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Review of Japanese Culture and Society, Volume 29, 2017, pp. 45-60 (Article)

Published by University of Hawai'i Press

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Reiko Abe Auestad

> The only consistent thing about people is their bodies. And because our bodies stay the same, most of us are content to assume that our minds do, too—that we go on being the selves we were, even when we do today the exact opposite of what we did yesterday. When the question of responsibility comes up and we are accused of breaking faith, why is it that none of us even thinks to reply, "well, that's because my personality is nothing but a bunch of memories. I'm just a mess inside"?
>
> Natsume Sōseki, *The Miner* (Kōfu, 1908)[1]

Why *Kokoro* Again?

As might be expected of someone growing up in Japan in the sixties, I first read Natsume Sōseki's *Kokoro* (1914) in a high-school textbook. I did not like it at all. Even though my reading of the novel has evolved over time, I have remained puzzled by the main character Sensei's excessive sense of guilt, which is supposed to lend the novel its moral weight, and I have never been convinced that Sensei's so called betrayal of his friend K justifies such strong self-condemnation. Is it so easy to see a causal mechanism behind Sensei's interactions with K and other characters, which led to K's tragic death? Isn't he pointing the finger at himself too hastily? Reading recent work on affect has reinforced my skepticism about the certitude of Sensei's moral judgment, and inspired me to write this essay. In this essay, I will argue that *Kokoro* is not a novel about how Sensei, a moral man, takes responsibility for his past actions. Rather, it is about how Sensei crafts a moralizing, emotion-laden narrative out of the chaos of his own affective responses in the past.

I use the term "affect" to mean a feeling or intensity that affects one's body but is not yet connected to anything meaningful, distinguishing it from emotion, which suggests

something that has been interpreted and given a meaningful content.[2] Affective responses are therefore necessarily disorganized to begin with. It should also be noted that there is another, more social, collective pole in affect—the larger "structure of feeling" or *Zeitgeist* (consciousness of a generation) as Sōseki calls it in *Theory of Literature* (Bungakuron, 1907)—in which one's affective response is often embedded. [3] It is the kind of feeling that a group of people with a common social denominator such as class, generation, education, and gender are likely to share. One can argue that this socially-conditioned, attitudinal affect is formed over time by social forces that restrain the free circulation of affects by shaping them into more socially acceptable forms. Most importantly, the two poles of affect, spontaneous affects arising in the individual and the more durational social ones, are continuous, even if they create tensions. They work together, as it were, to regulate and stabilize one's social life. The problem arises, however, when a form of social organization that supports the status quo, the patriarchical *ie* system in *Kokoro*,[4] for example, encounters and collides with other social forms that have different principles, such as the ideology of love in marriage. The collision can create a mismatch between the two poles of affect, or within the social pole of affect, leading to conflicts with grave consequences, which is what happens in Sensei's case, as we will see later.[5]

Suffice it for the moment to note that both poles of affect have a social dimension, to the extent that they are triggered by outside forces, independently of one's conscious intention. Their trajectory, as they fold into or combine with other affects, is often unpredictable and contingent. In other words, Sensei's initial, disorderly affective responses to his friend K are understandable and perhaps inevitable, and not necessarily damning evidence of his "egotism" or moral failing, as he later convinces himself when he retroactively narrates his past. Rather than acknowledging this however, Sensei creates a moral narrative that is so powerful that it eventually drives him to suicide. *Kokoro* is thus not so much about the tragic consequences of Sensei's betrayal, as it is about the sometimes tragic consequences of the way in which we judgmentally interpret our past actions, as well as those of others, in terms of our preconceived notions of "moral character" or "self-knowledge." Sensei's moral sense drives him to translate momentary affects into powerful emotional narratives that make sense in retrospect. Needless to say, Sensei is not Sōseki, nor does he represent the whole of *Kokoro*, something that seems to slip the minds of many readers.[6] If we listen to the implicit, alternative voices within Sensei's testament (*hitei no koe*, in the words of the Japanese literary scholar Nakamura Miharu), *Kokoro* can yield a different, ethical (but not moralistic) interpretation that acknowledges our own "invariable partial blindness about ourselves," asking us to be a little more "generous" to ourselves and to others, in spite of what Sensei writes.[7]

The task of this essay is to demonstrate such an "ethical" alternative to the moralistic reading of *Kokoro* by showing how Sensei's testament, through a detailed, moment-to-moment description of the changing affective landscape leading up to K's death, and eventually to Sensei's suicide, throws into relief the difficulty, if not the impossibility,

of locating agency within the complex neurological machinations that lie behind action, where body, affect, and cognition play their respective roles. Spontaneous affects, not terribly harmful on their own, collide with the social affects that have outlived the social conditions that gave birth to them, combining into powerful, negative forces, which together trigger an unfortunate chain of events that ends in tragedy. More specifically, I hope to show how mixtures of "ugly feelings" such as paranoia, envy, and fear, join forces and work in combination with various other circumstantial factors ("structure of feeling" included) in driving Sensei toward a series of what in retrospect turn out to be fatal "mistakes."

I propose to do this by separating the affects that circulate among characters in the story from the filter of Sensei's writing self in his retrospective testament, as there is an obvious gap between the past "I" of the time of the story and the present "I" of the time of the narration. As Sōseki's own comments on the impact of affect on memory in *Theory of Literature* indicate,[8] Sensei's impression of the course of events leading to K's suicide at the time of his narration cannot but be "different" from his impressions prior to the incident. In light of his strong feeling of guilt, Sensei is compelled to convert directionless, chaotic affects experienced by the past "I" into meaningful emotions. As is typical of a retroactive confessional narrative, Sensei is driven to write by a strong impulse to give a coherent account of the past by making sense of what did not make sense at the time of the story.

