



DOI 10.22363/2618-897X-2019-16-4-580-594

Research Article

Yone Noguchi's Impersonation in "The American Diary of a Japanese Girl"

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The first Japanese person known to write and publish an American novel, Yone Noguchi disguises as a Japanese female diarist to counter the orientalist representations of Japanese cultural and feminine images in early twentieth-century United States. His impersonation in "The American Diary of a Japanese Girl", however, results in a conflicting androgynous voice in which the male competes with the female, as well as in a number of contradictions that compromise characterization and plot development. Situating Noguchi in cultural and historical contexts, this essay examines his identity and reception as a translingual writer of English, and the contradictions found in the novel.

Key words: Yone Noguchi, "The American Diary of a Japanese Girl", impersonation, American-Japanese cultural contact, translingualism

Introduction

The story behind the publication of Yone Noguchi's "The American Diary of a Japanese Girl"—"[t]he first American novel by a writer of Japanese ancestry"—is perhaps as curious as the text itself [1. Back cover]. When "The American Diary of a Japanese Girl" was published as a serial in "Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly" in November 1901, there was a line below the title, "With Illustrations by Genjiro Yetto" [2. P. 19]. Yet the name of the author was nowhere to be found. The diarist introduced herself as "Miss Morning Glory" half-way through the serial, adding, "That's my humble name, sir. / Eighteen years old" [2. P. 74]. The book form of the text, which appeared in October 1902, had Miss Morning Glory as the author [1]. Both Noguchi and the publisher, Ellery Sedgwick, tried hard to keep Noguchi's authorship a secret at the beginning when the book sold well. "The American Diary of a Japanese Girl" aroused some controversies over authenticity among reviewers who were divided between whether the text was written by a real Japanese girl and whether it was faked by an American. Not until the summer of 1903 was the real identity of the author disclosed. Zona Gale, a friend of Noguchi's,

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told a reporter that the young Japanese poet who wrote in English and had made a name among American literati was in fact Miss Morning Glory. “The American Diary of a Japanese Girl” dropped in sales within two months of publication and the initial attention from reviewers soon dissipated. After returning to Japan in 1904, Noguchi republished the work under his name together with a sequel, “The American Letters of a Japanese Parlor-Maid”, which Sedgwick had refused to take on.

As publisher, Sedgwick was apparently capitalizing on the fads of Japonisme and women diary literature popular at the time. Though describing the work as “a playful book” [3. P. 78], Noguchi had more serious motives in impersonating a female diarist. Morning Glory is no ordinary Japanese female; she represents an ideal in the new generation of young Japanese women equipped with knowledge and autonomy as perceived by her creator. To Noguchi, Morning Glory is a heroine who is able to battle against the orientalist representations of Japanese women by American writers such as John Luther Long, the author of “Madame Butterfly”, and to freely express her opinions about the American people and against their prejudices toward Japanese immigrants. Nevertheless, Noguchi’s impersonation through inserting his masculine voice and perspective into the female diarist generates incongruities and contradictions in both characterization and plot that eventually undermine the goals of his writing.

Discussion

Noguchi: The Man behind the Japanese Girl

Since “The American Diary of a Japanese Girl” is partially autobiographical and sprinkled with Noguchi’s personal, literary, and political beliefs, I start by providing a brief background of Noguchi. Née Noguchi Yonejirō, Noguchi left home at eighteen for his eleven-year literary expedition abroad. He was born in 1875 in the small town of Tsushima near Nagoya. He started learning English at the age of ten at a local elementary school with a Wilson’s spelling book and various English readers [3. P. 1]. He left home at thirteen to continue schooling and spent about a year in Nagoya, where he had his first foreign English teacher who turned out to be “a common sort of sailor” [3. P. 4]. Moving to Tokyo, he enrolled in a public institution and then transferred to one of Japan’s first private universities, Keio Gijuku, later known as Keio University. After two years of college, Noguchi, like other (typically-male) Meiji intellectuals who yearned for opportunities to study and live overseas, boarded a steamer and arrived in San Francisco in December 1893. By this time, he had read Macaulay’s “Life of Lord Clive”, Spencer’s “Education”, Irving’s “Sketch Book”, Goldsmith’s “The Deserted Village”, and poems by Gray and Longfellow [3. Pp. 6–8].

