

Yone Noguchi: Accomplishments & Roles (ヨネ・ノグチ：実績と役割)

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SUMMARY IN JAPANESE: 明治以来の日本詩人の中で Yone Noguchi こと野口米次郎（1874～1947）は、西脇順三郎（1894～1982）と並んで、当初英語で詩を書いたことで有名になった。これは極めて稀なことでもあり、日本ではこれら二人の「詩人としての海外での名声」を誇張する嫌いがある。最近出版された Yoshinobu Hakutani 編の *Selected English Writings of Yone Noguchi*（二巻）は野口の英詩文を再評価する機会を与えてくれる。

野口の第一、第二詩集はよく英語を知らないで書いた珍妙な作品から成る。こうした詩集がアメリカで出版されたのは、日本人で英語を書くということが珍重されたためだと判断される。第三詩集以後の英語はかなりこなれたものとなるが、英詩として特筆すべきものではない。

野口は、十一年にわたるアメリカ生活を切り上げて日本に帰ってからは自称「日本主義の宣伝者」となり、日本文化の英語を通じた海外紹介に努めたが、野口が取り上げた日本文化は俳句（発句）、浮世絵、能楽などあまりにも「日本的」なものであり、しかも野口のその理解は浅かった。それが最終的には野口を戦争謳歌に駆り立てた。

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I always notice that when the Japanese expand and even impose ideas on others, it is the time when they have none of them.

Through the Torii, Yone Noguchi

In the past 100 years there have been two Japanese poets who achieved some distinction by writing poems in English: Noguchi Yonejirō or Yone Noguchi (1874-1947) and Nishiwaki Junzaburō (1894-1982). Their books were taken up for review in the countries where they published them, the United States and Britain. Further, in the case of Nishiwaki, Ezra Pound, upon reading his poem, "January in Kyoto," in 1956, famously wrote, "Junzaburo has a more vital english [*sic*] than any I have seen for some time,"¹ and followed this pronouncement with a suggestion that Nishiwaki be nominated for the Nobel Prize (as he duly was). As a result, Japanese writers have tended to make extravagant claims for Noguchi and Nishiwaki.

The recent publication, by Associated University Presses, of *Selected English Writings of Yone Noguchi, Vol. 1, Poetry*, in 1990, and *Vol. 2, Prose*, in 1992,² both edited by Yoshinobu Hakutani, a professor of English at Kent State University, in Ohio, gives us an opportunity to appraise the works of a man who at one time is said to have been counted among "the three poetic saints of the Orient," the other two being Nāidu and Tagore.³

The two volumes also allow us to consider the kind of "advertiser of Japanism" (*Nihon-shugi no sendensha*)⁴ that Noguchi was and, although Hakutani virtually ignores this aspect, why Noguchi ended up as "one of the most bitter and shrill exponents of Japanese conquest."⁵ (Nishiwaki, in contrast, became one of a handful of Japanese writers who chose to keep quiet during the war years.)

Reading Noguchi's first two books, *Seen & Unseen, or Monologues of a Homeless Snail* (1897),⁶ and *The Voice of the Valley* (1897), both published in San Francisco, one thinks not so much of Willa Cather's comment in her review of them—"he has more true inspiration, more melody from within than many a great man."⁷ Rather, one recalls Frank Norris' description, in his novel *The Octopus*, of "a Japanese youth"

who wore spectacles and a grey flannel shirt and who, at intervals, delivered himself of the most astonishing poems, vague, unrhymed,

unmetrical lucubrations, incoherent, bizarre. . . . The Japanese youth, in the silk robes of the *Samurai* two-sworded nobles, read from his own works—"The flat-bordered earth, nailed down at night, rusting under the darkness," "The brave, upright rains that came down like errands from iron-bodied yore-time."⁸

The description occurs where Norris lines up a gallery of "fakirs" whom a Mrs. Cedarquist, "a fashionable woman, the president or chairman of a score of clubs," continually brings to her society—"now a Russian Countess, with dirty finger nails . . . now an Aesthete who possessed a wonderful collection of topaz gems . . . now a widow of some Mohammedan of Bengal or Rajputana, who had a blue spot in the middle of her forehead . . . now a decayed musician who had been ejected from a young ladies' musical conservatory of Europe," and so forth.⁹

But how do we know this Japanese youth is Yone Noguchi? Because the lines quoted are from *Seen & Unseen*. "The Invisible Night" begins:

The flat-boarded¹⁰ earth, nailed down at night, rusting under the darkness:

The Universe grows smaller, palpitating against its destiny:

My chilly soul—center of the world—gives seat to audible tears—the songs of the cricket. . . .

and "The Brave Upright Rains" begins:

The brave upright rains come right down like errands from iron-bodied yoretime,¹¹ never looking back; out of the ever tranquil, ocean-breasted, far high heaven—yet as high but as the gum tree at my cabin window.