Ugly Feelings

I would like to focus particularly on paranoia and envy, which are among what affect theorist Sianne Ngai calls "ugly feelings," passive and non-cathartic feelings.[9] Ngai argues that paranoia and envy in particular have a disorienting impulse because both contain a meta-feeling premised on the subject's confoundment over the objective or subjective status of his own feelings. You become paranoid precisely because you are not entirely certain whether your "enemy is inside or outside." Likewise, envy is accompanied by a meta-feeling that denies its own legitimacy because of its necessarily negative connotation, even if it is rooted in an objective "difference" to begin with. Paranoia and envy will make you feel confused about what you are feeling, or what you are supposed to feel, and this, in turn, leads to unpleasant, dysphoric feelings. Both paranoia and envy thus have a tendency to diminish one's power to act or think, temporarily depriving one of agency. Ngai explains, "What we might think of as a state of feeling vaguely 'unsettled' or 'confused,' or, more precisely, a meta-feeling in which one feels confused about *what* one is feeling," leads to "situations in which action is blocked or suspended."[10] In many of Sōseki's later novels such as *Kokoro* and *To the Spring Equinox and Beyond* (Higan sugi made, 1912), it is exactly this kind of affective disorientation that prevents characters from acting with decisive consequences for narrative development. Another important feature of paranoia and envy is that they yield an added pressure on the subject to make

sense of their "unsettled and confused" situation, often driving them to construe meaning and intentionality out of everything and everywhere at any cost—a pressure that plays a significant role in shaping the patterns of Sensei's reaction at the time of the story, as we will soon see.

Paranoia and Envy

The paranoid disposition of Sensei, which he acknowledges has influenced his dealings with his landlady Okusan and her daughter Ojōsan, originates in an earlier conflict with his uncle. Many critics have taken Sensei's condemnation of his uncle literally and read it as an exemplary story of "an ordinary, decent person who will suddenly turn bad when he sees money" (136)[11]—a prelude to Sensei's "betrayal" of K and his realization that he is, after all, no better than his uncle. But if we examine the affective landscape surrounding Sensei and the uncle's family at the time of the story, the question can be asked if the uncle truly "cheated" Sensei out of his inheritance because of greed, as Sensei claims (137). Why did his uncle and the entire family, upon learning of Sensei's refusal to marry his cousin, start acting "odd" (133), their feelings apparently turning sour? The adjective "odd," which Sensei uses to describe their behavior, gives us an insight into the difference in their expectations. Where does that difference come from?

Under the *ie* system of the Meiji constitution, it was Sensei's deceased father, the eldest son of the family, who inherited his wealth from their parents, and he managed it well while enjoying "elegant traditional pursuits such as flower arranging and ceremonial tea-making, and reading books of poetry." He was a "man of means" and cultivated tastes, whereas his younger brother (*jinan bō*), Sensei's uncle, presumably had to make his living as a businessman on his own by fighting "his way in the world" (128). After Sensei's parents died unexpectedly early, and the very young Sensei ("not yet twenty") prematurely became the sole heir of their fortune, it was not unreasonable of his uncle to expect Sensei to "make an early marriage so that [he] could come back to live in the house and become [his] *father's* heir" (130). In line with the *ie* customs of the Meiji period, "becoming his father's heir" in that situation most probably meant providing for the welfare of the entire clan as the head of the extended *ie*-household, including the uncle's family. The uncle's proposal to unite his own daughter with Sensei by marriage is a solution very much in line with the conventions of the time (marriage between cousins was common, as is thematized in *To the Spring Equinox*).[12] However, to Sensei, who has been reading Western literature in college and is enthralled by the newly-imported "ideology of love," this seems like an unacceptable demand. He gets annoyed at this old-fashioned proposal and refuses it three times, making his uncle "pull a sour face," and causing his cousin to "cry."[13] In other words, the whole episode can be read as a story of colliding social forms and expectations that produce a mismatch between various "structures of feeling." Sensei's uncle's affective response, embedded in the larger "structure of feeling" of his generation—that a twenty-year-old nephew

should follow his uncle's advice in the absence of the father—collides with Sensei's affective reaction based on the "ideology of love" in marriage. This calls into question the image of Sensei's uncle as "human greed" incarnate, as Sensei's reconstruction of events would have it.

Regardless of whether or not there are justifiable roots in reality, Sensei's disappointment over his uncle's "betrayal" lingers on and influences his feelings vis-à-vis the women of his new household in Tokyo, by predisposing him to be on guard.[14] Sensei is a young man of means who does not have to seek employment for the remainder of his life (even after being "cheated" by his uncle), and ironically, his knowledge that his secure financial situation makes him attractive as a prospective son-in-law for the widowed Okusan awakens in him the unpleasant, affective memory of his uncle's "greed." When Sensei tells Okusan how he was teased by his classmates, who have seen him walking together with the two women in Nihonbashi, Okusan gives him an inquisitive look, as if to probe his intention. His immediate temptation to confess his love for Ojōsan is, however, thwarted by a "clammy lump of suspicion" that had by then been firmly "lodged in his heart," as he later regretfully confesses.[15]

