

# Trauma, Haunting, and Representation: Rereading and the Translation Examination of *Kokoro*

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**Abstract**—The Japanese novel, *Kokoro* (1914), offers a profound insight into early 20th-century Japanese society encompassing history, politics, and literature. Although this novel has been extensively explored in literary and translation studies, the convergence remains underexplored. This study advocates integrating literary criticism with translation practice for a more faithful representation of narratives. Applying trauma/PTSD studies theory, it meticulously analyzes *Kokoro*, particularly examining the English and Chinese renditions of the pivotal term “談判 (danpan; negotiation)”. The methodology involves constructing a trilingual database, incorporating the Japanese source text and seven translations in English and Chinese. By scrutinizing specific passages, the study delves into trauma-related responses and behaviors, revealing their impact on long-lasting changes in personality and relationships. Emphasis is placed on the translation of key terms, preserving cultural and linguistic nuances. This innovative approach advances both literary criticism and translation theory, emphasizing psychological elements for a nuanced portrayal of characters’ states of mind. The study underscores the significance of trauma narratives in comprehending personal and historical traumas, asserting that translators of trauma literature must blend theoretical knowledge with social responsibility. They serve as “secondary witnesses,” entrusted with accurately transmitting traumatic stories between languages, fostering empathy, and preventing the repetition of tragedies in history. This approach provides an innovative interpretation of *Kokoro* and its translations, bridging the realms of literary criticism and translation studies.

**Index Terms**—*Kokoro*, translation studies, trauma/PTSD studies, literary criticism, translation criticism

## I. INTRODUCTION

Trauma theory stands as a powerful tool for unraveling the intricate narratives woven into literature. By examining the psychological aftermath of trauma, it can unravel complex character motivations and interpersonal dynamics. *Kokoro*, a classic of Japanese literature, delves into profound themes of identity, guilt, and unresolved trauma, offering a poignant portrayal of the protagonist’s inner struggles. However, it is noteworthy that, to date, there has been a surprising paucity of scholarship applying trauma theory to this literary masterpiece. Similarly, the field of translation studies has not adequately addressed the nuanced challenges in accurately representing trauma and haunting in this traumatic narrative to a broader audience.

This study thus presents a pioneering endeavor in the analysis of *Kokoro* through the lens of trauma theory. By examining the protagonist’s experiences, this paper aims to unveil the deeply embedded traumas that shape his psyche, shedding new light on the novel’s profound emotional landscape. This paper employs trauma/PTSD theory as a guideline for literary criticism to interpret and analyze key scenes and character relationships in *Kokoro*. Building upon this foundation, it takes the term “談判 (danpan; negotiation)” as a focusing point to offer insights into the translation of this vocabulary and related scenes, as well as the translation of traumatic narratives.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The intersection of trauma theory and literature has yielded profound insights into the human experience in the face of extreme adversity. Sigmund Freud’s (1962) foundational work in psychoanalysis laid the groundwork for understanding the intricate ways in which trauma reverberates through an individual’s psyche. Building upon Freud’s work, Judith Herman’s *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) expanded our understanding of trauma, particularly in the context of interpersonal violence and its long-lasting aftereffects.

A crucial aspect of trauma theory is the recognition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a complex psychological response to traumatic events. Defined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (American Psychiatric Association, 2022), PTSD encompasses a range of symptoms, from intrusive memories to

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emotional numbness, that can persist long after the traumatic event has occurred. This diagnostic framework provides a perspective through which we can analyze characters in literature who grapple with the aftermath of trauma.

Dori Laub's concept of "the listener as the witness" (1992, p. 70) introduces a crucial dimension to trauma narratives. It underscores the importance of active, empathetic listening when survivors recount their experiences. In translation studies, this concept becomes particularly pertinent. Translators of trauma literature function as secondary witnesses, tasked not only with faithfully rendering the text in another language but also with preserving the emotional resonance and complex psychodynamics of the original narrative.