Without hesitation, they kill themselves in an instant on the earth, lifting their single-noted chants—O tragedy! Chants? Nay, the clapping sound of earth-lips. . . .

Norris probably knew Noguchi in person as well. He was associated with Les Jeunes, a group of literary bohemians (or aesthetes) in San Francisco which was led by Gelett Burgess (1866-1951), and Burgess not only printed

some of Noguchi's poems in *The Lark*, the magazine he edited and published, but also published *Seen & Unseen* with his own introduction. Burgess was a humorist who invented "goops" for his magazine—"characters in pictures and text . . . boneless, quasi-human figures divided . . . into two types: sulphites, independent thinkers, and bromides, platitudinous bores."¹² Indeed, Burgess had, for the outlet for his group's writings and drawings, "no more serious intention than to be gay"¹³ and shut it down after two years of existence, in 1897, though Norris had high hopes for the group itself.¹⁴

This bit of background is needed to see what is most likely to have lain behind the publication of the first book of poems written in English by a relatively new user of the language. Even though Noguchi is said to have begun studying English at age eight or nine, it must be assumed that his English was not far advanced when he arrived in San Francisco, in December 1893, at age 19, despite his confidence. As he recalled 20 years later, on the first day of his arrival in that city, "Nobody seemed to understand my English, in the ability of which I trusted."¹⁵ And his English education in the few years that followed does not seem to have been of the kind that would enable a foreigner to master the language quickly.

Noguchi's first (and probably main) associates were Japanese. When he associated with Americans, it was principally as a "schoolboy" (a house boy) at private homes or as a dishwasher at hotels. Though he was taken in by the poet Joaquin Miller (1841?-1913) as a handyman, in 1895, and lived with him for three years, Miller evidently was an anti-intellectual. He did not keep any books except his own, and his own books were "nailed high up near the ceiling," perhaps "for decoration."¹⁶ Furthermore, he told Noguchi that "he had no lesson or teaching to give [him], or if he had any, it was about the full value of silence."¹⁷ Clearly, residency with Miller was not conducive to swift, careful acquisition of the English language, either.

This is not to deny that Noguchi wanted to write poems, even if his various later recollections on this score, like most such recollections, cannot be entirely relied upon. In his introduction to *Seen & Unseen*, Burgess reports finding Noguchi to be "a recluse and a dreamer . . . watching . . . the writers of this new world, to see if the old words can live in the Western civilization; and if the sheeted memories of the Past may be re-embodied in our English tongue." But his English needed help. Burgess puts it kindly:

In the editing of these poems, I have collaborated with Mr. Porter Garnett,¹⁸ whose sympathetic assistance has lightened a responsibility, that only our regard for Yone Noguchi might authorize; and if our hints and explanations of idiom and diction have aided him and if our hands, laid reverently upon his writings, have in some places cleared a few ambiguous constructions, how generously has he repaid the debt!¹⁹

And what was it that Noguchi gave in return? Exoticism. In truth, much of Burgess' introduction is a gentle—or shall we say, humorous—parody of the novel ideas and expressions that Noguchi struggled to bring forth through “an unfamiliar tongue.”²⁰

... So much for the subjective aspect of his visions of Nature. . . . But of those dreams within the Dream, of the “Being”-fruit of his “Nothing” orchard, of his rivulet's unknown chatter, —how many shall understand? For his is the voice of the Occident²¹ speaking from the iron-bodied yore-time, where there is place without Place, and though he would give the Word to the word, not less, not more than the Word itself, —these, to many heedless ears, shall be but the unintelligible frogs' rainsongs, —the tear-cries of the crickets on the lean, gray-haired hill. And with his own whimsical despair, we may say, “O Homeless Snail, for my sake, put forth thy honorable horns!”²²

Here, it is worth recalling that Noguchi grew up in an environment pervaded by Buddhism. His family continued the ancestral tradition of sending at least one son out to be a Buddhist monk, with one of his older brothers having taken tonsure very young. He himself for a while studied at a school sponsored by the Jōdo Shinshū sect. After leaving his home town and arriving in Tokyo, he stayed in a school dormitory of the Zōjō temple. Equally important, one of his maternal uncles was a famous Buddhist scholar monk, Shaku Taishun.²³ In fact, a Buddhist scholar might find mere English renditions of routine Buddhist phrases and expressions where Gelett Burgess and his friend thought Noguchi had “lifted the veil of convention and discovered fresh beauties and unexpected charms in our speech”²⁴—where, for that matter, Willa Cather found “true inspiration.”²⁵ In the introduction to *Seen & Unseen* at any rate, one almost sees the amused face of a genial literary con.