With K's entry into the scene, Sensei becomes even more disoriented, as yet another complicating factor figures in his psychological landscape. As the cultural theorist Karatani Kōjin, one of Japan's most insightful readers of Sōseki, and many others have noted, Sensei is drawn into a vicious circle of Girardian mimetic desire.[16] Rivalry in love makes Sensei notice K's superior qualities that Sensei lacks such as "firm manliness," his "handsome" appearance, and his "scholarly ability" (179). It makes him envious, and this negative affect in turn fuels his inferiority complex and "suspicion that she might be more attracted to him [K]"(189). The Sōseki scholar Ishihara Chiaki points out that "envy" was considered one of the worst features of the weaker sex, and many magazines in the Meiji period (1868-1912) warned women against it. Even if K does in fact possess these superior qualities, the act of noticing them with such anxiety is enough to "effeminize" Sensei in his own eyes, making him even more insecure.[17]

The Structure of the House and the Structure of Feeling

It should be noted that there are several circumstantial barriers to Sensei's efforts to measure Ojōsan's "real" thoughts. The closed, small space of the Japanese-style house where he boards with sliding paper-doors for partitions that make it easy to accidentally "eavesdrop" on others, becomes an ideal stage on which the drama of guessing others' motives and feelings starts to unfold (166). Much of the guessing game is carried on through the reading of facial expressions and demeanor, or at best, fragments of words caught in between small talk. If there is a male visitor in the house, Sensei strains to hear his voice, which causes his nerves to afflict him with "strong waves of painful tension" (153). When there are no visitors, he is just as alert trying to assess the whereabouts of Okusan and Ojōsan in the house, taking stock of the intentions behind their movements.

Deprived of opportunities for clarification, affect is given free rein, growing in size in a snowball effect. Sensei narrates his life as a boarder from a highly subjective, retrospective first-person perspective, and his testament showcases how it feels to be in the grip of paranoid and envious affect.

One may also note several frustrating clusters of conditioned affect that aggravate the deadlock here. The first two "structures of feeling" in operation in *Kokoro* concern the kind of affect that prevailed among young men and women of the Meiji period, both of which made it difficult to talk about "private matters of the heart": most importantly, the affective atmosphere permeating young male college students of Sensei's generation.

> It strikes me now that the people I knew back then were all a bit peculiar—no one around me ever spoke about private matters of the heart [concerning women].[18] … This must seem most peculiar to you, in the relative freedom of your present age. I will leave it to you to judge whether it was a lingering effect from the Confucianism of an earlier time or simply a form of shyness (178).

Needless to say, what Sensei means by "the people I knew back then" are all college-educated men, and the "we" in the passage refers to the members of the homosocial community of the First Higher School and Imperial University, pairs such as Sensei and K, or Keitarō and Sunaga in *The Equinox*, for instance.[19] In relation to K, Sensei "squirmed with impotent frustration" at his inability to "speak [his] heart" (178), but never got around to it. Likewise the curious Keitarō does not have the courage to ask about a young female visitor at Sunaga's house, and much to his chagrin, repeatedly misses the opportunity to bring up the subject.[20] The inability of the latter pair to speak only adds suspense to the potential drama in the novel, while in the former pair it eventually develops into a fatal, affective misunderstanding that leads to K's suicide. Despite the difference in the consequences, the "structure of feeling" that holds them back is the same. In fact, this sort of "structure of feeling" that prevails between homosocial male pairs plays an important role (with or without grave consequences) in many of Sōseki's novels.

The second structure of feeling concerns young women of upper-middle class families, to which Ojōsan belongs. Codes of behavior restricting unmarried women in respectable society were many at the time. Higher-schools for girls sought to educate girls to become "good wives and wise mothers," calling for affectionate subservience in women. Sensei suspects that Japanese "girls lacked the courage to be frank and honest" (189) in matters concerning their heart in the presence of men. One can perhaps argue that they laughed instead. Sensei mentions "laughing" at "silly things" to be a "bad habit" that he dislikes, but acknowledges it as something "all young ladies do" (189), including Ojōsan. Sensei accidentally observes three times in which K and Ojōsan talk to each other alone: twice in K's room as he passes through it to get to his own, and another time, as he walks past them in the street outside. Not knowing whether they were together by

chance or on purpose, Sensei tries to probe into the circumstances of their meeting. On all three occasions, Ojōsan laughs instead of providing him with explanations.

> Ojōsan simply laughed. I disliked women who laugh in response that way. All young ladies do it, of course, but Ojōsan had a tendency to laugh at silly things (173).
>
> A week later I again passed through the room when Ojōsan and K were talking there together. This time she laughed as soon as she caught sight of me (174).
>
> I could not really question him further, but over dinner I felt an urge to ask Ojōsan the same question. Her response was to laugh in the way I disliked… (188).

Laughing in place of an answer can be considered a kind of "speech act" precipitated by the "structure of feeling" that expects "restraint" from young women. It is one of the few "artifices" (*gikō*) with which women are allowed to express themselves without being too direct. According to the literary theorist J. Hillis Miller (drawing on the linguist J. L. Austin and the philosopher Jacques Derrida),[21] all speech acts in literature are de facto "performative" rather than "constative," because the contexts that determine meaning are never fixed, potentially generating endless nuances of affect to go with them.[22] Miller includes an exclamation such as "Oh!" at the "border between body and word" as an example of a speech act rich in its ambiguous performative force.[23] In laughter like that of Ojōsan's, there is an element of coquettish vigilance, both friendly and demure at the same time, and yet it is ultimately enigmatic. The possible contexts for interpreting it are many, which magnify its performative, disorienting effect on Sensei's already confused mind.