Noguchi worked from hand to mouth in his first years in the United States, taking various odd jobs including working as a “school boy”, a domestic servant who earned the opportunity to go to school by doing household chores [4. P. VIII]. Due to their insufficient competencies in English and pressing needs to earn a living, many newly-arrived young Japanese males became school boys, an occupation they despised since only females worked as domestic servants in Japan. In San Francisco, Noguchi read Kingsley’s “Three Fishermen” [3. P. 9], Scott’s “Ivanhoe, Hamlet” [3. P. 10], and Keats’ poems, and made

use of every opportunity available to explore other literary works [3. P. 13]. After returning to San Francisco from a foot journey to Palo Alto in 1896, he made a life-changing decision of calling on Joaquin Miller at his “Hights” (sic) in Oakland [3. Pp. 16—17]. Noguchi took with him three books: a collection of Poe’s poems, a copy of Basho’s haikus, and a Zen philosophy book by Kochi [3. P. 42]. The call turned out to be a three-year stay during which Noguchi, doing menial work for the poet in exchange for board, lived in a small hut next to Miller’s house and turned to poetry-writing. Miller kept no books in the cottage except a few of his own works, but he introduced Noguchi to Omar Khayyam’s poems by singing the lines [3. P. 60]. Noguchi turned his experience at Miller’s residence into a major episode in “The American Diary of a Japanese Girl”, with Morning Glory as himself and Heine as Miller [4. P. 8].

In July 1896, five of Noguchi’s poems were published in “The Lark”, followed by more publications in “The Chap Book” and “The Philistine” [3. Pp. 41—42]. His first two poetry collections, “Seen and Unseen”: Or, Monologues of a Homeless Snail” and “The Voice of the Valley”, were published in 1897. He traveled to Chicago, Washington, D.C., and New York City in 1900 [4. P. 10], and to London in 1902 [5. P. 134] in search of better prospects as a poet. As he traveled, he started writing “The American Diary of a Japanese Girl” and arranged for its publication through his English editor at that time and later his first wife, Léonie Gilmour [4. Pp. 9—10]. When he was in London in 1903, Noguchi self-funded the publication of his third poetry collection, “From the Eastern Sea”, which was well received in London literary circles [6]. Overall, he had greater success in England than in the United States. He ended his self-exile in 1904, going back to Japan and working as a professor of English at Keio University. His essays on Japanese and American literatures and cultures continued to appear in American publications such as “The Bookman”, “Christian Science Monitor”, “The Critic”, “The Dial”, “The Living Age”, “Outlook, Washington Post”, and “The Youth Companion”, particularly from 1905 to 1920. He revisited England and the United States to give lectures in 1913 and 1919.

Noguchi published four more English poetry collections after returning to Japan: “The Pilgrimage” in 1909, “Selected Poems of Yone Noguchi” in 1921, “Selected Poems of Yone Noguchi, Selected by Himself, with the Japanese Version” in 1922, and “The Ganges Calls Me: Book of Poems” in 1938. Only after his return did he start publishing in Japanese. Throughout his life, he published close to a hundred books, more in Japanese than in English. He had four children, the eldest being the sculptor Isamu, who was Noguchi’s only son with Gilmour. Noguchi died in Tokyo in 1947. In recently years, Japanese-American scholar Yoshinobu Hakutani attempted to revive Noguchi’s importance in the development of imagism. Questioning Ernest Fenollosa’s limited knowledge of the Japanese language, Hakutani proposes that Noguchi’s widely-circulated poems and criticisms might have had a stronger influence on imagist advocates such as Ezra Pound and T. E. Hulme [6. P. 15]. In early 2007, Temple University Press published an annotated version of “The American Diary of a Japanese Girl” edited by Edward Marx and Laura E. Franey. “Collected English Works of Yone Noguchi: Poems, Novels and Literary Essays”, edited by Shunsuke Kamei in six volumes, was published in Japan in the same year.

“In both verse and prose, Noguchi exhibits an ambition of realizing his literary ideals by combining the best of Japanese and Western thoughts, values, aesthetics, and traditions, while remaining overtly skeptical about those which he perceived as faulty on either side. Like other new intellectuals in the Meiji Era, Noguchi considered learning and borrowing from Western civilizations a solution for reviving Japanese culture and spirit. Nevertheless, he emphasized the importance of a full understanding of Western thoughts and knowledge, thinking that a blind borrowing of Western civilizations would “intoxicat[e] [the] Japanese mind like strong drink” [7. P. 3]. He disparaged Japanese teachers for “turning to mere phonographs of foreign languages” and “diffusing other people’s ideas, but never their own” [7. P. 78]. Apparently, the study of Western literature was the best way to understand Western civilization to Noguchi. In an essay on the development of modern Japanese literature, he comments, “...the public discovered only a year or so ago that the reading of Western novels was the very way to feed their minds spiritually. They are ready to admit their immeasurable superiority to their native writing. Their translation has astonishingly increased with the downfall of the native authors” [8. P. 263]. His aspiration for personal cultivation through literature was reflected in his self-appraisal of literary taste. When describing his early life in the United States, he took pride in being “quite a reader” and “advanced in [his] taste of literature, particularly poetry” [3. P. 32] at that early age. His self-praises on poetic achievement, however modest they sound, such as “my first book of poems, ‘Seen and Unseen’, made some little literary excitement in America” [3. P. 14], suggest his delight in reaching a literary success that he had high esteem for.

