Yone Noguchi and Miss Morning Glory: American Humor, Identity, and Cultural Criticism in the Works of Yone Noguchi

Evan Connor Alston
Western Kentucky University, evancalston@hotmail.com

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YONE NOGUCHI AND MISS MORNING GLORY: AMERICAN HUMOR, IDENTITY, AND CULTURAL CRITICISM IN THE WORKS OF YONE NOGUCHI

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Evan Connor Alston

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YONE NOGUCHI AND MISS MORNING GLORY: AMERICAN HUMOR, IDENTITY, AND CULTURAL CRITICISM IN THE WORKS OF YONE NOGUCHI
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Yone Noguchi’s novels, *The American Diary of a Japanese Girl* and *The American Letters of a Japanese Parlor-Maid*, both published with the first decade of the twentieth century, have been the subject of study for scholars in the humanities for the past few decades. The research examines both novels in historical context and against his personal communications and his subsequently published works, understanding Noguchi not just as a Japanese immigrant but also a member of an American literary community. I compare the larger structing of the *Diary* to the works of his literary peers and mentors and demonstrate that understanding Noguchi’s novels as published within the spirit of American humor reinforces their reading as serious cultural criticism. This paper also examines Noguchi’s larger intentions for the *Diary*, not only to criticize Orientalist misconceptions that he observed, but to replace these ideas them with a model Japanese woman that reflected his modern views and captivated American audiences with her charm and wit. The investigation demonstrates an understanding of Noguchi’s novels as an expression femininity in association with the sexual and romantic notions that he expressed within the text by considering conceptions of gender and sexuality within the period.
In 1902, expatriate, bohemian, and poet Yone Noguchi published *The American Diary of a Japanese Girl*, the first of two books written from the perspective of Miss Morning Glory, a fictional traveler who, like himself, made the journey to the United States. The *Diary* is a self-narrated, humorous account of Morning Glory’s travels throughout the United States, one that often mirrors Noguchi’s own experiences. Morning Glory, in both *Diary* and its sequel, *The American Letters of a Japanese Parlor-Maid*, moves between different facets of American culture, especially those relevant to her (and his) immigrant condition. While the first work functions as a journal, *Letters* collects Morning Glory’s communications to a female friend, Matsuba-san, who is still in Japan. Criticisms of contemporary instances of Orientalism, now defined the reduction of non-Western cultures to an essence of “otherness,” line the pages of Noguchi’s novels, yet the works manage to stay lighthearted and carefree.

Noguchi published the *Diary* while living in New York, later relocating to England where he found success with his poetry. The novels themselves went unnoticed, failing commercially and with moderate reception from critics, until second half of the twentieth century when they garnered increased attention from scholars. Yet in November of 1901, Noguchi still bore great hopes for the *Diary*. From his New York apartment on East 19th Street, he penned Stoddard a letter: “Oh, my friend, nobody knows how the Diary will go. Only the prospect is rather good.” Noguchi still harbored an unsureness regarding its quality, though. He informed Stoddard that while the work was

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“was only a girlish diary,” he also stated “I don’t think that I must feel ashamed in writing such a stuff. I think that the Diary was an artistic work.” Before the letter’s end, he also claimed “Alas, such a silly affair like the Diary was the result of my seclusion!”

Noguchi often exhibited these mixed feelings about *Diary* before it’s publication. Just weeks before he wrote to Stoddard, he communicated similar thoughts to Leonie Gilmour, another friend. When writing about the work, he often returned to these terms, “silly,” “artistic,” or “clever.” Though he displayed confusion about its quality, he displayed confidence that the *Diary* was these things. Flipping through the *Diary*, the silly and clever artistry is evident; Morning Glory never shies from a bout of humor or a sly, off-hand comment. The book contains other interesting passages as well, such as a scolding of contemporary, American portrayals of Japanese or kisses on the neck between two female friends, and much more. When taken as a whole, the work is difficult to reconcile. The messages contained within and their presentation by Noguchi suggest that the work was more than just “a girlish diary.” There are multiple readings to the *Diary*, it can be taken as a statement against the Orientalist modes of thought and anti-Asian sentiment that Noguchi observed and endured; as an early, masked queer text, full of misdirection; or even as a funny tale of nonsense.

Other scholars have examined Noguchi’s text and have come to similar or related conclusions, notably Amy Sueyoshi, Laura E. Franey, and Edward Marx. Sueyoshi has

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4 Yone Noguchi to Charles Warren Stoddard, November 8, 1901, *Collected English Letters*, no. 101, Ikuko Atsumi, ed. (Tokyo: The Yone Noguchi Society, 1975) (all letters from the collection will be hereafter cited as *CEL*).
5 YN to Leonie Gilmour, 1901, *CEL*, 70.
argued that Noguchi utilized the *Diary* as a statement against orientalism. He produced Miss Morning Glory to match the modes of other Japanese-focused, Western novels in the pursuit of literary success, and then utilized her heterosexual romances to express his own homosexual ones. Sueyoshi also makes the important point that the majority of Noguchi’s messages eluded the general public, but that, today, the *Diary* still remains an interesting statement of the experiences of Asian Americans and the intersections between race, gender, and social status at the turn of the century in the U.S. Marx similarly examined the fate of the *Diary* in both the U.S. and Japan, noting on the commercial failure of the novel in both countries, and its passable, though ignorable, contemporary critical reception. Marx places Noguchi’s humor within spirit of ethnic American tricksterism, a mode of expression that forms in reaction to “a political system that oppresses or excludes.”

Noguchi’s transformative identity within the *Diary*, as he shifts between man and woman, Japanese and American, manifests a key element of ethnic American Tricksterism, comparable to other works by oppressed ethnic minorities within the U.S.

This work builds from these scholars’ conclusions, notably Sueyoshi’s, in analyzing Noguchi as a critic of Orientalism modes of thought within the U.S., but it also considers the *Diary* and *Letters* within the context American bohemia and American literary humor, where Noguchi’s social life and literary career respectively lay. By examining Noguchi’s novels within these cultural currents, the humorous disposition of the *Diary* coalesces with its structure, as journalist travel writing, to reinforce its

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7 Marx, *Afterward to Diary* by Noguchi,
tendency for criticism. Yet the Diary demonstrates more than just a criticism of America and American stereotypes of the Japanese; Noguchi uses Morning Glory to display his own modern or artistic views, shaped in part by his bohemian clique, as an appeal for American inclusion of the Japanese. Noguchi did not simply desire to refute and invalidate American misconceptions for his own personal purposes, he intended to produce a witty and charming narrator that reflected modernity as he saw it, one meant to replace American views of which he disapproved. By upending American conceptions of racial and cultural hierarchy through intermittently posing Japanese superiority, Noguchi reframes this acceptance as bilateral, criticizing both nations yet positioning Morning Glory as an amiable mediator the bridge the gap between American and Japanese failures. Yet, in his own American experiences, Noguchi suffered doubts and confusions about an Americanized identity, illustrating the pressures that many immigrants faced in assimilating to American standards.

