although in good health, happily married and relatively rich, chooses out of mysterious reasons to live in almost complete seclusion while paying regular visits to the grave of a friend in Zōshigaya cemetery. The first and second parts offer the comparative image of Sensei and the narrator's father. Sensei is seen in a positive light, while the father is depicted in unfavorable colors. Episode 11 places the two men in contrast through the words of the narrator, who is attached to both — to his father by virtue of blood ties, and to Sensei as a spiritual master「両方とも世間から見れば、生きているか死んでいるか分からない程大人しい男であった。他に認められるという点からいえば、何方も零であった」(p. 31).

Both Sensei and his father are detached from the social universe, one by self-seclusion, the other by age and illness. Their existence is unclear and they almost lack the recognition of others. Sensei has no close friends, lives with his wife in a house which is almost never visited by anybody, which he seldom leaves, and where hardly any voices or loud laughter are heard. Watakushi's father, on the other hand, is almost in the same situation, except that his reclusion is not self-imposed ; it is made inevitable by age and illness. His children are too busy or live too far away to be able to visit him while he is still alive, and can visit only if something serious happens to him :「万一の事がある場合」. However, similar in uselessness to Sensei, the father is not a desirable partner for his son for anything, let alone for shogi playing. His father reminds him of the exterior world, because he sticks to repetition, tradition, form, and these are only boring for the young man. His attitude is nothing new and it sweeps the young man into a sort of mental lethargy :「肉のなかに先生の力が喰い込んでいると云っても、血のなかに先生の命が流れていると云っても、其時の私には少しも誇張でないように思われた。」(pp. 31–32). He feels closer to Sensei, whose strength seems to have entered his own flesh and whose blood seems to run through his veins. He is surprised to remember that Sensei is only a stranger, while his father is his own flesh and blood :「私は父が私の本当の父であり、先生は又いう迄もなく、あかの他人であるという明白な事実を、ことさらに眼の前に並べて見て、始めて大きな真理でも発見したかの如くに驚ろいた」(p. 32). The narrator sees the provincial conventionalism of his parents in a negative light, compared to Sensei's

apparent lack of concern towards convention :「私には口で祝ってくれながら、腹の底でけなしている先生の方が、それ程にもないものを珍しそうに嬉しがる父よりも、却って高尚に見えた。私は仕舞に父の無知から出る田舎臭い所に不快を感じ出した。」(p. 50).

The opposition between the young Sensei and his friend K is traceable to the former's inclination towards material things and conventions and the latter's devotion to religion and spiritual enlightenment. Their origin also is significant in this respect, Sensei being the son of a country gentleman「田舎紳士」, who took great interest in art and to whom tradespeople came from remote places to show exquisite pieces of art. His uncle is a typical materialist type, who embodies the Meiji ideal of material independence and prosperity (Jap. *risshin shusse*).

On the other hand, K is the son of a Shinshu priest, which explains his inclination towards religious matters. His spiritual ideals assert a definitive disjunction between soul and flesh :「なまじい昔の高僧だとか聖徒だとかの伝を読んだ彼には、動ともすると精神と肉体とを切り離したがる癖がありました。肉を鞭撻すれば霊の光輝が増すように感ずる場合さえあったのかも知れません」(p. 102). Episode twenty-eight as a whole depicts K's negative attitude towards material comfort and his idea that torturing the body will result in the purification of the soul. K is at first indifferent towards worldly matters like quality of life and perception of beauty, which makes Sensei comment about his heart, which is like a piece of iron that gets rusty with lack of use :「使わない鉄が腐るように、彼の心には錆が出ていたとしか、私には思われなかった」(p. 104),「彼の心臓の周囲は黒い漆で重く塗り固められたのも同然でした。」(p. 110). In the latter example, the narrator uses the physical term for "heart" in order to emphasize the lack of interest with which he treats bodily, physical matters.

Also, K's self denial is also depicted in the discussion with Ojosan, when K, although cold, refuses the offer to bring new fire for the brazier :「火鉢に火があるかと尋ねると、K は無いと答えるそうです。では持って来ようと云うと、要らないと答えるそうです。寒くはないかと聞くと、寒いけれども要らないんだ」(p. 104). However, Sensei feels inferior to K, whose intellectual capacity and willpower are far beyond his own, and who is better looking than he, which arouses his fears that Ojosan may turn her affection toward him :「容貌も K の方が女に好かれるように見えました。性質も私のようにこせこせしていない所が、異性には気に入るだろうと思われました。... 私よりは優勢に見えました。学力になれば専門こそ違いますが、私は無論 K の敵でないと自覚していました。——凡て向うの好い所丈が斯う一度に眼先へ散らつき出すと、一寸安心した私はすぐ元の不安に立ち返るのです。」(p. 110).