Noguchi’s poetic ideal is the expression of the deepest feelings, i.e. the articulation of the inarticulatable. Noguchi believed that “[t]o live in poetry is ten times nobler than merely to write it; to understand it well is certainly far more divine than to speak it on the tongue” [3. P. 71]. In one of his poems, he described his ideal poet as the following:

He feels a touch beyond word,
He reads the silence’s sigh,
And prays before his own soul and destiny:
He is a pseudonym of the universal consciousness,
A person lonesome from concentration [3. P. 19].

He sees the poet as having a unique role in transcending humanity and speaking for a metaphysical, “universal consciousness”, and as someone far from the crowd and close to nature. His own poetic vocation came on the first night of his stay at Miller’s place after feeling a closeness to nature and listening to Miller’s talk on nature and silence [3. P. 40–41]. Despite the heavy influence from Miller and other American and English poets, some of whom he personally knew, Noguchi wrote from a distinctively Japanese mind. He insisted on following the Japanese attitude toward nature through which, as he describes it, the Japanese people look for a “true affinity between man and nature” and their “true place in the universe” [7. P. 49]. Not only did he make this idea his own poetic tradition, he was also committed to promoting it to his American counterparts:

“What we Japanese think important is the true contemplation of nature, that is another way to say the true realisation of our own selves; this literary attitude, perhaps, would invigorate the minds of American poets so that they can escape from emotional sentimentalism, and their interpretation of nature will become more essential” [7. P. 49].

Two observations can be made from this statement. The first is Noguchi's belief that while there was a lot for Japan to learn from the United States such as its optimism and youthfulness (New York Times January 18, 1920), Japan also had much to contribute to the New World. The second is his counter-proposal to Japonisme: Noguchi was appealing to American poets and intellectuals to explore genuine Japanese traditions instead of rendering orientalist appropriations of Japanese arts and artifacts.

Intriguingly, it was his very unfamiliarity with the English language that gave Noguchi the freedom of creative expression. He wrote, "As I had a poor vocabulary and almost no technique of composition, I started, from the beginning, to cultivate my inner feeling, and to express as best I could under the command; I had even moments when I felt thankful for my lack of visible beauty in technique" [3. P. 19]. From learning English to writing in English, Noguchi acquired not only a new medium of expression but an autonomy through which he re-invented his own version of the foreign language to fulfill his needs. Western critics and reviewers of his time generally affirmed his command of English. One points out that "all the things the Japanese have learned in the West are not so excellent as Yone Noguchi's English" (The Christian Science Monitor, August 14, 1922), while another writes, "His English has the charm of foreign arrangement... The deviation is usually one of increased charm and vigor" (The Christian Science Monitor, November 27, 1919). Some, however, resisted the foreignness in his English. P. W. Wilson calls him "a Japanese poet and essayist who writes the best broken English one has ever read" [9. P. 331]. An anonymous critic, commenting on Noguchi's first published poems, states that "[s]o far, to a certain extent, he has mastered the English language" but adds that "sense and understanding are two attributes of the English language which he has not yet acquired" (The Washington Post, December 13, 1896). Nevertheless, it is perhaps the incoherence of his English that makes Noguchi's poems what they are. One of his sons, Michio, considers his father's Japanese translation of his English poems a failure, saying that "they are terrible in Japanese" [6. P. 47].

As an essayist, Noguchi often wrote with a self-assigned authority in criticizing his subject matter. For example, in "Modern Japanese Women Writers", after giving brief accounts of a few Japanese women writers, he concludes, "Mrs. Otsuka and Kimiko Koganei are other bright women writers in present Japan. And there are a hundred poetesses, though none of them has achieved any distinction" [10. P. 432]. He was as authoritative when commenting on American literature: "The American literature of the future (of the present also) will neither be classic nor romantic, materialism nor mere spiritualism. ... the American literature must live close to the ground, feeling her impassioned rhythmic vibration in its inner heart" [7. P. 57]. By the time he spoke with such authority, he had already gained a foothold in the American literary community. At the beginning, however, Noguchi resorted to what Ina Christiane Seethalar calls an "'authorial drag' to achieve authority in a community to which [he] tried to find access" when he wrote "The American Diary of a Japanese Girl" [11. P. 190]. But behind the writing of this text is the same presumed authority: that he had the authority to impersonate a female diarist and pass as one. The ensuing creation, the fictional diarist Morning Glory, displays incoherence and contradictions and arguably compromises Noguchi's goals in countering orientalist perceptions of Japanese culture and femininity in the West.