In the field of translation studies, discussions on various translations of *Kokoro* in different languages abound. Most of these discussions are centered around classic translation theories, such as functionalism, domestication and foreignization, dynamic equivalence, or they delve into inherent distinctions between Japanese and target languages to explore the translation of specific vocabulary. The existing research mostly confines itself to the linguistic dimension, with scant integration of literary criticism and translation studies. George Steiner, a proponent of the hermeneutic approach, pointed out in *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (1975) that translation is fundamentally an act of interpretation and reading and interpretation endows language with life, allowing words to traverse time and space in dissemination.

Sōseki's *Kokoro* provides a poignant case study for applying trauma theory to literature. The protagonist's journey, shaped by profound loss, offers a canvas for examining the coping mechanisms and the intricacies of post-traumatic relationships. Through this narrative, readers/translators witness trauma responses echoing PTSD criteria. This paper examines the trauma theory and elucidates how individuals adapt to overwhelming experiences and it prompts reflection on resilience, memory complexities, and coping strategies. This analysis seeks to bridge trauma theory, literature, and translation studies, illuminating the profound impact of trauma and the pivotal role of translators in preserving these narratives by using trauma theory as an interpretative framework for appreciating and examining its English and Chinese translations.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The approach taken in this research involves the creation of an extensive trilingual database comprising over 3,000 entries, encompassing the Japanese source text and seven English and Chinese renditions. The English versions represent the published translations, one by Edwin McClellan (1957) and the other by Meredith McKinney (2017). There are a total of 21 different Chinese translations. Of these, this paper has chosen five to examine: Shaohua Lin (2013), Jiarong Zhu (2013), Dayong Zhou (1983), Jinghua Tan (2017), and Jianxiong Xu (2017)<sup>1</sup>. Only translations considered problematic will be included in following analysis.

Drawing from the foundational works of Freud (1962) and Herman (1992), this analysis employs a trauma-informed approach to dissect the psychological intricacies of the characters in *Kokoro*. Central to this methodology is the identification of key trauma responses exhibited by the protagonist. These include foundational trauma, intrusive memories, hypervigilance, and psychological defense mechanisms, all of which align with the diagnostic criteria of PTSD (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).

The methodology involves a meticulous examination of specific passages and scenes in *Kokoro* where trauma-related responses and behaviors are manifest. This close reading allows for a nuanced exploration of the protagonist's psychodynamics, as well as the interactions with other characters, shedding light on the ways in which trauma permeates and shapes relationships.

Given the multilingual nature of this study, special attention is dedicated to the translation of key terms related to trauma and its manifestations. The nuances of trauma responses, often deeply embedded in cultural and linguistic contexts, necessitate a judicious selection of words and phrases in the target language. Translation strategies and semantic equivalences will be scrutinized to ensure fidelity to the original text while accounting for the idiosyncrasies of the target language. Incorporating multiple translations of *Kokoro* into English and Chinese, this study conducts a comparative analysis to assess how different translators navigate the intricacies of trauma representation. By juxtaposing various renditions, we aim to discern divergences in the portrayal of trauma-related themes and their impact on the readers' engagement with the text.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. The Selection of Texts

<sup>1</sup> There are a total of 21 different Chinese translators who have translated this novel. Xuechang Dong (1982, 2014, 2018), Dayong Zhou (1983), Yanhui Zhou (1983, 2019), Changyong Yu (1999), Shaohua Lin (2000, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2015, and 2016), Yuanyu Chen (2001, 2010), Jiarong Zhu (2013, 2019, 2020), Yueting Li (2015), Wanyu Chen and Menghong Li (2015), Rongsheng Yu (2015, 2019), Qin Du (2015), Jinghua Tan (2017), Ling Yue (2017), Jianxiong Xu (2017), Jilun Wu (2017, 2018), Nian Xi (2018), Jiaobi Lin (2018), Yueying He (2018), Chen Lu (2020), Yuesheng Huang (2021), Haishu Jin (2021). Some of these translations have been published multiple times by multiple publishers. For example, Shaohua Lin's translation has been published seven times by three different publishers. Due to the scope of this study, I will choose five translations as examples. Also, since there is no exact data regarding the number of copies sold, my decision is based on four considerations: the number of reviews, the number of serious discussions, the number of libraries that own the physical copies of the translation, and academic citation.