The older Sensei comments on his friend's honesty in a highly emotional way ; K does not sense his friend's destructive intentions :「余りに正直でした。余りに単純でした。余りに人格が善良だったのです。」(p. 126). His words give Sensei an image of absolute, almost saintly, goodness, although he himself realizes after K's death that he is no better than his uncle,

despite his image of an honest young man :「世間は何うあろうとも此己は立派な人間だという信念が何処かにあったのです。それがKのために美事に破壊されてしまって、自分もあの叔父と同じ人間だと意識した時、私は急にふらふらしました。」(p. 140).

3. 4. The point of view in *Kokoro*.

At the level of point of view, *Kokoro* is narrated in the first person by a narrator, who does not identify himself by a name, and then by the central character himself, who, although we recognize him as the Sensei of the first and second parts, does not have a name. The narrator in the first and second parts is an older and more experienced man, who relates his own youthful and naive observation of Sensei's strange character. On the other hand, the narrator in the third part, significantly entitled "Sensei's Testament", is Sensei himself, who narrates his own experiences, sensations and feelings. This gives the reader a complete picture of the complexity of the main character, Sensei, who, despite appearing to the young narrator of the first two sections to be happily married and an intellectual, albeit quiet, unsociable and moody at times, is actually tortured by the awareness of his sin of driving his best friend to suicide in order to marry the woman whom K loved.

One may say that the novel is built in the manner of a detective story, through the complex play of reality and appearance, where, the young narrator may play the role of a detective, who tries to solve the mystery of Sensei's strange behavior. The abundance of verbs and expressions which refer to the act of seeing, watching and observing is telling in this respect. The suspect, Sensei, lives in constant terror that his secret may be found out, which explains his reluctance to seek the company of people and the strictness with which he defends his secret. However, only before his death does he decide to confess and complete the jigsaw-puzzle-like image that the young narrator's story had incompletely reflected in the first parts.

3. 5. The plot in *Kokoro*.

Finally, at the plot level, one may distinguish a set of oppositions, which are society/individual, in/out, reality/appearance, and life/death. The in/out and reality/appearance have already been discussed above ; I will discuss the oppositions society/individual, and life/death, and the significance of the title.

The title of the novel, *Kokoro*, is, in its vagueness, open to a multitude of interpretations. It covers a broad range of meanings, such as "mind", "mentality", "heart", "spirit", and even "will", "intention". However, although "heart" would be its closest English translation equivalent, it does not cover the intellectual dimension of man ; therefore it is understandable that English translators have chosen to preserve the original title (Viglielmo 1976 : 166).

"Kokoro", the de facto protagonist of the novel, is a term in the opposition body/soul in the sense that in the novel, although the physical descriptions of characters are scarce, the movements of their souls are minutely described.

"Kokoro" refers to all that differentiates people from one another ; it is spirit, not matter, which is the norm in the novel. Matter, represented by the motif of money, is regarded as deviant by Sensei, who blames it for the corruption of his soul. Moreover, "kokoro" refers to all that lies hidden in every individual and can hardly be perceived from outside ; thus it sustains the opposition hidden/overt, or depth/surface which is present in all three parts of the novel. In the first part, Watakushi observes Sensei from a close distance and makes his own judgements based on appearances. Sensei appears to a young and inexperienced Watakushi as a man of means, happily married to a beautiful and sensitive woman, who appears to be leading a happy and comfortable life. There are a few mysterious things about him (his monthly visits to the graveyard, his lack of interest in people and society in general, his sudden bursts of indignation at his youthful remarks, or hints to his past experiences). In the first part the fundamental opposition which guides Watakushi's judgement is that between appearance and reality, where appearance seems to be the norm which helps Watakushi's reasoning.

3. 6. "Individual" vs. "society" in *Kokoro*.