Contradictions in “The American Diary of a Japanese Girl”

Morning Glory’s diary covers a half-year period from 23 September 1899 to 19 March 1900. During this time, as her diary describes, she travels from Tokyo to San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Buffalo, and New York with her uncle, an “1884 Yale graduate” and “chief secretary of the ‘Nippon Mining Company’ who is taking a year off [1. P. 9]. Morning Glory is eighteen when she starts the journey. She comes from a wealthy family in Tokyo, has servants wait on her, and does not seem to be occupied with school or work before her departure for the United States. She mentions at the beginning of her diary that her “trip beyond the seas” represents a milestone, calling it “the first event in our family’s history that I could trace back for six centuries” [1. P. 3]. Since her uncle was Yale-educated, the “first event” probably means the first female in the family to travel outside the country. What Noguchi intended to portray in “The American Diary of a Japanese Girl” was a protagonist in her total femininity. He told Gilmore in a letter, “The girlish originality was the whole key, you know. It is not Yone Noguchi, but a Japanese girl you know” [5. P. 133]. Nevertheless, writing in a female voice was never easy for Noguchi. He told Gilmore on another occasion, “[it was] very hard work to keep Miss M. G. [Morning Glory] to be sweet, capricious, romantic all the time. Anytime my own self jumps in you know” [5. P. 149]. There are many moments in which Noguchi’s voice, rather than Morning Glory’s, is heard in the fictional diary, resulting in a number of gaps and conflicting representations.

A “Town and Country” review comments that Morning Glory gives “very little insight into the impressions made upon her by the extraordinary novelty which our [American] customs must have been to her” [12. P. 32]. Morning Glory often writes in simple expressions and sentences, and seldom relates deep thoughts and feelings. Some typical examples are “I don’t feel at home at all” [1. P. 3], “My heart was a lark” [1. P. 6], and “I am perfectly delighted by this city” [1. P. 34]. She likes to describe how she reacts to undesirable situations, how she makes sure to look pretty, and how she daydreams about her future husband. All this would look normal for an eighteen-year-old writing in a foreign language had she not displayed an exuberant knowledge of English-language literature. Her diary is filled with the names of Western authors and literary titles that she has read: Longfellow [1. P. 6], Lord Tennyson and “the Lotos Eaters” [1. P. 15], Homer [1. P. 15], Macaulay and Irving [1. P. 29], Keats [1. P. 30], Milton [1. P. 52], Carlyle [1. P. 55], Khayyam [1. P. 65], Byron [1. P. 87], “Paradise Lost” [1. P. 90], “Thanatopsis” [1. P. 94], Shelley [1. P. 122], Dante [1. P. 126], and others. This reading list is highly impressive for a young woman from a country where access to English-language literature had been available for about three decades only. In fact, the list contains Noguchi’s own readings which he had made many efforts to obtain in both Japan and the United States. Apparently, Noguchi reads on Morning Glory’s behalf and puts the words in her pen. This is even more obvious in her diatribe on “Madame Butterfly”, which Morning Glory despises as “Japanese fiction penned by the tojin [foreigner]” [1. P. 119] and “a farce at its best” [1. P. 120], and whose author she calls “Mr. Wrong” [1. P. 119]. Yet she has not even read the book — she writes in the opening lines, “‘Madame Butterfly’ lay by me, appealing to be read. / ‘No, iya, I’ll never open! I erred in buying you,’ I said” [1. P. 109]. There is clearly a gap between her words and actions as Noguchi overtook her voice.

Whereas English-language literature greatly nourished Noguchi's creative mind, their effects on Morning Glory are on a much lesser scale. "The American Diary of a Japanese Girl" contains a few literary attempts by Morning Glory, most of which are trivial and incomplete. They include her version of "The Lotos Eaters", which she composes on the steamer to San Francisco and has gotten only to the fifth line [1. Pp. 15—16]; a short essay entitled "Things seen in the Street", which becomes "illegible" after she has torn the paper to pieces and put them back together [1. Pp. 36—37]; the beginning of a story called "Destiny" and about an early-teen girl and a little boy meeting in a park [1. Pp. 72—73]; and "The Cave Journal", a diary written by a squirrel [1. Pp. 108—112]. Only the last one is complete, and just as her creator talks through her, she talks through the squirrel to express her concerns about beauty and complaints about the Americans. In addition, while Noguchi had every right to pursue sublimity in his poetry, Morning Glory does not have the same privilege; or so she assumes, saying, "You would hardly believe Morning Glory if she said that sublimity vibrated in her soul, because she was just a little Oriental" [1. P. 94]. Noguchi's injection of literary knowledge does little in helping her become sophisticated; rather, it only contradicts her characterization which is aptly described in "Town and Country" as "an unsophisticated little Japanese mousmi [sic], with a mind untrained to the analysis of emotion" [12. P. 32].