*Kokoro* consists of two major parts, both narrated in the first person. The first part recounts from the perspective of Watakushi (私; meaning “I” in Japanese): during my university days in Tokyo, I fortuitously encountered Sensei (先生; meaning “teacher” in Japanese) who hailed from a prosperous background, possessed extensive knowledge, and harbored a pessimistic outlook on humanity and the world. We formed an enduring friendship. Later, when I returned to my hometown to care for my critically ill father, I received a final letter from Sensei. Upon reading it, I hastily journeyed to Tokyo to meet him. The second part comprises this extensive letter from Sensei, detailing his life experiences. This paper primarily focuses on the second part, endeavoring to elucidate the relationship between Sensei’s adolescence and early adulthood: what precipitated the shift in Sensei’s emotional state, what constitutes his foundational trauma, which elements within this foundational trauma continue to stimulate and influence him to the extent of giving rise to secondary psychological trauma, consequently leading to behaviors that harm both himself and others.

### B. Sensei’s Foundational Trauma

Foundational trauma refers to the physiologically or psychologically unbearable suffering experienced by an individual, which entails events where one is unable to process their emotions (Lifton, 1996, p. 170). Herman posits that a person’s sense of safety and basic trust are acquired through their relationship with their first caregiver (1992, p. 51). The occurrence of a traumatic event shatters people’s existing values of the world and trust. If not properly processed and mourned, the memory of this experience does not integrate into normal human memory, rendering it inaccessible for meaningful retrieval. This outcome is often devastating and typically accompanies severe repercussions, affecting an individual’s lifetime (Lifton, 1996, p. 52). Traumatized individuals are likely to be triggered by certain elements of the event, leading to a series of self-harming or harming others’ behaviors (van der Kolk & van der Hart, 1995, p. 168).

At around fifteen or sixteen years old, Sensei experienced the successive deaths of his parents, who served as his primary caregivers. The sudden demise of his parents constitutes his foundational trauma, though he dedicates very few words to recounting this event. His behavior can be understood as an inability to adequately express his emotions and mourn his losses due to the overwhelming and abrupt nature of the traumatic experience (Lifton, 1996, p. 170). Yet, it is precisely those incidents left unspoken that encapsulate the core of his trauma (Stahl, 2018, p. 21). Freud points out that individuals who lose the capacity for mourning develop a series of sequelae, including psychological defense mechanisms such as “incorporation, substitution, and revenge” (1962, p. 248). These phenomena typically manifest in a disorderly, non-uniform manner in the post-trauma stage. Incapable of processing the trauma properly, Sensei projects his love for his parents onto his uncle, viewing the uncle as a substitute for his father and the uncle’s family as his new one. This mode of grieving is not necessarily intentional and, of course, it cannot heal the damage to the individual’s psychological wound (Schwab, 2010, p. 3). Even in adulthood, Sensei remains unaware of his true motives at the time, hence expending considerable effort to express his praises, unconditional trust, and the similarities between his uncle and father. This serves to rationalize his excessive attachment to the new father and family, as in the statement, “how could I have doubted my uncle’s integrity, then, when my father had praised him so highly and trusted him so thoroughly?” (McKinney, 2010, p. 128). However, this undoubtedly renders his uncle’s betrayal in the subsequent narrative all the more brutal and heart-wrenching.

### C. The 談判 (Danpan; Negotiation) With His Uncle — The Secondary Trauma

The term “談判 (danpan; negotiation)” appears twice in the novel, totaling three occurrences. It is used to describe conflicts between the protagonist and his uncle, as well as between the protagonist and K.