In his second book *The Voice of the Valley*, Noguchi's language is a little less unwieldy. Charles Warren Stoddard (1843-1909),²⁶ in his introduction, gamely characterizes it as "the most literal English that ever was uttered."²⁷ Here are lines from "Song of Day in Yosemite Valley":

The Shout of Hell wedded to the Silence of Heaven completes the Valley
concert, forms the true symphony—
The Female-light kissing the breast of the Male-shadow chants the sacred
Union!
I, a muse from the Orient, where is revealed the light of dawn,
Hearken to the welcome strains of genii from the heart of the great
Sierras—
I repose under the forest-boughs that invoke the Deity's hymn from the
Nothing-air.²⁸

And lines from "I Hail Myself as I Do Homer":

O Poet, begin thy flight by singing of the hidden soul in vaporous
harmony;
Startle thy lazy noon drowsing in the full-flowing tide of the sunbeams
nailing thy chants in Eternity!
The melody breathing peace in the name of Spring, calms tear to smile,
envy to rest.
Ah thou, world of this day, sigh not of the poets who have deserted thee—
aye, I hail myself as I do Homer!

Of course, asked to write an introduction, most of us strain to praise. Yet, one wonders why Stoddard, an accomplished poet and writer, went as far as calling Noguchi "a word-builder of startling originality and power."²⁹

With his third book, *From the Eastern Sea*, published in London and Tokyo, in 1903, Noguchi's language becomes remarkably conventional, accessible, and varied, suggesting a skilled editorial hand, perhaps that of Léonie Gilmour, the mother of his future American son, Isamu. Even so, Nitobe Inazō (1862-1933), a Japanese-born educator and a greatly more experienced user of the English language, had to refer, in his introduction, to the fact that Noguchi was

writing “in a foreign tongue” and ascribe the causes of his occasional “inarticulateness” and “incoherencies” partially—he was kind—to it.³⁰

Noguchi’s incomplete mastery of English—which under normal circumstances is to be expected with practically all users of a foreign language³¹—most likely persisted to the end. William Michael Rossetti (1829-1919), apparently the last non-Japanese asked to contribute an introduction or an afterword to a book of Noguchi’s poems, said of *The Pilgrimage*, published in Japan, in 1909: “He has progressed very considerably in the use of the English language, approximately as an Englishman or an American would use it.”³² This was not exactly a wholehearted affirmation of Noguchi as an English poet.

It was another Japanese, the geologist and world-traveler Shiga Shigetaka (1863-1927), who dropped all flattery and pretension and made the most astute assessment. Writing the afterword to the Japanese edition of *From the Eastern Sea*, he observed:

It appears that your name is extremely well-known in Europe and the United States. Nonetheless, it is not because you are thoroughly familiar with the English language, nor because you are skilled in English poems. The truth is that you particularly catch the eyes and ears of Westerners, first, because you, a Japanese, compose poems in English and, second, because in doing so you express the Oriental sentiments most notable in Kumoi Tatsuo in the mannerisms of Whitman. In brief, your English poems are found to be novel among Westerners because of their racial novelty and the novelty of the sentiments expressed. . . .

Kumoi Tatsuo (1844-70) was a chauvinist samurai, who was beheaded when he tried to topple the Meiji government to restore the old regime, failed, and was captured. A friend of Noguchi’s uncle, Shaku Taishun, Kumoi wrote *kanshi*, poems in Chinese—a common practice among the educated Japanese in those days.

Shiga concluded his words with a warning:

You are only twenty-seven or -eight of age and your future is greatly promising. Above all, you must aim to be a great man in maturity and, without becoming content with temporary honor, work hard from this

moment, striving to leave a name imperishable for a thousand years in the history of English literature. [Kumoi] Tatsuo . . . has left nothing for the history of Japan, let alone for the history of the world. It is merely that because his poems are inept (they are, yes, inept when viewed in Chinese literature), because they meet the taste of those without a discerning eye as readers, a handful of students, who just want to feel good, recite them. You must draw your own conclusion from Tatsuo's example.