Another incongruity is located between Morning Glory's inclination toward ingenuousness and frivolity on the one hand, and the occasional deep thoughts she evinces on the other. Morning Glory comments on the people and things she observes, usually in a spontaneous, desultory, half-mocking manner. She would not hesitate in pointing out the American people's ignorance of genuine Japanese culture, as in her comments on the "bamboo table" she finds in one of her accommodations: "I cannot sound Meriken [sic] *jīn's* [people's] curiosity in prizing such a cheap thing. ... I never saw such a Jap work in Nippon" [1. P. 86]. She criticizes American ways, as in "I thought that Americans buy things because they love to buy, not because they have to buy" [1. P. 62]. On a few occasions, she gets philosophical but still writes in her idiosyncratically simple style, as when she talks with a priest: "Church? It's too sleepy, don't you know? I have remarked that God is with me without any sort of prayer, if I trace the path of righteousness" [1. P. 83], or after she first meets with her American friend, Ada: "I had said that nothing could beat the beauty of my black eyes. But I see there are other pretty eyes in this world" [1. P. 28]. In contrast, the following remarks are much more pensive and mature in style and content:

The fashion is to buy books and to glance at their covers, I suppose, but not to read them. Modern publications aren't meant to be read, are they? The authors have degenerated to the place of upholsterers. Isn't it a shame? [1. P. 65]

"The train rushed like a maddened dragon. It was verily an astonishingly ghastly spectacle as any human thought could ever picture. I thrilled with a feeling of tragic ecstasy, which is the highest emotion" [1. P. 121].

The first example reads more like an author's self-mocking lamentation while the second one seems beyond Morning Glory's girlish imagination. The best explanation for these inconsistencies is, again, Noguchi's use of his diarist as a mere mouth-piece. These

kinds of expression are more in sync with the avid reader discussed earlier, yet that person is simply not Morning Glory.

A further contradiction which visibly flaws Morning Glory's characterization lies between her extreme conservativeness in intimate personal contacts and her sudden openness in expressing love. In explaining why she has torn up "Things Seen in the Street", a frivolous account of her observations, she writes, "I didn't come to Amerikey [sic] to be critical, that is, to act mean, did I? I said. / I must remain an Oriental girl, like a cherry blossom smiling softly in the Spring moonlight" [1. P. 36]. Her biggest dream in the American journey is to meet the "handsome face" she loves [1. P. 33] and choose her own husband. While being exceedingly conscious of her appearance [1. Pp. 7, 17, 26, 30, and 57] and confident about her attractiveness, admitting, "I always think every gentleman whom I meet falls in love with me" [1. P. 61], Morning Glory is particularly shy about kissing and exposing body parts. When she stays at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco, she has the following experience:

I was stepping along the courtyard of this hotel.
I have seen a gentleman kissing a woman.
I felt my face catching fire.
Is it not a shame in a public place?
I returned to my apartment. The mirror showed my cheeks still blushing [1. P. 25].

The same cautious attitude comes up when she watches a play: "American play has too much kissing. Each time I was electrified" [1. P. 68]. In addition, when Ada gives her a courteous kiss in front of a group of young women, Morning Glory "bulg[es]" [1. P. 43], though she does not display any unease when Ada gives her the "first taste of the kiss" playfully in private earlier on [1. P. 31]. Even the painting of a naked woman she sees in Mrs. Willis boarding house, where she moved to from the hotel, makes her feel uneasy:

A naked woman in an oil painting stood before me in the hall.
Is Mrs. Willis a lady worthy of respect?
It is nothing but an insulting stroke to an Oriental lady — yes, sir, I'm a lady — to expose such an obscenity.
I brought down one of my crape *haoris* [formal coats], raven-black in hue, with blushing maple leaves dispersed on the sleeves, and cloaked the honourable picture [1. Pp. 38–39].

Nevertheless, Morning Glory dramatically deviates from her shyness in romantic intimacy in her letters to Oscar Ellis, a nephew of the hostess whom Morning Glory and her uncle boarded with in Los Angeles. Morning Glory and Oscar like each other at first sight. The diarist's inexperience in physical contact with men is recorded in her entry for the following day when she goes donkey-riding with Oscar and his sister, Oliver:

I was wavering about my action, when I felt Oscar's arms around my waist. My small body was lifted on to the donkey's by his careless gallantry.
What a sensation ran through me! It was the first occasion to put me into so close contact with a Meriken [sic] young man [1. P. 62].

They see each other for two more weeks, during which time Oscar paints a portrait for Morning Glory. As the latter continues with her journey, they communicate through

letters. In the four letters from Morning Glory to Oscar included in her diary, the young woman's love for the American grows rapidly. Her salutations change from "Dear Honourable Mr. Ellis" [1. P. 84] and "Oscar *San!* Ellis *San!*" [1. P. 88] to "My Sweet Oscar" [1. P. 95] and "Most Beloved" [1. P. 106]. Her feelings advance from a flirtatious note of how she has learned smoking and "how charmingly" she smokes [1. P. 85] and a playful threat of her marrying one of the muscular laborers she saw [1. P. 88], to a declaration of "O my darling, I love you!" [1. P. 96] and a petition for kisses: "Oh, kiss! / Kiss me, my dear! / I have to ascertain our love in it" [1. P. 107]. Provided her intense desire to marry a husband of her choice, it would be natural for her to reflect upon the relationship or daydream about a future with Oscar as she has done before with an imaginary, unknown man. Yet her attention seems to be focused more on her travel experience; she has no plans in reuniting with Oscar. At the end of "The American Diary of a Japanese Girl", she chooses to play the role of a parlor-maid in New York, taking it "the proper quarter for seeing the high-toned New Yorker" [1. P. 130]. After her last letter written on 18 February 1900, a time when her love for him is at the peak, Oscar is left unmentioned in the rest of the diary. While this gap may not be consistent with the plot, it is consistent with the author's intention of continuing with his own travelogue through Morning Glory's diary. The lack of a fully-developed plot in "The American Diary of a Japanese Girl" is most likely an intentional arrangement by Noguchi. As he told Gilmour, "You know how I hate the plot in a story. Whenever I see any bungling invention in it I am disgusted" [5. P. 140]. The main storyline of the text clearly follows Morning Glory and her uncle's travel itinerary, and the episode between Morning Glory and Oscar is only a vignette. It is obvious that Noguchi prioritizes his personal need in voicing what he sees and thinks over a well-developed plot for the novel and a consistent characterization for his protagonist. Morning Glory's discussion with her uncle about Japanese male immigrants' lack of female companions lends further support to this point:

I have never met one progressive-seeming Oriental since I landed. They are like a dry tree. Are their souls dying?

"Well, that's why, they have no girl", my uncle concluded.

He is so bright once in a while.

Why not make love with Meriken [sic] *musume* [girl]?

I said I would petition the Tokio government to transplant her women [1. P. 77].

While Noguchi probably uses "make love" in a meaning as "to pay amorous attention" ("love, n.1". OED), he is apparently giving his own suggestions to the problem through the protagonist's lines. Hence, Morning Glory is able to focus on the sociocultural side of the issue without showing embarrassment in the romantic implications.

The fourth and last contradiction pertains to the construction of Morning Glory's autonomy. As mentioned earlier, it is one of Noguchi's aims to present a new Japanese woman different from women in the past and from the stereotypes in the Japanese female characters in Western novels. Throughout "The American Diary of a Japanese Girl", Morning Glory emphasizes her agency, asserting, "I act as I choose" [1. P. 7]. When she poses for a photographer in Japanese clothes, she insists on her own principles, refusing to pose like the actress in "Geisha", whom she finds "absurd", and declining to use a fan because "Nobody fans in cool November!" [1. P. 40]. Her actions in paying her uncle

to wash the windows of the cigar store which she temporarily looks after for a Japanese couple [1. Pp. 77–76] and to weed [1. P. 105] satirize the miserable lives of school boys. As she remarks, “It’s good fun to hire the chief secretary of the Nippon Mining Company to rub windows, isn’t it?” [1. P. 76]. She is even brave enough to physically attack an American man who insults her at the cigar store:

14th — O funny drunkard!

To-day one fellow established himself before my store. He fixed his amazing eyes on my face, and extended his hairy hand.

“Hel-lo, Japanese!” he stuttered.

He wanted to shake hands with me.

I lengthened my arm, and slapped his face, I withdrew directly within, and watched him from a hold.

“Ha, ha! She got mad — ha, ha, ha!” [1. P. 79].

The “drunkard” then takes a cigar and gets away. Morning Glory surely has avenged Noguchi, who had the following experience on his first night in San Francisco:

I again stepped out of the hotel after supper, and walked up and down... 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 [3. P. 28].

Noguchi might have carved a heroine out of Morning Glory for himself and the Japanese people, but her agency is largely a result of her privileged class, not her gender. Though the Japanese immigrants and visitors (mostly men) exercised the same autonomy as Morning Glory does in making a decision to travel to the United States, those travelers soon found themselves fettered to the lowest rungs of American society, or an image as such. They were left with no choice but to tolerate social injustice. Coming from a totally different social class, Morning Glory travels in style and interacts with the American upper class. The Japanese immigrants and Morning Glory might have similar feelings toward racial discrimination and cultural differences, but only Morning Glory has the resources to react as she likes. Had she worked for the photographer and the cigar seller to make a living, she would probably have behaved differently. She is able to tease her uncle and criticize the American bourgeois because she shares their class identities, or perhaps belongs to a higher one in the case of the latter. Her embodiment of different identities by putting on different clothes such as gardener [1. Pp. 42–43], male [1. P. 43], chambermaid [1. Pp. 45–46], critic [1. P. 47], and Klondyke miner [1. P. 102], though eulogized by Franey as an “emphasis on indeterminate play and fantasies of performance [which] hints that ethnic, gender, and class identity may be malleable, shaped by an individual’s needs and the needs of the community in which the individual lives” [4. P. xiv], is again a sign of privilege given to her by her class.