The change of focus from the collective, social aspect to the individual's inner life brought about by the Meiji intellectual revolution was due to internal factors, such as the emergence of a new class, the merchant class, concerned less with rigid samurai morality and more with self-improvement, and also, to external factors, which I will briefly summarize here. Reaching Japan through the translation work of Fukuzawa Yukichi, Nakamura Masanao and others, the influence of Western ideas together with the development of the new middle class led to an emphasis on the ideas of initiative and enterprise. In his *Gakumon no Susume*, Fukuzawa dealt with the concept of independence, which was an ideal almost impossible to fulfil in a society where strict hierarchic relations and the Confucian dogmas of respect and loyalty towards superiors were paramount. The ideal of independence and that of success and achievement in life (*risshin shusse*) gradually started to replace the traditional social cohesion.

However, the Meiji opening did not lead to only positive aspects. The cultural, social and political revolution that took place during this period placed Japan in the posture of receptacle of progressive ideas and concepts which were circulating around Europe at that time. However, while in Europe, words depicting concepts such as society, individual, freedom, existed and had long been used, Japan did not possess them in the form that could make them

translation equivalents for concepts that appeared in the writings of J. S. Mill, Darwin or Wayland. As a result, new words like *shakai*, *kojin*, or *hito*, *jiyuu* were coined, but their meaning remained obscure even for the intellectuals of the epoch. For example, in the case of the translation equivalent for "individual", there have been many attempts to find the most appropriate equivalent in translation. Fukuzawa Yukichi and Nakamura Masanao chose to use the term "hito" as the closest equivalent ; however, as Yanabu Akira (1995) points out, although "individual" and "hito" seem to denote one and the same reality, there are important semantic and cultural differences between them, which makes them non-equivalent. While in Western culture the individual is seen often as an unmarked term in the relation between society and individual, in Japanese culture the two concepts are contained in one another in a metonymical relation. The lack of a precise concept in Japanese, which could be considered the closest equivalent in to Western concept indicates that in pre-Meiji Japanese culture, individual and society were not perceived as two poles of an opposition. In Western culture the concept of "man" has a different meaning from "individual", denoting a being who stands alone before God ; "individual" is conceived in his relation with society, as a fundamental element in the creation of society, but with a clearly defined individuality.

As Tsuda Sokichi pointed out, this importing of concepts introduced new ideas in a new form ; both the form and content were not recognized by the Japanese as streaming from their cognitive and cultural experience. This created a situation of confusion, aggravated also by the disruption of traditional values and cultural codes, which is reflected also in Soseki's novel, where the individual is torn between two contradictory forces which dominate the old and new worlds respectively : the idea of duty towards society and family and that of self-consciousness. Like Yukio Mishima, Soseki sees the cause of the breakdown in human relations in the alienation of the individual from traditional values, whose place is taken by a modern society where money is the supreme reality. As Pollack emphasizes, during the Meiji enlightenment, the focus was shifted towards the quest for the self of the individual, which is also reflected in Soseki's novels. However, before he and Japan could ask questions, such as "Who am I ?", they had to ask a more fundamental question : "What is an *I* ?". Japan engaged in a quest for *a viable sense of its own identity in the face of the West and in particular, within the sociopolitical terms of the need to invent, for the sake of modernization, an analogue to the Western "self" as the necessary precursor to the political concepts of "liberty", "freedom", and "rights" which are founded upon it* (Pollack 1992 : 55).

The main character of *Kokoro*, the man named Sensei, is in a sense the reflection of these problems which troubled Japanese intellectual circles of the Meiji era. The pre-Meiji mentality, strictly anchored in Confucian dogmas and a rigid sense of hierarchy and social mission, is reflected in the novel by the narrator's parents, who are steadfastly attached to

tradition and social conventions. Their existence is closely linked with that of the group ; although dying the father is desperately clinging to his connections with the real world in an attempt to maintain its acceptance. The world they live in is a world where the individual does not exist as an independent entity, but only as a member of the group. On the other hand, the positive hero, Sensei, does not have any kind of social anchorage (he has no job, no title, not even a name), and is indifferent to the social conventions that enslave the individual in a mesh of endless obligations. One might say that he represents a new kind of individual, who stands alone before his own consciousness.