Finally, there is a third "structure of feeling" that concerns the ideology of love, with which Sensei most certainly was smitten. As the novelist and critic Mizumura Minae and many others have suggested, Sensei's dilemma ultimately boils down to the fact that he wants to marry for love, even though the circumstances surrounding his marriage resemble those of an arranged marriage (*miai*). The fact that he and Ojōsan are a "good match" by the *miai* standards of the day makes it even more difficult for him to take stock of her true feelings, because her internalized recognition of the goodness of their match might make him acceptable regardless of her "real" feelings.

> I hated the thought of marrying a woman who secretly longed for another. Many men are perfectly happy to marry the girl they love whether she returns the feelings or not, but in those days I considered such men to be more worldly and cynical than we were, or else more obtuse in the ways of love (189).

The opacity of Ojōsan's mind would not have mattered if Sensei had only been a more conventional, worldly Meiji man, such as his own uncle, or the I-narrator's father. For

Sensei, a woman's "inner feelings" do matter, and he wants to clear his doubts about them. And yet the two noted "structures of feeling" that prevent direct communication between the opposite sexes interfere. Swimming in a sea of contradictory affects that lead him in opposite directions, Sensei is unable to break the stasis, and remains at a standstill.[24]

Affective Preemptive Strike

With Sensei's vulnerable and unstable state of mind as a backdrop, let us now consider how affect, with its characteristic power and sense of urgency combined with the pressure of sense-making, propels him into action—into a "preemptive strike" that eventually leads to K's suicide. Ever since K's confession of love, Sensei was overcome by "a kind of terror—the *beginnings* of a horrified recognition that [K] was stronger" (emphasis added, 193). A series of actions that Sensei has taken (from spying on K, to feigning innocence), for which he blames himself in hindsight, is colored by "ugly feelings" and paranoid fear in particular, which have temporarily deprived him of his capacity to think. One well-known example is when he utters the following words, which he later condemns as a "crueler aim than revenge" to "block K's way to love" (202):

> "Anyone without spiritual aspirations is a fool," I repeated, watching to see what effect these words would have on K.
>
> "A *fool*," K responded at length. "I'm a *fool*" (emphasis added, 203).

There are strong performative forces at work in these speech acts. "Anyone without spiritual aspirations is a fool" is a sentence K himself has used "contemptuously" in his earlier conversation with Sensei *before* K had any feelings for Ojōsan. Sensei "quotes" it (iteration in Miller's vocabulary), presumably to remind K that "falling in love" is tantamount to betrayal of his own Buddhist aspirations.[25] As K slowly repeats the words as if to drive that point home, however, Sensei's sensitive ears, attuned to the change of the context in which they are now uttered, picks up a different connotation, a threatening tone this time, rather than the original "contemptuous" one, making them sound like the words of a "cornered thief" (203). In other words, what was meant to be a calculated "attack" backfires on Sensei and plants a seed of doubt that K might indeed be prepared to act like a "threatening thief." This, in turn, influences the way Sensei interprets K's next word, "resolve," uttered a little while later. In response to K's plea to stop, Sensei continues:

> "I wasn't the one who brought it up, you know. You began it. If you want to stop, that's fine by me. But there's no point in just shutting up. You have to *resolve* to put a stop to it in your heart as well. What about all those fine principles of yours? Where's your moral fiber?" (204)

> Seeing him cowed, I at last breathed a sigh of relief. Then he said suddenly, "*Resolve*?" Before I could respond, he went on, "*Resolve*—well, I'm not without resolve." He spoke as if to himself or as if in a trance (emphasis added, 205).

Sensei later ruminates on K's word "resolve" trying again to assess its "real" meaning. With each repetition, the word "resolve" invokes a different affective resonance in an atmosphere pregnant with volatile emotions, every time acquiring a slightly different connotation.[26] In the end, Sensei imagines that "K was resolved to act in relation to Ojōsan" instead of putting "a stop to it," and leaps "to the conclusion that his decisiveness would be exercised in the pursuit of love" (208). Paranoia feeds anew into his perception of K, and, mixed with envy and feelings of inferiority, amplifies his fear, making the threat feel "real." As if hypnotized by the performative force of his own words, "fool" and "resolve," long after they have been uttered, Sensei's mind's eye sees only one immediate goal, to beat K in the game of love.

There are a few points concerning a salient aspect of affect, said to prioritize the "here and now," which can give further insight into Sensei's conduct. Particularly relevant is what psychologists refer to as the "hyperbolic discounting" of distant rewards as it relates to "procrastination," which is a conspicuous feature of affect in general. In an affective evaluation of a given situation, value is discounted unreasonably in proportion to time, whereas this does not apply to an intellectual evaluation of the same situation. Studies show that we have a "temporary preference for a smaller, sooner (SS) reward over a larger, later (LL) reward or "preference for less cost in the present over greater cost that leads to a better deal in the long run."[27] This is related to how we experience time affectively, because of the "viscerality" of an SS reward. The sooner the reward, the more valuable it feels. One of the frequently cited reasons for this is our difficulty in imagining our future selves and identifying with them, and our tendency to feel that our future self is more like someone else."[28] We prioritize what means a lot for us "here and now" at the expense of what may become valuable in the future, and are therefore inclined to procrastinate, often indefinitely, what does not demand our urgent and immediate attention until "later."[29]

For Sensei, the motivation to reciprocate K's confession of love and square their relationship in the long run (a larger, later reward; an act that will cost him in the present) is weaker and makes him procrastinate, whereas the motivation to beat K in the game of love, to see K crushed under the impact of his words (a smaller, sooner reward), is stronger, making him say what he does in the end. When this does not free him from his doubt, his pursuit to remove the cause of his fear continues relentlessly. To thoroughly eliminate his fear means going to Okusan to ask for Ojōsan's hand in marriage before K, an agenda that strikes Sensei with the utmost urgency.