This work similarly builds from previous conclusions regarding Noguchi’s homoerotic notions within the text, again primarily from Sueyoshi. Noguchi employs humor and other techniques to disguise or distract from the Diary’s homosexual content. This paper analyzes that content through sexual and gender ideologies that existed before our modern conceptions of homosexuality and heterosexuality. These ideologies evince an understanding of sexuality that intertwined deeply with gender, which warrants deeper examination of Morning Glory’s female identity.

Before analysis, it is necessary to acknowledge the sexual and gender ideologies prevalent in Noguchi’s time. The terms homosexual, gay, and queer are anachronistic with the period, but have been employed within this paper sparingly, for the sake of
brevity. When used here, these terms refer generally to romantic and sexual interactions between to persons who openly identified by the same gender. Scholars such as George Chauncy and Jonathan Katz have demonstrated that throughout the nineteenth century Americans generally viewed gender within a two-sex binary system. This system held male and female as opposite of one another where actions, mannerisms, and sexual desires condensed into a single ideological unit, or a gender; masculine mannerisms and a sexual desire towards women constituted the male from, while the feminine mannerism and a sexual interest in men represented the female. These perceptions of sexuality fixed to gender itself, rather than standing alone as a singular concept of sexual orientation.8

In this way, homosexuality (and thus heterosexuality) did not exist as concepts similar to what we now perceive until the 1890s, and then in limited measure. At the tail end of the nineteenth century, when sexual pleasure intermingled with the new American consumer culture and became seen as more acceptable, medical studies fostered an idea of a sexual normal, soon termed heterosexuality, adverse to the sexual abnormal which had garnered increasing attention from the professional world. Thereafter, concepts of homosexuality and heterosexuality slowly percolated from medical studies into public consciousness over the following few decades.9 “Sodomy” or “buggery” are terms that lawmakers normally employed when referring to homosexual acts. Laws against such are as old as the nation itself, yet the increased attention that queer life received from the media at the turn of the century onward, the heightening concern for morality within the

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nation, and the slow development of “sex normalcy” brought both new and old concerns for gay men and women. Governments policed and enforced laws related to homosexual practices unevenly, and elements of queer life in cities such as New York or San Francisco were visible, at times even an attraction for the cities even. Yet, a measure of risk remained; the trials of Oscar Wilde in England did not go unnoticed by Noguchi, and such a case would have been imaginable in the U.S. as well. With this information, it is important to move forward know those living in late nineteenth, early twentieth century America did not perceive gender, sexuality, or love as we do today.

Some specifics of Noguchi’s life are necessary in deciphering his work. In November of 1893, Noguchi departed Tokyo for the wide-open town of San Francisco, part of a larger movement of Japanese student immigration to the U.S. for opportunities in professional employment or further education. His own Japanese education at Keio University constituted the foremost Western-styled scholarship available in Japan and Noguchi had been instructed in English since his youth. Yet, upon arrival, he despaired in finding himself like many other immigrants, stricken with “linguistic incompetency” and scarcely able to communicate with the locals. Before long, the young man of eighteen acquiesced to working menial labor to financially support himself; this “schoolboy” work, as he referred to it, or domestic labor bore with it a degradation to which he found himself unaccustomed.

10 Chauncey, Gay New York, 137-141.
11 Yone Noguchi, Through the Torii, (Boston: Four Seas Company, 1922), 118-125.
This type of work was not an uncommon undertaking for Japanese student-immigrants; many found themselves unable to meet American language expectations or faced difficulty because of Asian exclusion on the American West coast.\textsuperscript{14} Japanese immigrants, migrating in considerable numbers beginning in the 1880s, inherited the burden that Chinese immigrants long endure in previous decades. Threatened in labor opportunities by frequently underpaid immigrants and fearing for the preservation of their own American traditions and values, white Americans employed dialogues of racial and cultural superiority to force Asian immigrants to the fringes of society. Arriving in the early 1890s, Noguchi first resided on the West coast, when the exclusion movement just began to galvanize against Japanese immigrants.\textsuperscript{15}

Yet Noguchi’s linguistic skills grew as did his time in the states, and he found opportunities to better his conditions. In 1895, Noguchi settled into a small cottage on famed writer Joaquin Miller’s countryside ranch in Oakland, named the “Hights,” where he remained for five years. Many Japanese immigrants in San Francisco knew or knew of Miller, both for his interest in their culture and for him frequently taking in Japanese boarders and workers.\textsuperscript{16} With intentions of becoming a poet, Noguchi published in popular magazines, such as up-and-coming humorist Gelett Burgess’s \textit{The Lark} and became known in the local, San Francisco literary scene. In 1897, Noguchi released his first poetry anthology, \textit{Seen and Unseen}, the only work published by Burgess’s company \textit{Gelett Burgess & Porter Garnett}. Literary celebrities such as Ambrose Bierce and

\textsuperscript{14} Ichioka, \textit{The Issei}, 23-24.
Burgess were among many visitors at Miller’s ranch, a place considered by some as a centerpiece of the West coast bohemian movement, and Noguchi soon became a mainstay in the exclusive literary circle, developing his craft in their midst.17

Noguchi conceived Miss Morning Glory—first named O’cho-san and then Miss Cherryflower—and her diary while in California. With the intention to inject some sincerity into the wave of Japonisme, or a specifically Japanese focused mode of orientalism, that had gained popularity in the few preceding decades, Noguchi pictured a novel that demonstrated the “cleverness” of its central character and was “true to [the] life and nature of Japan.”18 With Miller’s advice, Noguchi worked with journalist Blanche Partington as an editor, spurring a brief friendship and romantic affair. Partington enthusiastically guided Noguchi’s composition for a time, though arguments over the structure of the novel and inability to find a satisfactory publisher ultimately drove a wedge between the two and prevented its realization.19 He migrated to New York in 1900 and, after burning his previous manuscript, resumed his efforts in realizing Morning Glory, now with the help of future lover Leonie Gilmour. In 1901 he published a few sections of the novel in Frank Leslie’s Popular Monthly, and, shortly afterwards, he published the work in book form by Fredrick A. Stokes.20 Noguchi wrote Letters soon after, again with Gilmour editing, though he struggled in having it published for three years. As Noguchi realized the novels’ commercial failure, he abandoned his intentions

18 YN to Leonie Gilmour, 1901, CEL, 70, 87.
19 YN to Blanche Partington, August 1899, CEL, 44; YN to Blanche Partington September 5, 1899, CEL, 46; YN to Blanche Partington, September 21, 1899, CEL, 47; YN to Blanche Partington, 1899, CEL, 49.
20 YN to CWS, November 5, 1901, CEL, 100.
for a third entry.\textsuperscript{21} In 1902 he relocated to England, where he befriended William Butler Yeats, and published the poetry anthology, \textit{From the Eastern Sea}. He returned to New York in April of 1903, staying for another year, before traveling to Los Angeles and then returning to Japan in late 1904 and taking a teaching position at Keio University.\textsuperscript{22}

Among the San Francisco bohemians, Noguchi also developed some of his closest relationships. In 1897, he approached Miller’s close friend, Charles Warren Stoddard, by letter for the sake of his writing. Stoddard, an older man in his early fifties when Noguchi met him, had made his fame with poetry and travel writing, publishing in the company of Mark Twain and Brett Harte in \textit{The Golden Era}, a magazine which played a prominent role in establishing the literary scene of the American West.\textsuperscript{23} A gay man, Stoddard often struggled for a sense of belonging in a world that never let him feel quite normal due to his sexual desires. In his youth, he had found alleviation from his feelings of abnormality in trips to Hawaii, where the locals more readily accepted his sexuality. The island paradise is also where he struck success; Stoddard’s \textit{South Sea Idyls}, a semi-autobiographical travelogue, cemented his literary status.\textsuperscript{24} Stoddard fell in love with the native islanders, his work interspersed with admiration for their sparse-clothed bodies. Upon Noguchi’s introduction in 1897, Stoddard responded brightly to Noguchi’s introduction, seemingly already yearning to reach out himself yet too shy to take the initiative.