#### Scene 1

私はとうとう叔父と 1.談判を開きました。2.談判というのは少し不穏当かも知れませんが、話の成行からいうと、そんな言葉で形容するより外に途のないところへ、自然の調子が落ちて来たのです。叔父はどこまでも私を子供扱いにしようとしています。私はまた始めから猜疑の眼で叔父に対しています。穏やかに解決のつくはずはなかったのです。

遺憾ながら私は今その 3.談判の顛末を詳しくここに書く事のできないほど先を急いでいます。(Sōseki, 1952, p. 189)

At last, I had 1. a conference with him. To say that “I had 2. a conference” may sound odd, but that is about the only way I can describe our talk. Unfortunately, I am in too much of a hurry to describe the results of the 3. “conference” in detail (McClellan, 1957, p. 141).

Prior to this confrontation, the protagonist devoted a significant portion of his narrative expressing his suspicion regarding his uncle’s misappropriation of his assets. However, during the crucial “negotiation” scene, he only briefly touched upon the events that unfolded in Scene 1. Stahl contends that “the heart of Sensei’s foundational trauma surely lies encrypted in the resounding silence enshrouding this unarticulated ‘negotiation’” (2020, p. 26). From a psychoanalytic perspective, trauma survivors often struggle to process and assimilate incoherent, fragmented traumatic memories into coherent, conscious narrative language (Herman, 1992, p. 183). Thus, in survivors’ self-narratives or literary works, certain parts are typically abnormally absent. The protagonist, having lost his parents in childhood, was once again abandoned by a guardian figure (namely, his uncle). In trauma theory, the death, betrayal, or separation of loved ones or partners can be understood as forms of abandonment (Stahl, 2018, p. 18). This marks the second

traumatic event in his life, where he once again lost his new parents and new family. To compound matters, his uncle deceitfully acquired and stole the inheritance left to him by his parents. Readers can envision how, in this “negotiation,” his uncle, leveraging his relationship with other relatives, age, life experience, and the trust the protagonist had in him, mercilessly struck the young, innocent, and vulnerable protagonist with malicious and cruel tactics and words. During his formative years, when his value system was not yet fixed, the consecutive abandonment by his guardian figures and the depth of harm from these two incidents inflicted an irreparable trauma on Sensei. This rendered him incapable of processing normally (for example, expressing in language, making sense out of) this segment of memory, as it exists outside the realm of normal memory systems. Thus, even decades later, the protagonist remains unwilling and unable to recount this event.

The word “negotiation (談判; danpan)” in Japanese always refers to “bargaining, making demands.” It implies equal communication and is often used in business settings. This “negotiation” has profound psychological significance to Sensei and marks the momentous transformation of his “pre-trauma self” into his “traumatized/post-traumatic self.” In this case, McKinney and the Chinese translators represent this world correctly. McClellan’s translation, “conference,” is acceptable as well. However, as will be shown, in the subsequent scene, some translations become problematic.

#### D. *The Replacement Family in Sensei’s Post-Traumatic Era*

After the loss of his biological parents, the protagonist suffered a cruel betrayal by his surrogate father (his uncle) and surrogate family. Moreover, he was deprived of a significant portion of his inheritance by the person he trusted most. This prompted him to bid farewell to his hometown and relocate to Tokyo for education and livelihood. Upon moving into Okusan’s (奥さん; meaning “landlady” in Japanese) residence, he frequently experienced uncontrollable fits of suspicion, rendering him unable to relax due to heightened vigilance. These successive blows led to a transformation in his character. His post-traumatic era was marked by detachment, depression, passivity, anxiety, restlessness, and suspicion, all of which unmistakably reflect classic symptoms of PTSD. The emotional and characterological shifts indicate that his capacity to navigate intimate relationships was severely compromised. Victims also possess social attributes, and the intense but conflicted need for normal social interaction, love, and trust often imbues the survivor’s post-traumatic period with variability (Herman, 1992, p. 56).