Theory of "Delay": Was There Foul Play on the Part of Sensei?

One might ask here if there was foul play in Sensei's conduct, as Sensei himself seems to conclude in his testament. Karatani argues that when Sensei was told about K's love for Ojōsan, Sensei could not but have missed his chance to confide in K, because his realization of his own feelings came only *after* K's confession. Such delay is part of the inherent structure underlying the mechanism of mediated desire, and Karatani elaborates on his theory of "delay" (*okure*), citing an episode in which children realize the attractiveness of their own toys only upon seeing other children take interest in them.[30] It is only then that they start "showing their attachment to the toys as if nothing else is as valuable only to lose interest as soon as the other children give them up and leave." Karatani then goes on to ask a question about how to assess the child's conduct, and compares it with Sensei's case.

> Is this child [Sensei] simply being mean [unfair]? In retrospect, when he thinks back on things, he may indeed feel he has done something bad. The fact remains, however, that there was no pretension or foul play on his part when it actually happened. The toy seemed truly valuable [K truly seemed like a superior competitor] at that moment. However, if he loses interest in the toy afterward [this turns out not to be the case] he will be judged in hindsight to have lied and been mean [unfair]. The movement of Sensei's affect (*kokoro no ugoki*) in the novel is not very different from this. Sensei, in other words, has never been unfaithful to his feelings. Nevertheless, he is judged to have lied and betrayed K.[31]

In Karatani's example, which is grounded in the power of mediation in the Girardian love-triangle, the toy is the object rather than the mediator in the paradigm. Since coveting of the object, Ojōsan, produces in Sensei a fear of the superior competitor, K (who is also the mediator), I believe the analogy still works. Karatani's insight into the delay is useful because it applies to the nature of affect-driven conduct in general, which neuroscientists and psychologists have discussed at length.[32]

The major events in many of the scenes Sensei recalls from the past, particularly those involving his "cowardly" behavior toward K, seem to have taken place while Sensei is immersed in the sea of affect, unable to reflect properly on the consequences of his conduct. A delay before his cognition truly kicks in seems inevitable, as there is an inherent time lag between the affective registering of the outside impact and the cognitive processing of the initial reactions.[33] Sensei oscillates between these two levels of consciousness, but always with a delay that makes his response seem either "too late" or "untimely." In other words, his realization always comes too late for him to take action, and he sinks back into his affect-driven "core self" by letting his more, urgent concerns gain the upperhand.[34] This pattern repeats itself with some variations. After recovering from the initial shock of K's confession a while later, Sensei thinks that he "should reveal his heart to K, but" he "also [feels] that [his] chance ha[s] already passed"

(194), and never finds an appropriate moment to do so. After rushing to Okusan to ask for Ojōsan's hand, Sensei takes a long walk with his mind so "intensely focused on the scene at home" that he does not even think of K once. It is only when he "open[s] the lattice door at the entrance" on coming home that his "conscience [springs] to life again," this time strongly urging him to "kneel before him and ask his pardon" (212-13). This does not materialize, however, because the timing is awkward, as there are others in the house who might hear their conversation. Going back to the question of whether or not there was foul play on the part of Sensei, the answer is "no," at least in the sense that "Sensei was never unfaithful to his own feelings," as Karatani argues. Sensei nevertheless takes the blame upon himself, as we all know.

Conclusion

Through my analysis, I hope to have demonstrated how "ugly feelings" such as paranoia, envy, and fear, combine forces with various other circumstantial factors to push Sensei into making a series of unwise decisions with fatal consequences. In addition, his conscious efforts to make amends fail because they always come too late. It should also be noted that it is the colliding social forms in the Meiji period that create gaps between "structures of feeling," and aggravate the situation for Sensei. Sensei's homosocial inhibition about speaking openly of love, a young women's restraint, and Sensei's uncle's conditioned affect would not have been a problem within the patriarchal *ie* order of things, where women and young boys are willing to stay put in their assigned social places. The problem occurs when the old patriarchal system is challenged by new forms of social life based on principles that contradict the old ones. Sensei lets himself be guided by his old affective habits and is prevented from making proper strategic adjustments. In other words, the social pole of affect that was nurtured in Sensei growing up survives into the new social regime and lingers on. It is this holdover affect that interferes in Sensei's attempt to form new social relationships.