\textsuperscript{21} Fredrick A. Stokes to YN, January 21, 1903, C\textit{EL}, 148.
\textsuperscript{22} Yone Noguchi to The Craftsman, December 25, 1904, C\textit{EL}, 363.
The two men took to one another, and their correspondence hastily developed into a close relationship. As he had his other protégés such as Jack London do, Stoddard seemingly encouraged his young friend to address him as “Dad,” and guided Noguchi to literary connections and opportunities from San Francisco to New York to London.25 As much as he acted as a father or a teacher to Noguchi, though, he was certainly a lover as well. The two shared their feelings intimately through letters and, though distant, their romance blossomed. From Stoddard’s first letter, he often longed to see new, “oriental” friend, offering Noguchi lodging in his Washington bungalow home. When Noguchi wrote to Partington of his friend that “writes me very beautiful letter once a week; his letter always brings me a new light and freshest beautifulness,” he surely referred to Stoddard.26 In the fall of 1900, the two men finally realized their affection face to face in Stoddard’s home. Reminiscing on the meeting weeks afterward, Noguchi recollected “Till that day we had only embraced each other in a letter.” They sat in each other’s arms in Stoddard’s hearthside chair, talking into the small hours of the evening, and slept in the same bed.27 Their brief time together was Noguchi’s “dream realized,” Stoddard his “ideal person.”28

The men spent most of their love affair hundreds if not thousands of miles apart, meeting only for a few, brief more moments together within Stoddard’s lifetime, notably when Stoddard was ill in bed with a heart disease in December of 1901. Intimacy persisted in their letters for the next five years, yet at times their relationship felt strain.

25 Parry, Garretts and Pretenders, 235.
26 YN to Blanche Partington, October 11, 1898, CEL, 20.
28 Noguchi, “In the Bungalow,” 305; YN to CWS, September 24, 1900, CEL, 59.
Both Stoddard and Noguchi focused much of their romantic and sexual energy elsewhere; Stoddard had other male lovers, and Noguchi pursued relationships with Leonie Gilmour, whom with he had a child in 1903, and Ethel Ames, whom he attempted to marry.  

Stoddard staunchly opposed matrimony between Noguchi and Ames on several accounts, writing him in January of 1903 saying “You should be a solitary, free to go and come, without let or hindrance. A wife would soon weary you and make your life a burden.”

Stoddard may have feared losing Noguchi. Between letters opposing the marriage Stoddard wrote Noguchi such things as “I want to go to the Hights and live with my Yone,” and “Now come, place your lips to mine in one long rapturous kiss.” Noguchi displays both love and disillusionment from Stoddard at times in the Diary through the fictious Morning Glory, and their relationship was a profound part of his life.

Noguchi’s references to his love with Stoddard are only a portion of the content contained within Noguchi’s novels. Overall, both the Diary and Letters feature a largely plotless tale that serves as a platform for Noguchi’s criticisms and ruminations on American life. As a diary, the first work features Morning Glory narrating day-to-day events in her American excursion. Morning Glory travels to Japan with her uncle, a consulate, moving between a few different American households and experiencing American representations of her own culture, as well as more American features, such as attending a Christian church service or clerking a cigar shop. She forms friendships with a few American women, notably her adored companion, Ada, as well as romance with an American painter, Oscar, but these characters only intermittently appear throughout the

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29 YN to CWS, July 29, 1904, CEL, 353; CWS to YN, January 28, 1903, CEL, 152.
30 CWS to YN, January 28, 1903, CEL, 152.
31 CWS to YN, January 31, 1903, CEL, 154; CWS to YN, February 2, 1903, CEL, 155.
novel, leaving the focus solely on Morning Glory and her observations. In *Letters*,
Morning Glory takes up work as a domestic servant for a wealthy, white, American
family, a job she shares with both American and white ethnic immigrant women. The job
of a domestic servant provides Morning Glory ample opportunity to make criticisms on
both wealthy American lifestyles, as well as convey instances or ideas from his own,
similar experiences.

Noguchi published *Diary* without his name attached, presenting it as a genuine
journal of a Japanese immigrant. On the matter, he expressed to his dear friend and lover
Charles Warren Stoddard, “if the Diary will make any success, it will be fine joke, don’t
you see?” before begging him to swear not to tell a soul who wrote it. The similarity of
events pictured the novels to his own life are too frequent to neglect; Morning Glory
occupies many of the same spaces as Noguchi. For a time, she lives in the country home
of an older poet, a clear manifestation of Miller’s ranch (so strikingly similar, in fact, that
Noguchi’s publisher originally chose to exclude the section, feeling it would reveal
Noguchi’s identity). Many opinions that Morning Glory expresses are echoed in letters
Noguchi wrote to friends or in his other works.

The novels fit into a larger trend of American humor, an understandable statement
considering Noguchi’s peers and mentors. As an insider to the San Francisco bohemian
movement, Noguchi found his literary voice within the circle, conversing, publishing,
and exchanging works and comments with its members. The *Diary* resembles some of the
themes and components of other popular humorist works, such as overall structure and

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32 YN to CWS, July 26, 1901, *CEL*, 90.

33 YN to CWS, November 5, 1901, *CEL*, 100.
semi-autobiographical nature. Similarly, the novels contained a moral component or satire, where Noguchi expresses his criticisms of orientalism and America. Just as the Diary exhibited a likeness to similarly styled, popular novels that featured a Japanese female lead, Noguchi’s humorist work was an expression within the bounds what was popular.\textsuperscript{34} By the late-nineteenth century, humor had attained a profound and marketable status within American literature, and the Diary’s penchant for comedy resonated with Noguchi’s desire for success.