As outlined above, after the demise of his biological parents, Sensei failed to properly process his emotions. Unconsciously, he projected his emotions onto his uncle, regarding him as a substitute for his parents. Even after the conflict with his uncle, he continued to employ the same coping mechanism – he could not express his anger towards his uncle, nor could he reflect on and contemplate his experiences with him. Consequently, he persisted in seeking new surrogates as a means of processing his trauma. Unlike others, he did not opt for solitary living when his financial situation permitted; instead, he chose to reside in a household devoid of males, sharing a roof with the landlady and her daughter, Ojōsan (お嬢さん; meaning “young lady” in Japanese). Concurrently, he reconnected with his childhood friend, K. Disregarding the wishes of both K and the landlady, the protagonist unilaterally insisted on bringing K to live with them, ostensibly to assist his friend. Therefore, Sensei successfully formed a new surrogate family. This action falls under behavioral reenactment, wherein certain details of the traumatic event are involuntarily and unconsciously replayed. This reenactment is not necessarily an exact replication of the original event (Horowitz, 2001, p. 22). In this new family, due to precedence and economic factors, Sensei assumed the most authoritative male role, much like the position once held by his uncle. His feelings towards his uncle are complex, a mix of affection and resentment. The unconscious emulation of his uncle’s identity, and the desire to align with his will, constitutes an instance of incorporation. Fuss, in *Identification Papers* (2010), describes incorporation as a psychological defense mechanism wherein the victim “internalizes the lost person, becomes that person, including the roles, characteristics, and habits they played in the victim’s perception, and so on” (p. 2). At this point, the victim believes they need not grieve, as the lost person continues to exist alongside them in this manner, never truly departed (Stahl, 2018, p. 21).

#### E. *The Relationship Between Sensei and K Before the 談判 (Danpan; Negotiation)*

The protagonist’s emotions towards K are notably intricate. Their relationship is significantly influenced by the traumatic events inflicted upon the protagonist by his uncle (Stahl, 2021, p. 27). However, this paper contends that the initial intention behind the close bond between the protagonist and K was viewing K as another self, or “the second self”. Both hailing from the same hometown, they both experienced affluent childhoods. K’s biological mother also passed away in his early years, after which he was adopted by foster parents. Upon arriving in Tokyo, K was completely abandoned by both his adoptive and biological fathers, forced to wander alone without any financial foundation. These characteristics undeniably bear a striking resemblance to Sensei’s own experiences, leading him to regard K as an extension of himself. This resulted in the protagonist bestowing upon K a level of attention and compassion surpassing that of ordinary friendships.

Simultaneously, the protagonist subconsciously cast K in the role of his uncle. Throughout the narrative, the protagonist repeatedly expresses respect and admiration for K. He marvels at K’s contemplations and insights into philosophical matters, deeming K more handsome, intelligent, and capable (Sōseki, 1952, p. 249). His admiration for K mirrors the sentiments he harbored for his uncle before the negotiation. Therefore, even before the protagonist vaguely sensed the relationship between K and the landlady’s daughter, his feelings towards K were already intricately woven.

#### F. The 談判 (Danpan; Negotiation) With K

One day, K suddenly sought out Sensei and confided in him about his feelings for Ojōsan. In stark contrast to the brief description of the negotiation with his uncle, Sensei now vividly portrays his emotions, “his heart feels as if it is being twisted, his body instantly transforms into a terrified, anguished stone, to the point where he can barely breathe” (Sōseki, 1952, p. 268). Based on trauma theory, the protagonist’s intense reaction stems from this conversation triggering the foundational trauma experience stored outside of his normal memory system. Similar to the previous negotiation, he believes that what rightfully belongs to him, the “property” left by his parents, Ojōsan in this situation, is about to be heartlessly and unlawfully taken away by another man, who surpasses him in various aspects. In this conversation, Sensei seems almost paralyzed by shock and is unable to articulate any thoughts. However, in the days that follow, he is consumed by an almost frenzied desire to talk to K, to regain control, and to rewrite the failed outcome of their exchange from a few days prior. Scene 2 depicts his attempt to intercept K on the street one day, to engage with him.