Morning Glory also exhibits much autonomy over the issue of marriage. She tears her father’s letter to pieces because he named a list of suitors. “I’ll never go back to Japan, I think”, she tells her uncle. “The dictionary for Jap girls comprises no such word as ‘No.’ But you must remember, Uncle, I have the capital ‘No’ in my head. I am a revolutionist” [1. P. 86]. According to Halverson, “The American Diary of a Japanese Girl” “contends

that the single most important marker of modern Japanese womanhood is the turn from arranged to 'free' marriages" [13. P. 71]. Nevertheless, a staunch supporter of free marriage as she is, Morning Glory is at the same time trapped within traditional Japanese ideologies, such as the emphasis on feminine beauty ("Without beauty [a] woman is nothing" [1. P. 4]), the expectation of having male offspring ("I will make a stamp book for my boy who may be born when I become a wife" [1. P. 37]), and the projection of Japanese women as "little Oriental[s]" [1. P. 94]. What Noguchi presents in Morning Glory is a new Japanese woman perceived through the eyes of a Japanese male intellectual, but he himself was a product of his time. Rather than representing an archetypal new woman, Morning Glory reveals the self-conflicting definition of "new women" for a Japan at the crossroads of traditions and reforms.

Other Readings of "The American Diary of a Japanese Girl"

There was less attention to the contradictions discussed above in the book reviews and scholarly studies of "The American Diary of a Japanese Girl". As mentioned in the introduction, most of the book reviews were concerned with the authenticity of authorship. According to Edward Marx [5] and Cathryn Halverson [13], who analyzed thirty-one and eight reviews of the text, respectively, most early reviews accepted the claim of authorship by an authentic Japanese female. For example, a review in *Town and Country* concludes that "there is a fullness, an ingenuousness in [Morning Glory's] confidences that is delightful, and as there is no plot and barely a suggestion of a love theme, the book is evidently genuine" [12. P. 32]. Some other reviews use Morning Glory's English, which is heavily mixed with Japanese expressions, as evidence of authenticity. For instance, "Journal" finds her "[w]ords chosen as only a Japanese girl could choose them" [13. P. 75]. The point to note is that the debate was much more along the Japanese/Occidental divide than along gender difference. Only two of the reviews included in Marx's and Halverson's essays touch on gender issues. "Current Literature" questions, "Who is the American man who poses as Miss Morning Glory?" [13. P. 75], while "San Francisco Bulletin" argues that "her piquancies would be possible in a Japanese man, but they are hardly such as the best authorities indicate that the Japanese female is capable of" [5. P. 137]. The second major concern of the reviews is the text's representation of Japanese women as opposed to that by popular orientalist novels. Some reviewers resisted Morning Glory mainly due to her blunt attacks on American people and culture. As "Chicago Record-Herald" states, Miss Morning Glory's thoughts, expressed *tete-a-tete*, might seem highly piquant, but read in cold type they either bore or arouse repugnance. Pierre Loti and John Luther Long have given us portrayals of delicately feminine creatures whom, by the way, Miss Morning Glory ridicules. But candidly we prefer their fiction to her truth, if truth it be [5. P. 139].

Reviews like this reflect the popularity and influence of Japonisme at the time of the work's release. The publication of the 2007 annotated edition led to some renewed attention to the work with the focus shifting to Noguchi's impersonation. A review in "The Japan Times" endorses Noguchi's impersonation, noting that the writer "wanted a heedless little scatterbrain to voice his satirical objections" (*The Japan Times*, April 22, 2007).

A brief look at the reception of Noguchi's poetry in his early success would reveal how differently American critics assessed a Japanese poet who wrote in English but did not openly attack their country and culture. Though his poetry was said to be too obscure and incoherent for Westerners to understand, it was generally praised as having "remarkable originality" [14. P. 661]. To Caroline Wells, "for the most part these songs [his first poems] are as unintelligible as a Japanese dream, yet they have a poetic quality which need not be understood to be enjoyed" [15. P. 302]. "The Saturday Review" observes that "it is through his incoherences that we seem to see what is most significant in this scarcely to be apprehended personality" and that "Mr. Noguchi is perhaps trying to render what can never be rendered even with the best aid of words; but his brave attempt, in a language not his own, is full of interest" [7]. Another critic regarded him as a "fad" (The Washington Post, December 13, 1896), probably a sub-stream of Japonisme.

The studies of "The American Diary of a Japanese Girl" by Franey, Halverson, and Marx generally embrace a celebratory tone, reading the work as a hybrid site which critiques Japonisme and racism against Japanese, reconstructs Japanese female image, performs identities, voices out for the oppressed, and suggests bisexuality. The work is recognized as a "light-hearted sociopolitical critique and "duck-out-of-water" observation of cultural customs" [4. P. X], "a work of modernist fiction" which features "stream of consciousness, the profusion of incorporated genres, and the experimentalism of narrative style" [5. P. 152], and an effective means for Noguchi "to protest and transcend the less than ideal conditions" he was faced with in the United States [13. P. 76]. Differences between Noguchi and Morning Glory are discussed, such as class and their contrasting experiences in speaking English: while the Japanese writer felt like a "deaf mute" [3. P. 8] when he first arrived in the United States, his fictional diarist shows no difficulties in communicating with Americans in English even though she frequently mixes Japanese with English in her writings [4. P. XVIII]. Marx observes Noguchi's reinscription of negative stereotypes of other ethnic groups despite the novelist's efforts to "dissect American stereotypes of the Japanese", yet he is quick in affirming Noguchi's position as an ethnic writer who encompasses a "trickster spirit" in "achieving voice and visibility in a context of oppression" [5. P. 147]. Halverson notes that by "[p]osing as lady", Noguchi attempted to break away from the effeminate stereotypes placed on Japanese males by white Americans [13. P. 74]. In sum, these writers seem to endorse Morning Glory as Noguchi's "alter ego" [4. P. XIX], one that incarnates his fantasies, desires, and ideals, with little acknowledgment of the split inside.