The Diary shares many structural features with other known humorists, including influential figures in Noguchi’s life, such as Stoddard, and those in the genre, such as Mark Twain. While not as graphic as Twain in subject matter and lacking in much of the lavish prose that lined Stoddard’s work, the Diary reads as parodic travelogue that focuses on observational humor and showcases the wit of the narrator, in the style of Twain’s Roughing It or Stoddard’s South-Sea Idyls.\textsuperscript{35} As Morning Glory wanders aimlessly through American life, no grand drama or scheme direct her. There is no crescendo or release, and Morning Glory is nearly the same at the end of the novel as she in its opening chapters. Noguchi stood adamant in preserving this quality. In 1899, he wrote to Partington “I wish you will stop to plan to make the Diary as a story,” and “I think we cannot make out a good story from it,’ that it is “about all to be a diary.”\textsuperscript{36} He and Partington clashed over the matter enough to where Noguchi felt the need to start fresh upon arriving in New York.

\textsuperscript{34} Sueyoshi, “Miss Morning Glory,” 3-4.
\textsuperscript{36} YN to Blanche Partington, August 25, 1899, CEL, 45; YN to Blanche Partington, September 5, 1899, CEL, 46.
The Diary and Letters also contain a moral component; humorists considered this feature as essential to their craft and often approached social issues in their work. Prominent humorists such as James Russell Lowell, an influence on both Noguchi and his mentors, viewed humor as a form of cultural expression and thus, when employed correctly, an agent of cultural uplift. Mark Twain’s willingness to engage social issues is evident throughout much of his work. His observations of life in the American West were as much criticisms as they were humorous anecdotes; in his early writing years he earned himself the nickname “the Moralist on Main.” Writer Ben Tarnoff describes Twain’s moral criticisms as the “conscience of the individual against the crowd,” where matters need be analyzed by personal ethics rather than popular sentiment. Likely Twain’s most famous social critique, Huckleberry Finn’s decision to “go to hell” demonstrated a willingness to endure condemnation rather than allow the return of a runaway slave, his friend, Jim. Historian Michael Epp has demonstrated how Marietta Holley, a popular American humorist in the 1890s, embedded nationalist themes within her humor novel, Samantha at the World’s Fair (1893), to achieve national success while simultaneously drawing out gender inequalities and promoting suffrage. Noguchi’s discourse on American attitudes towards Asian immigrants itself, though not the most common, was not necessarily a new frontier. Ambrose Bierce’s short story “The Haunted Valley” or Bret Harte’s “Plain Language from Truthful James” (also known as “The

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38 Tarnoff, The Bohemians, 104.
39 Tarnoff, The Bohemians, 104.
Heathen Chinee”) criticized anti-Chinese sentiment in California years before even
Noguchi was born.41

Years after the fact, in 1918, Noguchi published an article “The Failure of
American Optimism” which urged the evolution of American humor as a genre. Noguchi
noted, referencing writer G. K. Chesterton’s “In Defence of Nonsense”, that American
humor “represented the allegorical view of the whole universe or cosmos,” in the sense
that it often posed a moral message.42 Noguchi did not consider his humor to be, as
Chesterton put it “art for art’s sake,” humor for humor’s sake, or merely a “recreation.”43

More so, Noguchi expressed the shortcomings of American humor, that works in the
genre did not take enough of a stance and were rarely “backed by life's tragedy or tears.”
Though the genre exuded a moralist, guiding force, it had “no footing on life's inevitable
Realism.”44 Noguchi did not mention whether he believed his endeavors in humor
portrayed real tears, yet, taken in this context, the Diary’s propensity for criticism is
understandable. Noguchi intended for the Diary not only to entertain but to illuminate the
malpractices of society in hopes of spurring correction, perhaps even a step further than
his peers had or were.

Noguchi wove criticism of America and American attitudes towards the Japanese
throughout the work, expressing frustrations at the diminishment or misrepresentation of
his culture. In 1978, Edward Said described Orientalism as the infantilization of cultures
located in the Middle East, Asia, and North Africa, a notion usually rooted in the ideas of

inherent Western superiority and reasonableness. Orientalism instills a sense of “otherness” in these cultures, emphasizing their difference from the West, and it has often manifested in Western reproductions.\textsuperscript{45} Plays such as \textit{The Geisha} and novels like \textit{Madame Butterfly} by John Luthor Long or \textit{Miss. Nume of Japan} by Onoto Watanna grabbed audiences’ attentions and their thrill for the exotic in the same ways that travel writing had, yet they often relegated the cultures or Asian characters within their stories to caricatures. \textit{Nume} or \textit{Madame Butterfly} depicted meek, quiet women, with very few heroine-like qualities and little control over their destinies. \textit{Japonisme}, or the popular interest in Japanese culture that often embodied Orientalist notions, also appeared in women’s fashion and design in the household as a movement that captured the interest of middle-class women.\textsuperscript{46}

Much of this frustrated Noguchi, notably the European and American writers that capitalized on his culture. In \textit{Diary}, Noguchi conveyed his opinions to some of these authors, stating “the honorable author of ‘Madame Butterfly’ is Mr. Wrong. (Do you know that Japanese have no boundary between L and R?) Undoubtedly, he is qualified to be a Wrong.”\textsuperscript{47} It appears that their lack of legitimacy is what irked him most. Morning Glory mentions “Your Nippon character in blue, and hairy-skinned always. Isn’t it absurd when it puts a ‘Merican shoe on one foot and a wooden clog on the other? And if you register it as a Jap, I shall merely laugh loudly.”\textsuperscript{48} In his memoirs, Noguchi expressed how the “the Mikado or the Geisha…made [his] true Japanese heart pained,” and that he

\textsuperscript{45} Said, \textit{Orientalism}, 2-12.
\textsuperscript{46} Lee, \textit{Orientals}, 124.
\textsuperscript{47} Noguchi, \textit{Diary}, 119.
\textsuperscript{48} Noguchi, \textit{Diary}, 120.
“thought it was a blasphemy against Japan.” He saw these popular pieces as nothing more than imposters’ work that monetized his culture, and Diary was his way to set the record straight, hoping to display the Japanese people as he saw them, as “clever” and “charming.”

In this reframing, Noguchi uses other notable structures in humorist writing. Parts of Diary are underscored by a travel writing motif, a style prevalent again in the popular works Roughing It and South-Sea Idyls, naturally being tied to their journalistic nature. In the midst of crossing the Pacific, Morning Glory contemplates poet Alfred Tennyson’s “The Lotos-eaters,” a poem that resurfaces a number of times within the Diary. In the poem, Tennyson describes a crew of sailors landing on a primitive island. Though regretful about the families they have left behind, the sailors find eternal, melancholic respite on the island, freedom from the monotony and struggle of a laborious life. Morning Glory determines to write her own “Lotos-eaters,” seeking foreign fulfilment and her own personal island of the lotos-eaters in America while contemplating her possible literary success. Similar themes run through South Sea Idyls, Stoddard’s humorous sort of semi-autobiographical travelogue, an apparent influence on the Diary. Stoddard, as the central narrator, rather than filling the role of the white conqueror or civilized man aghast by the savagery of foreign culture, falls in love with the tranquility of the island and its natives.