##### Scene 2

ある日私は突然往来でKに 2.肉薄しました。(Sōseki, 1952, p. 277)

One day, as we were walking home, I suddenly 2. asked him. (McClellan, 1957, p. 211)

有一天, 我突然在大路上和 K 直截了当地 2.开谈了。(Zhou, 1988, p. 219)

有一天, 我在路上突然 2.问了 K 几个问题。(Zhu, 2013, p. 143)

有一天,我在大街上突然对 K 2.发出了追问。(Xu, 2017, p. 243)

Sensei’s excessive zeal for the conversation reveals that he has entered a compulsive psychological state, rendering him unable to control his actions. Subconsciously, he is eager to engage in behavioral reenactment and intends to avenge. Revenge is also a form of psychological defense mechanism, where in the survivor’s subconscious, there is a desire to rewrite the ending through retaliation, in order to “escape the fear, shame, and pain of that moment” (Herman, 1992, p. 189).

Vaguely, Sensei sensed that K had transformed into an indelible, troublesome demon (Sōseki, 1952, p. 272). The protagonist even experienced auditory hallucinations, with a “devilish voice urging him to make a decision” regarding the relationship among K, Ojōsan, and himself (Sōseki, 1952, pp. 266, 291); he had also, on nights, involuntarily called out to K. These uncontrollable manifestations are symptomatic of dissociation and can also be understood as his current mood and state awakening his intrusive memory experience. Because traumatic memories are stored outside of normal memory systems, they are not consciously recalled or remembered, but are unconsciously triggered by certain details in traumatic events, such as images, thoughts, feelings, behaviors, sounds, or smells, and may undergo fragmentary experiences like flashbacks, nightmares, and auditory hallucinations, appearing uncontrollably without subjective control, hence, this memory experience is referred to as intrusive memory (Herman, 1992, pp. 35-47).

During the experience of intrusive memory, some survivors may enter an abnormal mental and psychological state – an altered state of consciousness, leading to actions that are beyond subjective control.

After being tormented for several days, he finally initiated a frontal confrontation with K in Scene 2. The text describes K as a devil on several occasions, a psychological association traceable back to the uncle. Just as Sensei’s attitude towards the uncle is love-hate, at this point, his feelings towards K have evolved from a simple positive sentiment to a complex mix. According to trauma/PTSD theory, the process of revenge may involve a phenomenon of role reversal, implying that a former victim may transform into a victimizer (Stahl, 2018, p. 24). In this scenario, Sensei has become his uncle, becoming the victimizer; K, on the other hand, has transformed back into the pre-traumatized naive and helpless young man that Sensei once was. At this moment, the protagonist is determined to avenge past humiliations and protect what he deems as “his property,” in this case, Ojōsan.

Example 2, “肉薄 (nikuhaku),” is a verb meaning “press somebody hard/close,” “come close in on (the enemy),” “tread close on somebody’s heels” and is usually used in reference to an adversary or competitor. This verb accurately demonstrates Sensei’s aggressiveness at the time, coupled with an abnormal mental state bordering on the compulsive psychological state of behavioral reenactment. He views K as his enemy, intending to retaliate and attack him. Scene 2 also foreshadows the pivotal conversation in Ueno Park between the two, where the protagonist, in a state of behavioral alteration, undergoes a complete transformation into a ruthless perpetrator. McClellan, Zhu Jiarong, and Xu Jianxiong’s translations, as well as Zhou Dayong’s “initiated the conversation,” implicitly suggest “an equal exchange of ideas”. However, their translations fail to convey the aggressive and attacking nature with which the protagonist regards K as an enemy. Therefore, all four translated versions do not accurately convey the protagonist’s psychological state as depicted in the original text. McKinney’s “suddenly took the offensive” and Lin Shaohua and Tan Jinghua’s translation, “engaged in close combat,” aptly capture the protagonist’s aggressiveness at that moment.