An example which indicates Franey's, Halverson's, and Marx's interpretations of "The American Diary of a Japanese Girl" as partially autobiographic of Noguchi is their interpretation of Morning Glory's sexuality. They all read the scene in which Ada tries on Morning Glory's kimono as suggestive of the diarist's bisexuality. In Morning Glory's words, "Ada caught my neck by her arm. She squandered her kisses on me. (It was my first taste of the kiss.) We two young ladies in wanton garments rolled down happily on the floor" [1. P. 31]. However, just like her relationship with Oscar, further development of her relationship with Ada is absent from the text. Though Morning Glory calls her American friend "my precious Ada" [1. Pp. 72 and 76], she seems to treat Ada more as a friend than as a lover subsequently. Ada only kisses her again courteously in front of

some female friends. When Morning Glory leaves for the East coast, they cry “in hugging” and not kissing [1. P. 119]. Perhaps Noguchi is hinting through Morning Glory and Ada his own bisexuality; he once described an ambiguous homosexual relationship with Charles Stoddard in his autobiography [3. P. 252] while Franey [4. P. xvii], Marx [5. Pp. 149—150], and Sueyoshi [16] provide other evidence of his bisexuality. As Sueyoshi argues, it is “under the cover of heterosexuality” between Morning Glory and Oscar that Noguchi portrays same-sex romance, rather than between Morning Glory and Ada [17. P. 15].

Conclusion

In “The American Diary of a Japanese Girl”, I observe four strands of incongruities and contradictions: Morning Glory’s incompetence in expressing deep feelings and her mediocrity in creative attempts despite her familiarity with Western canonical literary works, her occasionally profound philosophical musings out of her usual flippancy, her sudden openness in expressing love amidst a habitual conservativeness in romantic intimacy, and her autonomy overshadowed by traditional and ideological expectations. The result is a kind of androgyny in which the male and female compete with each other to stand out as the dominant. This is in contrast to the harmonious androgyny proposed by Virginia Woolf. In “A Room of One’s Own”, Woolf expounds the androgynous state of mind as being an ideal for a person’s spiritual and intellectual development. She proposes that a male power and a female power exist in each person and that “[t]he normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually cooperating” [18. P. 102]. With her body usurped by her creator, Morning Glory lives a conflicting existence in her fictional world. Undoubtedly, Noguchi was a pioneer and important figure in Japanese-English translingualism and cultural exchange. To acknowledge his place in English-language literature requires an excavation of the challenges and difficulties he was faced with, and of his identity as a historical being. A problematization of his impersonation in “The American Diary of a Japanese Girl” reveals how Noguchi was interpreted by culture, rather than how he interpreted culture.

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Article history:

Received: 27.04.2019

Accepted: 10.10.2019

Moderator: S.G. Kellman

Conflict of interests: none

For citation:

Wong, E. 2019. “Yone Noguchi’s Impersonation in “*The American Diary of a Japanese Girl*” ”. *Polylinguality and Transcultural Practices*, 16 (4), 580–594. DOI 10.22363/2618-897X-2019-16-4-580-594

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Подражание Йона Ногучи в «Американском дневнике японской девушки»

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Первый японец, известный тем, что написал и опубликовал американский роман, Йон Ногучи «маскируется» под японскую мемуаристку, чтобы противостоять восточным представлениям о японских культурных и женских образах сложившихся в Соединенных Штатах в начале XX века. Однако его подражание в «Американском дневнике японской девушки» приводит к противоречивому андрогинному голосу, в котором мужчина конкурирует с женщиной, а также к ряду противоречий, которые ставят под угрозу характеристику и развитие сюжета. Рассматривая Ногучи в культурном и историческом контекстах, в этом эссе автор исследует личность писателя и его восприятие в качестве переводчика с английского языка, а также противоречия, обнаруженные в романе.

Ключевые слова: Йон Ногучи, «Американский дневник японской девушки», подражание, американо-японский культурный контакт, транслингвизм

История статьи:

Дата поступления в редакцию: 27.04.2019

Дата принятия к печати: 10.10.2019

Модератор: С. Келлман

Конфликт интересов: отсутствует

Для цитирования:

Вонг Э. Подражание Йона Ногучи в «Американском дневнике японской девушки» // Полилингвильность и транскультурные практики. 2019. Т. 16. № 4. С. 580—594. DOI 10.22363/2618-897X-2019-16-4-580-594

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