What new insights can this reading of *Kokoro* can yield for readers today? There are two points I would like to reflect upon before trying to answer this question. One is related to Sōseki's project in writing *Kokoro* in 1914, and the other concerns the reader's affective reaction to *Kokoro*, which not only varies individually, but has also evolved over time. With regard to the former, I would like to call attention to a moral dimension in the productive parallel between Sōseki's projects in *Kokoro* and in *Theory of Literature*. Sōseki in *Theory of Literature* seems to be torn between his enthusiasm, on the one hand, about literature's laudable ability to elicit emotions across time and space (to which he devotes a considerable number of pages), and his fear, on the other hand, that emotions might get out of control. As a "bad" example of how the rhetorical mechanism behind fictional writing can affectively and effectively "delude" the reader, Sōseki calls attention to our propensity to empathize with Rochester and Jane in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) at the expense of Rochester's lawful wife, Bertha, and even

rejoice at the latter's death, which Sōseki problematizes as "morally questionable."[35] In light of Sōseki's skepticism toward Westerners' general tendency to applaud the power of romantic love at the expense of morals, we can detect Sōseki's uneasiness about the representation of romantic love in fiction and its impact on the reader.[36]

By having Sensei severely judge himself for lying and betraying K, because of the graveness of the consequences, *Kokoro* seems to ask us to admire his integrity in keeping with Meiji morals, confirming Sensei's own statement that "he was born a moral man and raised as one" (124). Even if Sensei has more or less been true to his feelings, he willingly takes the blame, which underscores Sensei's courage—courage because it is, strictly speaking, a choice and not a necessity. On one level, then, we can see Sōseki' project as a personal and critical response to the nineteenth-century tradition of the romantic novel in England represented by *Jane Eyre*, and symbolized by Sensei's famous words, "love is sinful"—a warning to his readers not to give in to the temptation to exonerate Sensei, despite the sympathy his emotional narrative elicits, of which Sōseki is fully aware.

As Sōseki himself has repeatedly reminded us, however, the moral dispositions of the reader change over time, or are just idiosyncratic,[37] which brings me to my second, final point. What has struck the canonical reader of the past as a sign of Sensei's "courage" or moral fiber does not necessarily resonate with all readers. For those readers who feel that there is a mismatch between Sensei's "misdeed" and the guilt that drives him to suicide, *Kokoro* might appear to be old-fashioned, outdated, or frustrating. In fact, there has been a noticeable tendency among contemporary critics to respond to Sensei's guilt as excessive overreaction.[38] Alternatively, some might feel, as I am inclined to do, that Sensei is suffering from a form of "bad conscience," and that his testament represents his search for a cause for his unhappiness by putting together a coherent picture of himself that lives up to his self-identity as a "moral man"—an ultimately narcissistic project executed at the expense of his wife.

What *can* resonate anew with the reader of today, however, is what might be called the rich phenomenology of emotion in *Kokoro*, with its insightful portrayal of the dramatically contingent and the free nature of affect and the malleability of human motivation—an aspect of the novel that has been overshadowed by the "moral" weight of Sensei's confession. It is my contention that there is much we can learn from the detailed cartography of *Kokoro's* emotional landscape, which demonstrates how Sensei, in his affective encounter with others, has allowed himself to become unhinged, carried away, and transported outside his "usual" self. Through its rich imagery of sensory experiences,[39] Sensei exposes his past self, quite mercilessly, at his most vulnerable and impressionable moments, as if to remind us that we are "given over from the start to the world of others, bearing their imprint, formed within the crucible of social life," to borrow Judith Butler's words.[40] *Kokoro* may, in fact, give us an opportunity to rethink the terms of ethical relationality, for which the first step might be to acknowledge our own limited self-knowledge, so that we can learn to be more patient with and generous

toward others. We can perhaps envisage an ethics based on "our shared, and invariable partial blindness about ourselves" as Butler suggests—an ethics that does not demand that we remain selfsame at every moment of our life and is not always intent on passing judgment.[41]

As we all know, however, this is not the path Sensei chooses to take. He condemns his uncle, as well as himself, for failing as a "moral person." The most conservative, canonical critics have identified themselves fully and exclusively with Sensei, and tried to draw a holistic moral lesson from *Kokoro* based on this identification. This line of ethics, with its narrowly defined, moral subject as a platform, was well suited for the nationalist ethos of the postwar era, and has been disseminated through the inclusion of excerpts from *Kokoro* in high-school textbooks with guiding questions.[42]

Last but not least, I believe we can most profitably appreciate *Kokoro*'s resonance when considered from the perspective of affect that circulates in our world at large today. Understanding better the "affect-driven logic of could-have" (the logic behind the "preemptive attack") that easily ignites under occasion-dependent affects, provides us with invaluable insights into how what initially appears as a series of randomly irrational actions can gather momentum and eventually pool into tragic decisions with grave consequences.[43] Also, by pointing to the socio-cultural dimensions of affect in general (contagious affect or the "structure of feeling"), *Kokoro* gives us an opportunity to rethink the boundaries of the individual without necessarily voiding agency. These insights are especially important when the world is increasingly caught in a downward spiral of fear and terror, immersing us in a sea of negative affect amplified by the social media. By enriching our understanding of how humans interact with the social world they inhabit, *Kokoro* can be read not as a moralizing text as many past readers of the novel would have it, but one that warns us against our propensity to interpret and judge by resorting to a simple, reductive causal logic.

Notes

1.
Natsume Sōseki, *The Miner*, trans. Jay Rubin (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), 16.

2.
The definition of affect and emotion varies depending on the discipline and the critic. My use of affect, emotion, and structure of feeling are inspired by scholar of art and comparative literature Jonathan Flatley's "Glossary: Affect, Emotion, Mood (*Stimmung*), Structure of Feeling," in *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 12-27. The neuroscientist Antonio Damasio does not distinguish between affect and emotion, but what he refers to as "feeling emotion" and "feeling made conscious" seems to correspond roughly to Flatley's "affect" and "emotion" respectively. See *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (London: Vintage Books, 2000). *Jōcho*, the term that Sōseki uses in *Theory of Literature* is wider in its connotation, encompassing affect, emotion, and mood. See *Bungakuron jō*, *Sōseki zenshū* (Theory of Literature, Part One, The Complete Works of Sōseki), vol. 14 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995), 27. All quotes from Sōseki are taken from *Sōseki zenshū* (hereafter *SZ*), unless otherwise stated.