Kamei Shunsuke, a knowledgeable student of Noguchi who quotes this afterword in his book,³³ reports that *From the Eastern Sea* caused a "sensation" in London.³⁴ It may indeed have. Still, it is highly doubtful that this and the two earlier books were the kind of books for which Kaneko Mitsuharu made this claim: "[Noguchi's] pieces were epocally new types of poems even in England and the United States. Many appreciate him as the forerunner of free-verse poets, and not a few English and American writers opened new ways [of writing] because of him."³⁵

Even if you forget for the moment that Kaneko was speaking of his former professor, this particular claim is puzzling because he lived in foreign countries for extensive periods himself and knew the difficulty of mastering foreign languages. Unfortunately, similarly unthinking comments continue to be made.

The last poem Noguchi wrote in English may have been the one called "Two Thousand in the Valley of Death." It was the translation of the poem he wrote on May 30, 1943, at the news of the annihilation of Japanese soldiers on the Aleutian island of Attu and he did the translation at the request of the news service Domei for worldwide broadcasting.³⁶ For this essay I was unable to obtain either the translation or the original, but the poem was one of the many he wrote to "support and glorify the war" and in tone and spirit must resemble "Slaughter the U.K., U.S.: They Are Our Enemies," one of the few such poems I have managed to read. It may be translated:

"Slaughter the U.K., U.S.: They Are Our Enemies" fills the town,
and I shout it myself, shout it till I become hoarse, shout it, crying, in
tears.

Because they are the countries that nurtured me for twelve years of my
youth.

An ungrateful act you say, but I must choose the fate of my country;
the flourishing of the past is a dream for the moment.
The U.K. and U.S. of the old days were countries of justice,
the country of Whitman,
the country of Browning;
but now they are licentious countries fallen into the trap of wealth,
immoral countries indulging in dreams they shouldn't see....
Some say heaven is punishing their lawlessness, we aren't slaughtering
the truthful U.K., U.S.
Some say, in my U.K., U.S. days I made many friends,
and some, now dead, didn't have to hear my "Slaughter 'Em."
You don't know what a happiness this happiness is for you.
My friends who are still alive will say to me,
This is a war between nations; our friendships are too sacred to be torn
apart....
Don't be a fool, the hundred-million-with-one-heart³⁷ doesn't approve of
such a prayer, you have to be thorough, be thorough,
I'll slaughter you with a single stroke, along with all the friendships!³⁸

Written in January 1942, when Japan was agog with victories in initial battles against the United States and Great Britain, this poem, awkward in diction and syntax and altogether infantile in content, comes with Noguchi's own preface called "Declaration of War":

Life is an eternal declaration of war.

I hear that Mohammed held a sword in one hand and a twig of roses in the other. Now Japan, the hundred-million-with-one-heart, relying on a death-defying commando's resolve and fervor, is ready to break through and conquer the thorns of reality in its mighty dash toward the perfection of an ideal. Upholding the divine rescript from the genealogical line unbroken for ten thousand generations, eternal as heaven and earth, Japan is trying to share its future prosperity with all the races of Asia, an act of which those with no poetry in their hearts and no understanding of nature, the beauty of human sentiments, and justice are incapable.

War and peace are one and the same thing. I have devoted my entire life to poetry, but why I, faced with the grave crisis of my country, support

and glorify the war is self-evident. My joy of having been given life in Japan and witnessing today's incomparable grandeur—I cannot express my gratitude for it without tears.³⁹

As a result of his fervid support of the war, Noguchi was put on the list of writers charged with “war responsibility” that was printed in *Shin Nihon Bungaku*, the magazine founded to promote a “democratic” and “progressive” literature.⁴⁰ Following the charge, the sculptor-poet Takamura Kōtarō (1883-1956), for one, “exiled” himself internally, and Noguchi himself admitted to his son, Isamu, that he “had made a terrible mistake in supporting his country during the war.”⁴¹