49 Noguchi, Story of, 16.
50 YN to Leonie Gilmour, April 1901, CEL, 79, 80.
52 Noguchi, Diary, 15-16.
In *Diary*, Morning Glory departs from the conventions of the mode as well. She leaves her civilized home country for a barbaric America where, to her, the ‘novelty’ culture is often as fascinating as it is alarming. When she first comes aground in the U.S., she is greeted by an unpleasant scent and a strange world,

Oya, ma, my Meriken dream was a complete failure. 
Did I ever fancy any sky-invading dragon of smoke in my own America? 
The smoke stifled me…

I never dreamed that human beings could cast such an insulting smell. 
The smell of honorable wagon drivers is the smell of a M-O-N-K-E-Y. 
Their wild faces also prove their likeness to it. 
They must have furnished all of their evidence to Mr. Darwin.\(^{54}\)

Here Noguchi inverts American expectations, placing Japan, rather than the U.S., as the advanced civilization or race. The U.S. is fantastically portrayed, and Morning Glory is caught off guard, to the readers enjoyment, by the difference in her expectations and experiences. She harps on the unbridled nature of Americans yet sometimes admires it for its ‘natural’ or artistic quality. After Morning Glory eats tongue and ox-tail soup, she confesses the disappointment her mother would have in her, claiming “I shall turn into a beast in the jungle by and by, I should say.” Morning Glory warns her friend, Matsubasan, that, regarding an American woman, “you should be off half a dozen steps to estimate her beautiful captivation. You would be horrified, otherwise, by her hairy skin.”\(^{55}\) The beastliness that Noguchi imbues America with is pronounced and set directly against the Japanese ethnicity of Morning Glory and her friend, posing a role reversal that would have shocked American readers. The exaggerated nature of her comments is intended to be humorous while reversing the American expectations of racial hierarchy.

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\(^{54}\) Noguchi, *Diary*, 27.  
\(^{55}\) Noguchi, *Diary*, 82.
As far as travel writing is concerned, Noguchi’s narrator existed as an outsider to American culture (as he did himself), and he clearly understood what it could do for his humor, as it had for writers like Twain and Stoddard previously. Rather than a shock value humor of the obscure or grotesque, though, Noguchi finds comedy by placing Morning Glory as the confounded observer of sights common to the American reader, things like a church service or an American beggar. He positions the absurdity of these things comically against their commonness to the public; Morning Glory’s astonishment to unfamiliar structures (that are familiar to the reader) allows Noguchi to bluntly confront the reality of a structure, apart from the ideologies of its custom or tradition in the U.S. The placement of Western civilization as backwards or unfamiliar by making the narrator a foreigner, especially one as opinionated as Morning Glory, also allowed the contemporary American reader a new perspective when considering what is foreign. The humor of the books worked both for and against their purpose. Lightness in tone kept irreverence from turning into impudence, yet it also cloaked Noguchi’s criticisms to a large portion of readers, as others have noted.56

Noguchi does not deliver a consistent statement for American inferiority. He uses the Diary to picture Morning Glory as modern while depicting a complicated picture Japanese and American faults. While his work hints at the adequacy of the Japanese for inclusion in American life, and he also reframes that inclusion in his own terms. Historian Amy Sueyoshi has noted how, at times, the Diary “positioned Japan as barbaric in comparison to the United States.”57 She references the “Jap Gentleman” who traded

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57 Sueyoshi, “Miss Morning Glory,” 11.
women like wares and permitted women to stand in cars; these old-fashioned Japanese
men stood in contrast to the “gallant” men of San Francisco and “modern” American
women.\textsuperscript{58} It appears Noguchi could not decide which cultural mores were more
confining, or modern, or artistic. He admired elements of both cultures, but in the case of
women or love, Noguchi seemed to favor American customs. Speaking of freedom of
choice in marriage in the U.S. and against arranged marriages back in Japan, Morning
Glory declares “I’ll never go back to Japan, I think. The dictionary for Jap girls
comprises of no such word as ‘No.’ But you must remember, Uncle, I have the capital
‘No,’ in my head. I am a revolutionist.”\textsuperscript{59} Freedom to love was an important concept to
Noguchi, mentioned a few times within his novels, just as he freely courted many men
and women within his travels. It appears he felt that the U.S. offered him opportunities
that he could not enjoy back in Japan.

This enshrining of American freedom in love and affection is a piece of
Noguchi’s larger view of positive American values; Noguchi revered the ideologies of
independence, individualism, and democracy. Later in life, he emphasized the importance
of democratic tradition in American literature, while in the \textit{Diary}, Morning Glory urged
“that Emerson’s essays be adopted in the Nippon Schools. His ‘Self-Reliance’ should be
the first of all.”\textsuperscript{60} This is no small wonder, considering Japan’s recent political
modernization from a Feudal system to a Western-styled constitutional monarchy after
the Meiji Restoration. Noguchi would have been the first generation to be born in the new
era, and Keio University was the primary institution in emphasizing Western modes of

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{58} Sueyoshi, “Miss Morning Glory,” 11.
\textsuperscript{59} Noguchi, \textit{Diary}, 86.
\textsuperscript{60} Noguchi, \textit{Diary}, 114.
\end{footnotesize}
thought. Though he does not depict these ideas as common in Japan, he suggests their compatibility.

Yet Noguchi disapproved of the economic-focused aspect of American life. While living in New York, Noguchi ran into an old friend from San Francisco, Edwin Markham, who had repurposed himself from an artist to a professional journalist. Noguchi later complained to Stoddard, “Perhaps, Markham earned some name and money, but lost the truest spirit of poet and writer. Alas, he is a common business-man-like writer! Markham dead, what a pity!”61 In the Diary, Morning Glory dwells on how America is a “business country,” an “eternal country of ‘pay, pay, pay,’ ” while implying that Japan was an artistic nation.62 This sort of distinction was important to Noguchi and a recurring theme; he admired the artistic purpose of the bohemian lifestyle in which he engaged. For a bohemian artist, framing Japan in terms of artistry is likely the best compliment that could be given. Historian Christine Stansell has depicted the equation of art to modernity in the early modernist movement; bohemians understood artistry as free expression and fulfillment in life as well as their primary purpose for writing.63 Though Noguchi depicts Japanese social mores, especially concerning women, as unprogressive, he places the capitalist tendencies of American life as stifling to artistry or progression.

Considering Noguchi’s careful refutation of Orientalist stereotypes and exploitation of the Japanese, yet apathy towards other racial or ethnic minorities in similar situations, the Diary can be understood as a bid for the acceptance of the Japanese

61 YN to CWS, July 12, 1900, CEL, 57.
62 Noguchi, Diary, 21.
by the white American society, comparable to efforts by other Japanese immigrants from the period. Historians Yuji Ichioka and Eiichiro Azuma have illustrated that many of the Issei, or early Japanese immigrants between 1880 and 1907, readily assimilated to American values and cultures and pushed for identification with white Americans. Primarily this has been explained as an action to avoid the scorn that Chinese immigrants had received in previous decades; Japanese immigrant leaders took measures to differentiate themselves from Chinese or other racial minorities in the states.\(^\text{64}\) Noguchi asserts values of individualism and democracy, and though Morning Glory observes a backwards nature to elements of Japanese society, she herself is a “revolutionist,” able to criticize her own people’s failures and capable of comprehending key American ideals. Noguchi hoped to capture American audiences with Morning Glory’s “wit” and “charm,” but she also demonstrates his own views on marriage, love, and art in a progressive, bohemian-influenced way. Rather than simply denying orientalist depictions of Japanese women, Noguchi hoped to replace them by making Morning Glory a modern proxy that could represent Japan.