The individual we see depicted in the novel, lonely and lacking a position in the network of obligations which give his name in society, is a non-entity. However, the values imposed by the literary discourse reverse the markedness relation from unmarked to marked. That which is normally unmarked in the social context of Meiji Japan, that is, the society, the group, is marked as negative in the novel, and the individual with his feelings becomes the norm. Thus, the respect of tradition and conventions are discarded as redundant by the older narrator and Sensei and also by K. The negative mark of the concept of "convention" in the novel is repeatedly emphasized by the author.「其頃の私は今よりまだ習慣の奴隷でした」(p. 94), says the old Sensei, referring to the episode of his classmate's expensive silk garments. Young Watakushi looks with irritation at how his father makes plans for his graduation party, and this makes his father remark sourly「学問をさせると人間が兎角理屈っぽくなっていけない」(p. 53). That means that school teaches people to question everything about them, including conventions and traditions ; their thinking becomes "too logical".

3.7. The life/death opposition in *Kokoro*.

The life-death opposition is of a very interesting nature. Usually regarded as positive and unmarked, life lacks signification in the novel. Rather, for Sensei, life with his sin on his conscience is a burden, and he lives like a mummy left among people. Death, which occurs not only in the first part, but also in the second and third parts, is for him not only an escape, but is also the expiation of his sin.

4. Conclusion.

I have pointed out only a few aspects in an attempt to order the richness of expressive information provided by the novel. Although opposition is not the only principle around which the expressive information in a literary work is organized, the present paper shows that the highlighting devices used by the author and their meaningful placement in contexts point to an arrangement of information into opposite pairs.

The concern for the problems of the heart in the novel, at the expense at a more complex presentation of the characters, implies that the focus in the novel is placed on the individual person and his world, rather than on the society. However, the individual depicted in *Kokoro* is the image of the Meiji disruption of traditional values and customs. The self that is depicted in the novel is a parasitic self, unable to act in order to bring his contribution to a new, materialistic society, and ends up in self-destruction.

Although the method of highlighting the oppositions around which the literary discourse is organized does not offer an exhaustive interpretation of the novel, it can be said that it is a starting point for a coherent interpretation and evaluation of prose.

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Notes

1) The episodes are :

Part 1. Sensei and I.

Episode one : Introduction. (3-4 up)

Episode two. Sensei is observed. (4 up-5 down)

Episode three. The contact. (5 down-6 down)

Episode four. The encounter with Sensei's wife. (6 down-8 up)

Episode five. The reencounter in the cemetery. The Zoushigaya episode. (8 up-9 up)

Episode six. Sensei's loneliness. (9 up-11 down)

Episode seven. Sensei and his wife. (12 up-15 down)

Episode eight. Watakushi and Sensei's wife. The first discussion. (15 down-16 down)

Episode nine. Sensei and his love. (17 up-19 down)

Episode ten. Sensei and the world. The second discussion with Sensei's wife. (19 down-28 down)

Episode eleven. Watakushi's first reencounter with his parents. (28 down-32 down)

Episode twelve. Back to Tokyo. (32 down-35 up)

Episode thirteen. The discussion about in the tree nursery. (35 up-42 down)

Episode fourteen. Watakushi's graduation. (42 down-49 down)

Part 2. My Parents and I.

Episode fifteen. The graduation diploma. (49 down-50 down)

Episode sixteen. The father's sickness. (51 up-52 up)

Episode seventeen. Keeping up appearances. (52 up-54 up)

Episode eighteen. Emperor's illness. (54 up-56 up)

Episode nineteen. Job hunting. (56 up-58 down)

Episode twenty. Plans to return to Tokyo. (58 down-60 up)

Episode twenty-one. Unexpected change of plans. (60 up-73 up)

Part 3. Sensei's Testament.

Episode twenty-two. The justification. (73 up-75 down)

Episode twenty-three. Sensei's childhood and family. (75 down-76 down)

Episode twenty-four. The uncle's betrayal. (77 up-84 down)

Episode twenty-five. The new home. (84 down-88 down)

Episode twenty-six. Sensei and the two women. (88 down-96 up)

Episode twenty-seven. Enters K. (96 up-101 down)

Episode twenty-eight. K moves into the house. (101 down-105 down)

Episode twenty-nine. Sensei is jealous. (105 down-108 up)

Episode thirty. The trip to Boshu. (108 up-113 up)

Episode thirty-one. Back to Tokyo. (113 up-117 down)

Episode thirty-two. K confesses his love. (117 down-129 up)

Episode thirty-three. Sensei asks for Ojosan's hand. (129 up-132 down)

Episode thirty-four. K's final move. (132 down-138 up)

Episode thirty-five. Life after K and the end. (138 up-146).