Although the question of “war responsibility” fizzled in the end perhaps because the aim of this literary indictment was too amorphous and sweeping, Noguchi's active support of Japanese military causes should not be ignored. Not that most of us today, for one reason or another, forget or neglect to look into the overt and covert maneuverings that went on among Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, and Japan for preserving or expanding “interests” in China before the Pacific War. Rather, Noguchi's action constituted an important aspect of his promotion of “Japanism.” It is in this that Yoshinobu Hakutani's two-volume assemblage leaves much to be desired.⁴²

Noguchi, who arrived in San Francisco in December 1893, headed back to Japan in September 1904⁴³ (for several months from the end of 1902 to early 1903 he was a visitor in London). The ostensible reason for the return was to report on the Russo-Japanese War then under way for the New York daily *Globe*, but the inner reasons were not immediately clear. In the United States he had had some literary successes if only as “a beautiful Japanese boy who wrote quaint English”;⁴⁴ also he had left an American woman, Léonie Gilmour, pregnant.⁴⁵ Yet, instead of returning to the States when the war was over,⁴⁶ he settled down in his homeland, marrying a Japanese woman in 1906 and becoming later that year the dean of the English Department newly created at Keiō University. The next time he left Japan in any case, it was as a full-fledged “advertiser of Japanism.” In October 1913 he went to London at the invitation of Oxford University to give a series of lectures.

Years later, Noguchi suggested in various articles that his early resolve to posit Japanese “spiritualism” against the overwhelming material wealth of the

United States (or “the West” as symbolized by it) had to do with his decision to go back to Japan. Once he made that resolve, the constant need to “contrast [himself] with the Westerners” in a foreign country became oppressive.⁴⁷ In *Geijutsu no Tōyō-shugi*, published in 1927, he explains the origins of his spiritual conflicts:

I crossed over to a foreign country at a time when Japan, unlike today, was not regarded by various foreign countries as strong and powerful. The Westerners in those days did not even know the difference between Japan and China, at times thinking that Japan and Korea were the same country. I was laughed at, cursed at, and even beaten up by them in their land.⁴⁸ As a representative of the Japanese, I tasted the pain and climbed their gallows. Their world was a world of material prosperity. I decided that it was entirely natural that materially destitute human beings were despised in such a world. I must compete and fight with them. . . . If so, with what kind of weapon should I war with them? I would never be able to hope to win if I competed with material. I would have to challenge their material with spirit. It wouldn't work unless I extolled our spiritual life, struck at their weak point, and defeated them. That was my strategic plan. Thus was born my Orientalism in the United States.⁴⁹

Whether or not such recollections were to be believed, his strategy, if his *modus operandi* was based on it, was flawed.

To be sure, one set of cultural manifestations can sometimes dominate another; but it must certainly be doubted whether such dominance can be attained by setting up spiritualism as the antithesis of materialism. It would be like pitting Zen meditation against a fleet of bombers. More important, the kind of spiritualism—Japanism, Orientalism—that Noguchi envisioned to find upon his return to Japan he found only in things that were all too conventionally *Japanese*: the hokku (haiku), Nō, ukiyo-e, and even geisha.⁵⁰ And he had to establish spiritualism in them in a hurry, for before he ventured out to the United States at age 19, his knowledge of them was either negligible or non-existent. In that hurry he often failed to achieve a full understanding even though he seems to have found “simplicity” and other catchy things convenient for “advertisement.”

Of the reams of writings he did on ukiyo-e, his son Isamu had this to say,

correctly: "I've found it difficult to read [them] because he tries to be a poet or literary man discussing something else. I'm, therefore, not much interested in his writing on art in the descriptive sense."⁵¹ Here, let us look at the way he presented the hokku to Westerners.

Hakutani's selections include basically two articles Noguchi wrote on hokku: "What Is a Hokku Poem?" which was originally published in the London magazine *Rhythm* in January 1913⁵² and later used, with some added paragraphs, as the preface to *Japanese Hokkus* that was dedicated to William Butler Yeats⁵³ and "The Japanese Hokku Poetry," his lecture at Magdalen College in January 1914 that was later included in *The Spirit of Japanese Poetry*.⁵⁴ In both instances, what comes across is Noguchi's eagerness to contrast Japanese poetry with Western poetry. Most of his observations on the hokku are misguided or misleading.