Noguchi asserts Japanese superiority to establish these claims on equal footing, rather than from a subordinate position. Late in the Diary, Morning Glory claims

> I say that our Japan is entitled to regard for worthier things than geisha girls or a fashion in bowing. We should decline your love, Americans, if it is rooted merely in your fancy for our paper lanterns. I have frequently come to conclude that Americans are eminently a freakish nation. I feel not only occasionally that they lack the reasoning power.\(^\text{65}\)

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\(^{65}\) Noguchi, *Diary*, 114.
By elevating the Japanese position in the assumed racial hierarchy, citing a lack of American “reasoning power,” and criticizing American misconceptions of the Japanese, he structures acceptance as bilateral. Noguchi establishes that though Japan is not without its faults (and strengths), America is similarly positioned and both nations require important changes for the sake of modernization and mutual respect.

Though Noguchi pitted Morning Glory as the cure to orientalist ideas, seemingly a mediator between the problems he observed in both nations, he struggled with reconciling his own Americanization. Similar to how Amy Sueyoshi has depicted Morning Glory as an outlet for Noguchi’s homosexual energies, she also was his outlet for reconciling his dual American and Japanese identities. At times, Morning Glory looks upon an American identity with anticipation, again the search for her own “Lotos-land” alludes to a freedom or identity which she cannot attain at home and a desire to blend into her new home, even while emphasizing its wildness. When Morning Glory dons an American dress before her journey, she cannot hide her excitement when her dog no longer recognizes her, “Oh, how I wished to change me into a different style! Change is so pleasing.”\(^66\) She yearns to have curly hair or body shape of an American girl and confesses that her tastes cannot remain unaltered throughout her adventure.\(^67\) Though Noguchi felt proud of his ethnicity, enough to use *Diary* and *Letters* to condemn those who exploited it, he was willing, enthusiastic even, to remake himself in the U.S.

In *Letters*, Morning Glory’s changing tendencies begin to trouble her, “Am I not ready to do anything—even carrying a broom down B’way—for money? Do you scorn

\(^66\) Noguchi, *Diary*, 10.  
your M.G. for her quick Americanization?" To a point, Noguchi appeared to accept the exploitation of his culture, even by himself if it gained him success. Morning Glory expresses disgust when told she should speak in “broken English like an actress in a Japanese play,” but afterwards she contemplates learning “pigeon English” for a hirer wage. Noguchi mostly abstained from using the misspellings and fragmented English that characterized other literary depictions of the Japanese, he requested of his editor, Leonie Gilmour, to “change and make the broken English as beautiful as you can.” He desired to make the work “good and artistic in English,” but he still desired elements of the English to remain imperfect and strike a balance between the two features.

To her, Morning Glory’s transnational identity appears to place her Japanese identity in jeopardy, and the character struggles with losing herself, both to her newfound American tendencies and to the oriental imagery that occupied the American mind. Again, in Letters, Morning Glory communicates a dream to her friend, Matsuba-san, that exhibits her fears of a lost identity. Within it, Morning Glory returns to Japan, happily received by her people, yet she has “lost all memory of Japanese fare” and feels indignation as an idol of the Buddha stares at her “suspiciously,” failing to recognize her. She then envisions herself with golden hair as her feet quickly enlarge, dashing their Japanese delicacy. Morning Glory exclaims, “Have I really turned into a Meriken girl? Oh, what a shame! What will my mama say?” and cries. As anxious as Morning Glory is to change herself, she fears losing her ethnic authenticity. After her fellow servants

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68 Noguchi, Letters, 14.
70 YN to Leonie Gilmour, April 1901, CEL, 79; YN to Leonie Gilmour, December 1901, CEL 109.
71 Noguchi, Letters, 100.
playfully question if she is a “true Jap,” she skitters around the house singing a Japanese “tinkle” in hopes of vindicating her as Japanese.\textsuperscript{72} Noguchi expressed similar feelings in his memoirs, \textit{The Story of Yone Noguchi as Told by Himself}. In it, he expressed feeling like “Rip Van Winkle, only not so romantic” returning to Japan in 1904, startling his father who failed to recognize him upon their first meeting in over a decade.\textsuperscript{73}

Yet more than his own changing identity, Noguchi conveys a disapproval of the \textit{Japonisme} that punctuated popular interest. This ideology felt as a spear against his own pride, and misidentification with Orientalist stereotypes by Americans may be what he feared most. As Morning Glory makes the rounds between different households in the U.S., her path frequently leads to questionable representations of Japanese culture. Pictured within the pages of the \textit{Diary} are things such as a quaint Japanese tea garden or an extravagant reception room in her friend Mrs. Schuyler’s home, decorated with all sorts of mismatched or misused Asian designs, and it is evident that Morning Glory distresses over becoming another part of the “exotic bric-a-bric” that decorates these locations.\textsuperscript{74} Morning Glory expresses disgust when her madam in \textit{Letters} exclaims, “Morning Glory, your speech is too perfect for Japanese. How I wish you could speak broken English like an actress in a Japanese play;” she writes her friend in response claiming “the mystery was cleared to-day. Listen! [American interest] is plainly from curiosity, not from appreciation of the worth of Japanese. What a shame!”\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{72} Noguchi, \textit{Letters}, 118.
\textsuperscript{73} Noguchi, \textit{Story of}, 168-9.
\textsuperscript{74} Noguchi, \textit{Diary}, 62.
\textsuperscript{75} Noguchi, \textit{Letters}, 115-6.
Glory feels less than equal to her American hosts, rather being an exaggerated piece of entertainment.

Noguchi’s Asian origins were never far when peers, friends, and even lovers considered him. One such letter to him from English critic William M. Rossetti reads, “You will hardly need to be informed that your poems do not read exactly as if they had been written by an Englishman: indeed, in my opinion, they ought not to do so - they ought to evince their eastern origin,” though Rossetti went on to compliment his Noguchi’s poetry and offer his assistance in their publishing.\textsuperscript{76} Other critics felt his conditions precluded any hope of success. William Archer wrote “if I say that as English poetry your work can scarcely take high rank. It is impossible for anyone really to excel in poetry written in a language which is not his mother tongue.” He declared that Noguchi’s poetry was “translated from Japanese poems existing, if not on paper, at any rate in [Noguchi’s] mind.”\textsuperscript{77} Noguchi’s race entered into his romance with Stoddard as well. In their earliest communications, Stoddard first greeted him as “Dear friend who has come to me out of the Orient!”\textsuperscript{78} When they first met face to face, Noguchi recounts that Stoddard “condemned” him as “far too Americanized,” and Noguchi felt that Stoddard “prayed that I would come to him in some Japanese robe at the least.”\textsuperscript{79} A specific interest in Japanese culture existed throughout the West coast bohemian scene. Miller hosted many Japanese “live/work servants” at the Hights, and Miller often had dinners of sushi and other Japanese foods.\textsuperscript{80} Wherever Noguchi went, his race was one of

\textsuperscript{76} William M. Rossetti to YN, January 17, 1903, \textit{CEL}, 130. \\
\textsuperscript{77} William Archer to YN, January 18, 1903, \textit{CEL}, 146. \\
\textsuperscript{78} CWS to YN, April 1987, \textit{CEL}, 4. \\
\textsuperscript{79} Noguchi, “In the Bungalow,” 306. \\
\textsuperscript{80} Phoebe Cutler, “Joaquin Miller,” 55.
primary elements, if not the singular one, in considering him or his work. His race cast a shadow over his achievements and his relationships, one which he struggled to overcome.