3.
In *Theory of Literature,* Sōseki discusses the role of affect/emotions (*jōcho*) in literature by referring to "literature" as a "device" that elicits

a certain affective reaction in the reader by simulating in narrative form a particular life situation. Sōseki translates his theory of reading into the "F + f" formula, arguing that an impression or a perception of an object or phenomenon, F, in literature evokes a certain affect, f, in the reader. In Sōseki's scheme, affect and its "after-life" ("F+f" and "f+F") encompass the following "three wavelike dynamic sites of continuity," to borrow Thomas Lamarre's paraphrase ("Expanded Empiricism: Natsume Sōseki with William James," *Japan Forum* 20.1 [2008]: 63): F and f in the "instant"; F and f in a stage in the "individual's life"; and F and f in a stage in "social evolution." In the first and second instances, affects are individual based, and can be restricted to a particular occasion, whereas the third is an attitudinal disposition, which has become part of the social F, not unlike the "structure of feeling" originally coined by Raymond Williams (*Marxism and Literature* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977], 132–33). See also Flatley's insightful account of "structure of feeling" (24-27). Sōseki only uses this three-stage scheme for "F," but I have included "f "here because I believe there is a convergence between the two over time.

4.
The *ie* system in the Meiji period is the patriarchal household system codified under law in which all marriages in an extended family were arranged and subject to approval by the patriarch.

5.
Caroline Levine has an insightful discussion of colliding social forms in her *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, and Network* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

6.
As Park Yuha points out in her book *Nashonaru aidentitī to jendā* (National Identity and Gender)(Tokyo: Kurein, 2007), *Kokoro* encourages a moralistic, or even nationalistic reading for those readers whose immediate impulse is to equate Sensei with Sōseki (the reason why Park considers it a "dangerous text"), a fact that should be taken seriously. To counteract such a reading, the Sōseki scholars Komori Yōichi and Ishihara Chiaki famously tried to relativize Sensei's voice by engaging it in dialogue with the I-narrator's voice in other parts of the novel, generating a lively debate in the 1980s. Here, I take a different tack, by relativizing Sensei's voice in the testament itself. See Atsuko Sakaki, "The Debates on *Kokoro*," in *Recontextualizing Texts: Narrative Performance in Modern Japanese Fiction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999) and J. Keith Vincent, "Sensei's Bloody Legacy," in *Two-Timing Modernity: Homosocial Narratives in Modern Japanese Fiction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2012).

7.
Nakamura Miharu, "Sōseki tekusuto to hitei," *Bungaku*, vol. 1 (2000): 2. Also, see Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 41, to which I will return later.

8.
Sōseki uses an example of a pregnant woman in labor, who begs her husband to kill her to stop the excruciating pain, but who can never remember the pain "correctly" after the birth of a child. See *Bungakuron jō*, *SZ*, vol. 14, 171.

9.
Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005). Paranoia and envy are what Antonio Damasio calls "secondary or social" affects in contrast to "primary or universal" affects, and are more sophisticated forms of affects that have cognitive and social components in them (thus, "emotions" in his terminology). See *The Feeling of What Happens*, 5.

10.
Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 14.

11.
All translations are taken from *Kokoro*, translated by Meredith McKinney (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), unless otherwise noted.

12.
In *To the Spring Equinox*, too, monetary concern, as well as concern for family lineage are important factors in Sunaga's mother's recommendation that Sunaga marry his cousin Chiyoko.

13.
Kokoro, trans. Edwin McClellan (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1978), 137. I prefer McClellan's "pulling a sour face" to McKinney's "looking unsatisfied" (132) for *iyana kao o suru* (*Kokoro*, *SZ*, vol. 9, 168). Ishihara Chiaki also comments on this difference between Sensei's father (*chōnan*) and his uncle (*jinan*) as a "brutal difference" that becomes a "seed for drama." *Sōseki no kigōgaku* (Sōseki's Semiotics) (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1999), 82.

14.
It demonstrates Sōseki's insight into the complex feedback mechanism of affects, and their dynamic "after-life"—how some of them linger on and are resurrected later, or coalesce into something else when met by an appropriate F or an other f (See "f no henka," in *Bungakuron, jō*, *SZ,* vol. 14, 142).

15.
Shikashi watashi ni wa mō kogi to iu sappari shinai katamari ga kobiritsuite imashita (my translation) (*Kokoro, SZ,* vol. 9, 197-98).

16.
Sensei acknowledges in retrospect that jealousy was very much at work in the presence of K, and was a "necessary part of love," while his "jealous impulses" as well as "fierce passion of love" "slowly faded" after marriage (189).