In "What Is a Hokku Poem?" he cites a famous piece by Hattori Ransetsu (1654-1707): *Ume ichirin ichirin hodo no atatakasa*, "One plum blossom, and another: warmer than that,"⁵⁵ and says: "I declare myself to be an adherent of this 'hokku' poem in whose gem-small form of utterance our Japanese poets were able to express their understanding of Nature, better than that, to sing or chant their longing or wonder or adoration toward Mother Nature." In this piece Ransetsu surely shows a gentle sensitivity to a seasonal change, but in the *haikai* (humor) canon, its merit lies in the seeming minuteness of the attention given.⁵⁶

The claim for "adoration toward Mother Nature" is similarly dubious with the second piece cited in the article, which is by Takarai (or Enomoto) Kikaku (1661-1707): *Meigetsu ya tatami no ue ni matsu no kage*, "Full moon: on the straw mat the shadow of a pine."⁵⁷ Recalling his "silent" encounter with Kikaku's descendant on a moonlit night when he was young, Noguchi says this hokku spurred his "poetical development," adding rhapsodically: "Really it was my first opportunity to observe the full beauty of the light and shadow, more the beauty of the shadow in fact, far more luminous than the light itself, with such a decorativeness, particularly when it stamped the dustless mats as a dragon-shaped ageless pine-tree." Noguchi is not entirely wrong, but again the *haikai* merit of this piece lies in its artistry: pointing to a shadow to praise a full moon.

In "The Japanese Hokku Poetry," Noguchi shifts his focus, turning his attention to the "wistfulness and delicacy [of hokku] not to be met with in the

general run of English poetry.”⁵⁸ But one of the hokkus he cites to demonstrate this, which is by Yosa Buson (1715-83)—*Kindachi ni kitsune baketari yoi no haru*, “A fox transmogrified as a noble this spring dusk”⁵⁹—is surely out of place, and another, by Matsuo Bashō (1644-94)—*Furuike ya kawazu tobikomu mizu no oto*, “An old pond: a frog jumps in the water the sound”⁶⁰—does not draw “a picture of an autumnal desolation reigning on an ancient temple pond whose world-old silence is now broken by a leaping frog.”⁶¹ Bashō’s piece, like Buson’s, describes a vernal scene.

“Hokku poems are,” Noguchi says, “unlike the majority of English poems, the expression of the moods or forces of the writer’s poetic exertion, and their aim, if aim they have, is hardly connected with the thing or matter actually stated.” (Whatever happened to the “adoration toward Mother Nature”?) And if unintelligibility occurs as a result, “poetic unintelligibility is certainly better than the imbecility or vulgarity of which examples abound, permit me to say, in English poetry.”⁶²

In the expanded version of “What Is a Hokku Poem?” Noguchi says: “what our Hokku aims at is, like the haori or silk or crepe, a usefulness of uselessness, not what it expresses but how it expresses spiritually.”⁶³ This emphasis on spirituality is inevitably extended to the assertion: “Japanese poetry, at least in the old Japanese poetry, is different from Western poetry in the same way as silence is different from a voice”⁶⁴—like “a silent bell of a Buddhist temple,”⁶⁵ preferably. It is said that when in one talk in London, he picked up a poem by a Miss Lizette Woolworth Reese and proposed that he, “‘as a Japanese poet,’ would sacrifice the first three [of the four] stanzas to make the last sparkle fully,”⁶⁶ one in the audience rose to say that if Noguchi’s dictum had been followed, England would not have Milton or Shakespeare, and Noguchi remained silent.⁶⁷

Reading the arguments on hokku that Noguchi made in the belief that “Japan can do something towards the reformation or advancement of the Western poetry,”⁶⁸ one cannot help remembering what Gelette Burgess had said in his introduction to *Seen & Unseen*. One might illustrate the “intangible delicacy” of Noguchi’s poems, he said,

by one of the Ho-ku’s or “inspirations” of his own “high qualified” Bashō, meaningless but wisdom-wreathed syllables, —elusive phrases, —like opiate vapors changing to the changing mood.

“Alas, lonesome road,
Deserted by wayfarers,
This autumn evening!”⁶⁹

As an “advertiser” of Japanese poetry, Noguchi was flawed because he was trying to sell an ill-digested notion. Hokku are neither nature poems (whatever the term may mean) nor silent (of course not). That Noguchi’s understanding of the genre was inadequate for the task he set for himself is clear in a series of 84 “hokkus” he presented to Yeats: most of them do not have the faintest resemblance to the classical hokku he promoted.⁷⁰ Worse, he did not practice what he preached: most of his poems, in English or in Japanese, were as *verbose* as the Western poems he condemned.⁷¹

As various of his writings show, Noguchi was perfectly aware of these contradictions. Nevertheless, he persisted in the dichotomous world view that he had adopted early on, in the end gladly throwing himself into the infantile world of war propaganda.