In Scene 2, Sensei did not engage in a deep conversation with K. Instead, he altered his approach, opting to remain passive and await K’s initiative. He was determined to be mentally and verbally prepared, anticipating the forthcoming conversation between them. Finally, on a certain day, K took the initiative to find the protagonist in the library while he was reading. To avoid disturbing others, K leaned close to the protagonist and spoke in a hushed tone. The protagonist understood that this was a perfectly normal gesture, yet he still had a “strange sensation” (Sōseki, 1952, p. 279). This was because he had a premonition of the impending negotiation that was about to take place.

## Scene 3

何だか 3.Kの胸に一物があって、4.談判でもしに來られたように思われて仕方がないのですました。(Sōseki, 1952, p. 279)

I was disturbed by the idea that K had come to 3, 4. discuss something serious with me. (McClellan, 1957, p. 212)

The conviction seized me that 3. he had something up his sleeve and had come to 4. discuss things with me. (McKinney, 2010, p. 200)

不知何故，似乎觉得 3.K 胸中有了件什么事要跟我 4. 谈判，使我放心不下。(Zhou, 1983, p. 220)

不知怎么搞的，我总觉得 3. K 一定有心事，是专门来跟我 4. 摊牌的。(Zhu, 2013, p. 144)

我总觉得 K 是 3. 心怀叵测，是来 4. 找我谈判的。(Tan, 2017, p. 185)

不知怎么的，我总觉得 K 3. 心有所念，是特地来找我 4. 谈判的。(Xu, 2017, p. 245)

In Scene 2, as the protagonist initiated the attack, there emerged a phenomenon of role reversal, wherein he transformed from a victim to a victimizer. However, the library scene at this juncture unfolds slightly differently. Over the course of several days between Scenes 2 and 3, the protagonist awaited K's initiative for conversation, resulting in a relatively calm mental state. It was not until K found him in the library and invited him for a walk that he felt "something unusual" (Sōseki, 1952, p. 279). This was because K's actions triggered Sensei's traumatic memory, pushing him into a critical state of behavioral alteration. At this juncture, the protagonist was mentally fortified, resolute in his intent to rewrite the outcome of the traumatic negotiation and reclaim his territory. He now saw K as a surrogate for his uncle. The anticipation of the impending revenge filled him with a sense of peculiarity.

In Example 3, the phrase, "胸に一物があって(mune ni ichimotsu ga atte)" implies "though not explicitly stated, he/she harbors resentment/plans in their heart," generally used in negative contexts. With the preceding "何だか(somehow)", it can be understood that, due to the protagonist subconsciously viewing K as his uncle, as his enemy, in his eyes, K is harboring ill intentions. Tan's "心怀叵测(xin huai po ce)" makes the implicit meaning explicit, accurately reproducing the original connotation. McKinney's "he had something up his sleeve" is also accurate. Expressions like McClellan's "K had come to discuss something serious with me," Zhou Dayong's, Zhu Jiarong's, and Xu Jianxiong's "K 心里有事(xin li you shi)", meaning "K has something in his mind," greatly weaken the tone of the term, failing to convey Sensei's desire for revenge and the tense atmosphere of his impending transformation into an attacker, nor did it lay the groundwork for the crucial conversation between the two in Ueno Park which Sensei viciously attacks K with words.

In Example 4, the term "谈判(danpan; negotiation)" appears once again. As described earlier, the fact that the young Sensei could not verbalize the scene and his feelings at the time precisely affirms that the "negotiation" with his uncle is the core of his primary trauma. Here, he uses the same vocabulary to describe the conflict about to happen with K, confirming that he has entered a state of uncontrollable behavioral reenactment. In Scene 3, due to his fragile yet excessively excited abnormal mental state, he exhibits symptoms of frequent identity confusion. Firstly, he regards K as a malevolent uncle, categorizing himself as a helpless victim. What follows in Ueno Park is a behavioral reenactment that encompasses revenge, substitution, and identity confusion. At this point, Sensei becomes the uncle, the victimizer, leveraging his understanding of K, hitting him mercilessly with words. Through the negotiation with K, the protagonist formally transfers the trauma to K, directly leading to K's suicide. In summary, Sōseki uses the term, "negotiation," to link the Sensei's primary trauma from his youth with secondary trauma (for example, the relationship between Sensei and K), providing readers with a hint, guiding them to discover and interpret the process and causal relationship of Sensei's transformation from the victim to the victimizer. Therefore, the translation of this term should remain consistent.