Noguchi’s criticisms extended beyond racial subjects; the situations he places Morning Glory in and the actions he has her take sometimes bend gender ideologies. Similar to how Morning Glory yearned to change herself into a white, American woman, she also, in private, clothed herself in masculine attire. One such entry reads,

22nd—There was one thing I wanted to test. My uncle went out. I understood that he would not be back for some hours. I found myself in his room, pulling out his drawer. “Isn’t it elegant?” I exclaimed, picking up his dress-suit. At last I had an opportunity to examine how I would look in a tapering coat. Gentleman’s suit is fascinating. “Where is his silk hat?” I said. I reached up my arms to the top shelf of a closet, standing on the chair. The door swung open. Tamageta! My liver was crushed by the alarm. A chambermaid threw her suspicious smile at me. Alas! My adventure failed.81

The passage is peppered with humor. At the very point of success, as soon as she stands on a chair and becomes most involved in searching for the hat, she is caught by the maid, exclaiming “Alas!” at her misfortune. Ultimately, Morning Glory flounders in her enterprise, being caught in the act, yet this does not stop her from performing similar acts later in the Diary. Instances such as this also operate as an inside joke for any who knew the book’s true author.82

81 Noguchi, Diary, 43.
82 Franey, Introduction to Diary, xv.
Noguchi’s commentary is evident; each time Morning Glory attempts to dress like a man she is either nearly caught in the act, or actually is. It is also notable that Morning Glory felt she had to complete the entire look. Her curiosity could not be satiated with a half-measure; she must first be entirely dressed as a man. When staying in the poet Heine’s country home, Morning Glory dares one day to try on his winter coat and boots. As she hears Mrs. Heine approaching from the other room, Morning Glory darts into the bureau, trembling with deadly fear, “Please don’t let her find me!”

Noguchi admits the complications in reaching across gender and that, eventually, he fears such a step would result in embarrassment and shame. This possibly hints at Morning Glory being an extension of himself, one he was quite afraid to reveal. This feminine aspect of himself likely contained connections to sexuality. Morning Glory’s thoughts hint at the difficult barrier posed by gender in sexual advances; in Letters she claims “isn’t it glorious to be a woman? How I wish I could work influence over a gentleman!”

Noguchi demonstrates a longing to shed his gender within the context of sexuality, threading the two together. His anxieties about crossing gender boundaries again come to light in the passage as well; Morning Glory claims, soon after, “What a scandal it would be, I fancied, if one of them were a man in a woman’s garb!”

Noguchi occasionally uses more abstract humor within the Diary as well, which expands the readers willingness to endure what is out of the ordinary and calls into whether any passage has genuine meaning. One such instance is Morning Glory’s “Cave Journal,” a brief, comical diary of a squirrel living on the property of the poet Heine’s

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83 Noguchi, Diary, 102.
84 Noguchi, Letters, 167.
85 Noguchi, Letters, 166.
countryside cottage; she envisions the squirrel as a professor who recently lost his wife to a hunter, muttering snide comments about both frogs and humans. When placed against passages like this, or even when simply presented lightly and laughingly, Morning Glory’s breaching of the gender dichotomy or criticism of American values appear less severe.

In line with other early American queer texts, such as Walt Whitman’s “Calamus” or Stoddard’s *South Sea Idylls*, the *Diary* is full of misdirection and humor provided Noguchi an escape route, or plausible deniability. The nature of the prevailing literary humor of the period, it’s absurdity or nonsensical quality, allowed Noguchi to easily dismiss of anything contained in the text as fiction or comedy. In reading the novel without supporting historical information, it can be difficult even to surmise where Noguchi’s sexual interests are aimed. Immersed in humor and in the company of nonsense writing, Noguchi’s homosexual feelings are portrayed as heterosexual interactions. Considering that Noguchi published the work not under his own name, add to it that Noguchi likely included attractions to both men and women that mirrored his own varying interests, and the whole piece becomes very difficult to decipher for a casual reader.

Though some of those closest to him understood his varied sexual attractions, and likely others who more closely knew Stoddard could have inferred as much, Noguchi rarely advertised his feelings towards Stoddard or other men; he primarily addressed them, ambiguously, in writing. His personal communications with friends and peers, aside from with Stoddard himself, never indicate a deep knowledge of Stoddard and

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Noguchi’s romantic or sexual relationship, though they did know they were close friends. Noguchi had any number of reasons to keep these feelings hidden, such as fear of ostracization and legal charges.

In the *Diary* and *Letters*, Morning Glory displays a sexual curiosity towards her female friends; Noguchi similarly depicts these instances cautiously. In *Letters*, she imagines a kiss with her coworker Nell, caught up in the joy of being allowed to try on beautiful dresses.\(^7\) Sueyoshi and Franey have been previously analyzed Morning Glory’s closeness with her adored, American friend Ada in *Diary*, with whom she shares several sensual moments.\(^8\) In the midst of trying on Japanese clothing with her friend, Ada, Morning Glory describes,

> Then we both laughed. 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.\(^9\)

This passage, as well as similar ones, end their respective Diary entry sharply, or are completely ignored onlookers. The sensual actions are not referenced again afterwards by characters and the relationships between them remain unchanged. When Noguchi crosses the lines of gender or sexuality, he does it briefly and changes the subject, seemingly another act of misdirection.

Both Morning Glory’s sexual interactions with Ada and Noguchi’s relationship with Stoddard exhibit form of compartmentalization. Stoddard was devout in his affection and more generous in showing it, enough so that some part of it made Noguchi

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\(^8\) Sueyoshi, *Miss Morning Glory*, 15; Franey, Introduction to *Diary*, xvii.
uncomfortable. To Gilmour in October of 1901, Noguchi wrote, “My old friend at Washington wrote me inviting me to come up. But I don't like such a sentimental old fool. Yes, Stoddard is an old fool! … I think I will go there, if he promise me to act less fantastically.” Later to Gilmour, writing from Washington, Noguchi referred to Stoddard as an “idiot” and contemplated leaving. Yet, two weeks earlier, Noguchi expressed to Stoddard feelings of longing, “Dear Charlie, I like to see you so much! I am lonely, Oh, well, everyone cannot allowed to be happy always, I suppose.” Whether Noguchi felt fully frustrated by Stoddard’s affection, or if Noguchi was hiding his relationship with Stoddard from Gilmour, it provides the same effect as Morning Glory’s same sex encounters, that occasionally he desired to deny or wish away his romance with Stoddard.