Notes

- 1 A fuller quotation from Pound’s letter to his translator Iwasaki Ryōzō appears in Hosea Hirata’s book, *The Poetry and Poetics of Nishiwaki Junzaburō* (Princeton University Press, 1993), p. xvii.
- 2 Hereafter these volumes will be referred to simply as *Poetry* and *Prose*.
- 3 Hazumi Fuitsu, *Rondon no Kiri Egaki / Ushinawareta Nihon no Geijutsu Seishin* (Rokuyūkan, 1992), p. 9. Sarojinī Nāidu (1879-1949), accorded the sobriquet “the Indian Nightingale,” was also a prominent politician. Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) became, in 1913, the first Asian to receive the Nobel Prize. The Japanese for “poetic saint” is *shisei*. I do not know whether grouping these three poets as stated was something that only the Japanese did or something people of the Occident did.
- 4 The characterization Noguchi gave himself in an article, *Geijutsu no Tōyō-shugi*. Quoted almost in its entirety in Hazumi, pp. 106-113. Noguchi seems to have used the words *Nihon-shugi* and *Tōyō-shugi*, “Orientalism,” interchangeably throughout his life.
- 5 Dore Ashton, *Noguchi: East and West* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), p. 12. The book is about his famous son, the sculptor Isamu Noguchi.
- 6 Some say this book was published toward the end of the previous year, 1896. Here I follow Hakutani’s dating.
- 7 Her review is reprinted in full in *The World and the Parish, Volume Two: Willa Cather’s Articles and Reviews, 1893-1902* (University of Nebraska Press, 1970), pp. 579-580. The review appeared in the February 8, 1898 issue of *Courier*.

- 8 Frank Norris, *Novels and Essays* (The Library of America, 1986), p. 825. I was led to this passage by the entry on Noguchi in *The Oxford Companion to American Literature: Fifth Edition*, edited by James D. Harris.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 824-825.
- 10 Norris says "flat-bordered," instead of "flat-boarded."
- 11 Norris puts a comma after "brave," says "came" instead of "come," omits "right," and hyphenates "yoretime."
- 12 The entry on "goops" in *The Oxford Companion to American Literature*.
- 13 The entry on "The Lark" in *The Oxford Companion*.
- 14 In a short essay entitled "An Opening for Novelists," he said, "'The Lark' was delightful—delightful, fooling, but there's a graver note and a more virile to be sounded. Les Jeunes can do better than 'The Lark.'"
Norris, pp. 1113.
- 15 *The Story of Yone Noguchi in Prose*, p. 214.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 230.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 219.
- 18 Unlike Burgess, Garnett no longer seems to merit encyclopedic mention. He, along with Burgess, published *Seen & Unseen*.
- 19 *Poetry*, p. 57.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 57.
- 21 Did Burgess mean to say "the Orient"?
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 58. The poem "Like a Paper Lantern" has a line: "*O for my sake, put forth thy honorable horns!*"
- 23 Kamei Shunsuke, *Nationalism no Bungaku* (Kōdansha, 1988), pp. 210-211.
- 24 *Poetry*, p. 57.
- 25 Kamei, for example, has taken a look at the first line of "Where Is the Poet?" and spotted what must be a direct translation of a Japanese phrase. The line—very long, yes—reads: "The inky-garmented, truth-dead Cloud—woven by dumb ghost alone in the darkness of phantasmal mountain-mouth—kidnapped the maiden Moon, silence-faced, love-mannered, mirroring her golden breast in silvery rivulets." The phrase "inky-garmented" has to be, as Kamei suggests, a translation of *sumizome*, the dark robe worn by a Buddhist monk or for mourning. Kamei, p. 234.
- 26 Though Hakutani provides no notes or dates, I assume this Stoddard is the one who wrote books such as *Poems*, edited by Bret Harte, *Mashallah!*, and *A Cruise Under the Crescent*, although when Hakutani says Noguchi met him, he may not have been living in California.
- 27 *Poetry*, p. 77.
- 28 Here, Noguchi may have had in mind the Japanese word *kokū*, "void."
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 90.
- 31 Modern exceptions such as Vladimir Nabokov and George Steiner were brought up in strictly bilingual or trilingual circumstances.
- 32 *Poetry*, p. 161. *The Pilgrimage* was Noguchi's fifth book of poems.
- 33 Kamei, pp. 237-238. In addition to a chapter in this book, called "Yone Noguchi no Nihon-shugi," Kamei

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has written an article on the relationship between Noguchi and American poets, as well as a booklet entitled *Yone Noguchi, An English Poet of Japan*. For this essay I was unable to obtain either the article or the booklet.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 236.