McClellan and McKinney's translations lack consistency and precision. In Scene 3, they both translate it as "discuss," which does not convey the meaning of "negotiating to defend one's rights;" Zhu Jiarong's "摊牌(tan pai)" means "to reveal relevant information to the other party," emphasizing "K unilaterally providing information to Sensei, rather than mutual communication." If the translators had knowledge of trauma/PTSD theory and applied it to interpreting the original text, they might have noticed the inherent correlation between the two scenes. Therefore, the translations by these three individuals lack precision, severing the linguistic link to the "negotiation" in Scene 1.

Additionally, during the process of translating *Kokoro*, translators should always remind themselves to differentiate between the author and the protagonist. Although the protagonist, Sensei, is enduring the torment of traumatic events and has not clarified the causal relationship between his past and current events, *Kokoro* is a story told from an omniscient perspective. The author intentionally leaves clues in several places, guiding readers to contemplate the character's emotional journey and the impact of traumatic events on individuals. The translations above prevent readers from accessing the hints provided by the author, thus hindering a correct understanding of Sensei's psychological state.

## V. CONCLUSION

Through the analysis above, it can be concluded that, as advocated by scholars like George Steiner and John Felstiner, literary criticism and literary translation are interrelated. Translation is essentially an act of interpretation; it not only

advances and improves literary criticism theory, but also draws insights and inspiration from literary criticism (Schulte, 2012, p. 1). The statement, “what the author pursues is not information, but poetics” (Han, 2019, p. 2), indicates that in literary translation, translators often need to use their own understanding to interpret the texts, so theoretical frameworks are required to support their interpretation and reflection on the work.

This paper takes an innovative approach by interpreting *Kokoro* from the perspective of trauma/PTSD theory, providing a fresh interpretation of this classic Japanese literary work while exploring its English and Chinese translations. This achieves a convergence of literary criticism and translation studies. In contrast to the more common focus on artistic and linguistic aspects such as style and rhetoric in translation literary criticism, this paper places greater emphasis on the importance of key terms and scenes from a psychological perspective. It aims to accurately reproduce the characters’ psychological states and the interrelatedness of events to the greatest extent.

Traumatic narratives enable people to engage with and comprehend personal traumas and historical events. It is a serious literary genre that involves politics, economics, society, and more (Pederson, 2017, p. 97). Freud (1962) and Stahl’s (2018, 2020) research demonstrates that trauma is widespread in serious literature. Therefore, when translating trauma literature, achieving basic linguistic equivalence is far from sufficient. Trauma/PTSD theory can better assist translators in understanding the protagonist’s foundational traumatic event, discerning their behavioral re-enactments, and psychological defense mechanisms, thereby understanding the similarities and correlations between characters and events in detail. With a foundation in this theoretical knowledge, translators of trauma literature should also possess a sense of social responsibility. Building upon Laub’s research on testimonies from Holocaust survivors, the concept of “the listener as the witness” is proposed, suggesting that listeners should be fully engaged and encourage survivors to share their experiences (1992, p. 71). In traumatic narratives, reading serves as another form of witnessing (Johnston, 2014, p. 5). Therefore, this paper contends that translators are “secondary witnesses” of trauma literature. Translators should approach their task with “sympathy and empathy to listen to the stories of the victims and help record, store, and disseminate them” (Dean-cox, 2013, p. 310), be fully aware of their role as historical witnesses and disseminators, ensuring the accurate transmission of traumatic stories between different languages. Discovering and understanding trauma enables the whole society to pay attention to the sufferings in literature and reality, promotes human reflection, and enhances empathy, thereby avoiding the repetition of personal and societal tragedies in history.

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