17.
Ishihara, *Sōseki no kigōgaku*, 183.

18.
Onna ni kanshite tachiitta hanashi nado surumono wa imasen deshita (no one discussed women in depth) (*Kokoro*, *SZ,* vol. 9, 226).
19.
Addressed as "you" immersed in "the relative freedom of your present age" (178), the young narrator of *Kokoro* apparently does not share this "structure of feeling." Also K was freer presumably because of his "constitutional insensitivity," making him immune to the thoughts of others and conventions (177), as Sensei describes him.
20.
See *Higan sugi made*, *SZ,* vol. 7, 43, 45, and 47.
21.
J. Hillis Miller, *Speech Acts in Literature* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2002), 18.
22.
Miller does not use the term "affect" but what he refers to as the disquieting, "autonomous power of language" must certainly have to do with the unpredictable ways in which language invokes affect. J. Hillis Miller, *Literature as Conduct: Speech Acts in Henry James* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 172.
23.
Ibid., 199.
24.
If the discovery of the modern ideal of romantic love entails a certain form of "subjectification," as Michel Foucault suggests, Sensei's passive affective state can perhaps be read in terms of his anxiety about taking on such a full heterosexual commitment, as well as his desire to dwell within the male homosocial continuum.
25.
Paraphrased by Miller, "iterability" as conceived by Derrida refers to the word's capacity to be used in different contexts and generate new meanings, bringing out the performative force in language. Miller, *Speech Acts*, 99.
26.
The Japanese literary scholar Satō Izumi has an insightful discussion on how these terms, "fool" and "resolve," come to exemplify an inherent limit in verbal communication. "Shigen no hango: *Kokoro* ni tsuite" (Irony at Its Origin: The Case of *Kokoro*), in *Sōseki kenkyū* (Sōseki Studies), vol. 6 (1996): 112-29.
27.
George Ainslie, "Procrastination," in *The Thief of Time: Philosophical Essays on Procrastination*, eds. Chrisoula Andreou and Mark D. White (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 11-13.
28.
Nobuhara Yukihiro and Ōta Hiroshi, eds., *Shin kokoro no tetsugaku III: jōdō hen* (New Philosophy of Mind: Affect) (Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 2014).
29.
Other related features of affect worthy of attention are its tendency to override intellectual judgment (your fear for flying does not easily disappear even if you know it is safe); its tendency to provide a sense of urgency and combine easily with a motivation. See Nobuhara and Ōta, eds., *Shin kokoro no tetsugaku III*, 2014.
30.
Karatani Kōjin draws on Hegel's notion of desire. See "Sōseki no tayōsei: *Kokoro* o megutte" (Sōseki's Diversity: On *Kokoro*), in *Natsume Sōseki:* Kokoro *o dō yomuka* (Natsume Sōseki: How to Read *Kokoro*), ed. Ishihara Chiaki (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2014), 87.
31.
Karatani, "Sōseki no tayōsei," 87. My translation.
32.
See Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens* and Anreou and White, eds., *The Thief of Time*.
33.
As Damasio writes: "We are always hopelessly late for consciousness and because we all suffer from the same tardiness no one notices it" (*The Feeling of What Happens*, 129).
34.
Ibid., 17. According to Damasio, core-consciousness, the simplest kind, provides the organism with a "sense of self about one moment (now) and about one place (here)," while extended consciousness, the complex kind, consisting of many levels and grades, provides a "elaborate sense of self." The scope of the former encompasses only the "here and now," whereas the latter goes beyond it, both "backward and forward," and evolves across a lifetime in each individual.
35.
Sōseki, *Bungakuron jō*, *SZ*, vol. 14, 184.
36.
Ibid., 109.
37.
Ibid., 111.
38.
As Ishihara Chiaki points out, various critics from Komiya Toyotaka, Ōoka Shōhei, and to Karatani Kōjin have commented on the excessiveness of Sensei's guilty feelings in the past. Ishihara,"*Kokoro* wa dō yomarete kitaka" (How Has *Kokoro* Been Read?), in *Natsume Sōseki:* Kokoro *o dō yomuka* (Natsume Sōseki: How to Read *Kokoro*, 2014), 6. Ishihara characterizes Komiya's skepticism as remarkably prescient. See also Itō Seikō and Okuizumi Hikaru, "Bungei mandan: Natsume Sōseki *Kokoro* o yomu" (Literary Chit-Chat: Reading Natsume Sōseki's *Kokoro*), 11-12; Yamazaki Masakazu, "Sabishii ningen" (Lonely Being), 134; and Yoshimoto Takaaki, "*Kokoro*," 97 (all in the same volume).
39.
Sensei's reactions are often couched in sensory terms: When he was "at a standstill," unable to free himself from his doubt about Okusan's intention, he felt as if his "limbs [were] paralyzed"

(190); when he hears K's confession, he "froze, as if his words were a magic wand that turned me instantly to stone," with his "mouth [failing] to so much as twitch in an effort to respond" (192); On discovering K's death, his "gaze froze," with his "eyeballs [staring] in their sockets as if made of glass," before he starts trembling (217).

40.
Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 21.

41.
Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 41. Butler warns that our propensity to judge and condemn can work against our "self-knowledge," and sketches out a possible, new concept of ethics based on the "divided and incoherent subject-hood" (19, 41).

42.
In fact, moral textbooks such as *Notebook on My Mind and Heart* (Kokoro no nōto, Japan Ministry of Education and Science, 2002) and *Our Morals/ Moral Lessons for You and Me* (Watashitachi no dōtoku, Japan Ministry of Education and Science, 2014) continue to disseminate the image of the always selfsame, morally responsible "Japanese" citizen at school even today. It should be noted however, that there are considerable variations in the ways in which *Kokoro* has been excerpted and used in high-school textbooks, as Ken Ito points out in his insightful essay in this issue, "Reading *Kokoro* in the High-School Textbook."

43.
Affect theorist Brian Massumi elaborates on the problem of the "ungroundedness" of "affective fact" that led to a "preemptive attack" by the Bush administration on Iraq, in "The Future Birth of the Affective Fact," and calls it "the affect-driven logic of the would-have/could have." Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 55.