35 *Noguchi Yonejirō, Kawaji Ryūkō, Senke Motomaro, Satō Sōnosuke*, edited by Kaneko Mitsuharu et al. (Shinchōsha, 1969), p. 18.

36 See Hazumi Fuitsu's book cited earlier, p. 202.

37 A slogan. As is often pointed out, the Japanese population at the time was 70 million.

38 Included in Hazumi, pp. 181-182. The ellipses are part of the original.

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 180-181.

40 Odagiri Hideo's explanation of the charge is printed in full in Hazumi, pp. 178-180.

41 Isamu Noguchi's remark, *Poetry*, p. 42. Sotoyama Uzaburō, editor of collections of essays on Noguchi, tells the apocryphal story that General MacArthur was a lover of Noguchi's poems and sought to meet him, but Noguchi declined. Hazumi, p. 183. Faubion Bowers, who was aide-de-camp to MacArthur for the first two years of the Occupation, thinks that's well-nigh impossible. There were a legion of Japanese who sought to meet MacArthur, but MacArthur did not really try to meet any Japanese, except perhaps the emperor.

42 Anyone who does not know anything about Noguchi's role during the war is likely to be surprised by his son Isamu's comment quoted in the preceding paragraph.

43 A different chronology says 1905 but I have chosen this year on account of the reference to the Russo-Japanese war that follows.

44 Ashton, p. 12.

45 Is it possible that he left the United States because of anti-miscegenation laws? If Noguchi ever made reference to it, I haven't seen it. None of the authors I have consulted suggests that as a reason.

46 One can imagine Noguchi doing so in 1905 to report on President Theodore Roosevelt officiating the peace treaty between Russia and Japan at Portsmouth—say, for a Japanese paper.

47 *Geijutsu no Nihon-shugi*, quoted in Hazumi, p. 113.

48 In Hakutani's selections, one such incident is described which occurred on his first day in San Francisco: "I was standing before a certain show window (I believe it was on Market Street), the beauty of which doubtless surprised me; I was suddenly struck by a hard hand from behind, and found a large, red-faced fellow, somewhat smiling in scorn, who, seeing my face, exclaimed, 'Hello, Jap!' I was terribly indignant to be addressed in such a fashion; my indignation increased when he ran away, after spitting on my face." *Prose*, pp. 213-214.

49 Quoted in Kamei, p. 221.

50 In *The Pilgrimage* he has a poem called "Kyoto," which is about maiko. *Poetry*, pp. 148-149.

51 *Poetry*, p. 44.

52 *Prose*, pp. 99-105.

53 *Poetry*, pp. 165-171.

54 *Prose*, pp. 67-78.

55 Noguchi's translation: "One blossom of the plum— / Yes, as much as that one blossom, every day, / Have we of Spring's warmth." *Prose*, p. 100. Some interpreters object to putting this piece in the category of spring

because Ransetsu's own headnote says it describes "plum blossoms in winter."

56 So some commentators find this piece artificial and vulgar.

57 Noguchi's translation: "Autumn's full moon: / Lo, the shadows of a pine-tree / Upon the mats!" *Prose*, p. 102.

58 *Prose*, p. 69.

59 Noguchi's translation: "Prince young, gallant, a masquerading fox goes this spring eve."

60 Noguchi's translation: ("The old pond! / A frog leapt into— / List, the water sound!"). The parentheses are part of the translation.

61 *Prose*, p. 74.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

63 *Poetry*, p. 165.

64 "Japanese Poetry," *Prose*, p. 59.

65 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 61. This talk is "Japanese Poetry," cited earlier.

67 Hazumi, p. 160. I should note that Hazumi's judgment is that Noguchi was right in responding with silence.

68 *Prose*, p. 59.

69 *Poetry*, p. 58. The original: *Kono michi ya yuku hito nashi ni aki no kure*, which may be translated: "This road: no one taking it as autumn ends."

70 And he mixes in translations of classical tanka without saying so.

71 He began his speech, "Japanese Poetry," by saying: "I come always to the conclusion that the English poets waste too much energy in 'words, words, words.'" *Prose*, p. 57.