When Morning Glory and Ada embrace sensually and then seemingly forget the occurrence, Morning Glory is free to direct her affections elsewhere. This comments on the fluidity between homosocial/homosexual interaction that he experienced with Stoddard and possibly with others. Within their relationship, the barriers between friendship and romance melted away, and they fulfilled many different roles for one another. These roles helped disguise their romance publicly but also were also significant to each of the men as well. Stoddard, a mentor and a loving “Dad,” Noguchi a protégé and a “dear son” and each a close friend of the other. Though prominent, their sexual and romantic feelings did not always dominate the relationship between the two men who pursued other sexual and romantic partners, and they rarely hinted at any sense of romantic exclusivity.

90 YN to Leonie Gilmour, October 22, 1901, CEL, 99; YN to Leonie Gilmour, December 1901 CEL, 110. 91 YN to CWS, October 7, 1901, CEL, 97.
Sueyoshi has illuminated the ways in which Morning Glory’s relationship with Oscar, her romantic interest in both novels, imitates Noguchi’s affair with Stoddard. Letters made up much of their romantic communications, both Noguchi and Morning Glory becoming “engrossed” in them. The portrait of Morning Glory that Oscar paints in *Diary* alludes to commissioned sketches of his own face that Noguchi meant to endearingly send to Stoddard. When Morning Glory expresses her need to be “free” as a “bird of passage,” Noguchi is likely hinting at a desired freedom from Stoddard as he wrote parts of *Diary*; Noguchi had not written to the man for months. Depicting his own romances through Morning Glory certainly allowed Noguchi to discreetly put his romance into print, but there is evidence that signals that Morning Glory’s feminine identity could have constituted more than just a disguise for his romance. By speaking through Morning Glory, Noguchi similarly establishes all romantic interactions with men as situations where he, as a man, fulfills the feminine role.

As aforementioned, conceptions of gender and sexuality from the period intertwined, rooted in Victorian era concepts of masculinity and femininity that placed sexual desire within gender ideologies. Masculinity and femininity in this sense constituted opposing ideas. Men were seen as naturally attracted to women, and women naturally attracted to men. George Chauncy has expanded on how this ideology manifested within late nineteenth and early twentieth century, demonstrating that the *fairy* archetype, men who dressed as or proclaimed feminine qualities, dominated much of the public conversation on male-male gay life. By tying sexuality to gender, many gay

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men adopted femininity to demonstrate their sexual desires, small mannerisms such as
the way a man stood or the intonation of his voice constituted recognizable identifiers of
sexuality. These structures were not wholly encompassing, men certainly engaged in
sexual relations with one another outside of these configurations of gender ideology. Yet
Chauncy demonstrates that fairy archetype, a manifestation of the widespread
understanding of homosexuality as inherently feminine, was so pronounced that it
affected how many gay men considered their own identities. Some men confessed
contempt for fairies due to of how fully the ideology dominated discourse on male-male
sexuality. Femininity was the dominant form that men utilized in expressing their
homosexual feelings, and Noguchi’s relationship with Stoddard hints at this expression.\textsuperscript{94}

Tinges of femininity appeared throughout Noguchi and Stoddard’s relationship
that supported this feminine understanding of the romance. In his first letter to Stoddard
after their intimate time spent together in Stoddard’s bungalow, Noguchi described
Stoddard being “as tender as a goddess,” attributing a female aspect to his male lover.\textsuperscript{95}
Years later, reminiscing on his and Stoddard’s first evening spent together, Noguchi
lightly joked “did he expect me to be a Kana Ana—a little sea god of his South Sea.”
This figure, the Kana Ana, was the object of Stoddard’s friendship and affection in his “A
South Sea Idyl,” a young boy who Stoddard erotically described as having “round, full,
rather girlish face; lips ripe and expressive” and “eyes perfectly glorious—regular
almonds—with the mythical lashes ‘that sweep’”\textsuperscript{96} Noguchi’s suggestions demonstrate

\textsuperscript{95} YN to CWS, September 24, 1900, \textit{CEL}, 59.
the ways in which ideas of race, gender, and age entered into his relationship. He felt that Stoddard imagined him as an exoticized and youthful image, exhibiting no masculine qualities.

Just as his Asian origin appealed to Stoddard’s exotic fancy, Noguchi’s ambiguous features, his youthful face and lithe frame, enthralled Stoddard. In his youth, Stoddard privately noted a desire for femininity himself. Into his diary he imaged himself in a woman’s body so as his “physique” could be “made whole.”97 Later in life, though, many of Stoddard’s partners were men much younger than himself. He often assumed a more masculine, sometimes fatherly role in his and Noguchi’s relationship. Staring at the picture of his lover placed upon his desk, Stoddard fell in love with Noguchi’s “too sensitive mouth” and “delicate chin,” as well as his “beautiful hands” both “sensitive and artistic.” To Stoddard, these features showed that Noguchi “must be loved much, and most tenderly cared for;” He expressed “you are my child --- my Baby and I must nurse you well, and take such very, very good care of you.”98 Stoddard pictured himself in an authoritative position, protective of the youthful, sensitive, and sexually ambiguous Noguchi who was dependent on his care as well as his professional assistance. Noguchi accepted and reciprocated Stoddard’s affection, referring to him as ‘Dad,’ gifting him photographs and sketches, and writing of how he missed Stoddard and how much he had been thinking of him.99

Cultural trends in Japan may add more context to Noguchi and Stoddard’s relationship. Though the transforming Meiji culture that Noguchi lived through saw more

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99 YN to CWS, October 7 1901, *CEL* 97; YN to CWS, July 26, 1901, *CEL*, 90.
resistance to homosexuality than previously found in Japan, historians Furukawa Makoto, Angus Lockyer, and Gary Leupp have indicated the notable acceptance of homosexuality in Japan when compared to many Western nations. Practices and ideologies of the Satsuma prefecture gained prominence after the Meiji Restoration, including those related to male-male sexual mores. A cultural trend, nanshouku, centered on student life, instilled in practice by way of samurai tradition, and enshrined love between an older and a younger man. Practitioners related this ideology to samurai practices of manliness common in the previous era.¹⁰⁰ This practice had various implementations, whether between an instructor and student or between upper and lower classmen. It is hard to judge whether Noguchi experienced or hand knowledge of any part of this facet of student life; it spread wide through the southern regions of Japan such as Kyushu, but in Aichi and Tokyo, where Noguchi undertook his education, its dissemination varied. Yet it is worth considering that Noguchi’s relationship with Stoddard reflected qualities of the nanshouku. A relationship between an older man and younger, Stoddard in a position of authority over Noguchi considering age, prestige, and experience. Their relationship also did not lend toward exclusivity or any life-long commitment, and did not necessarily preclude sexual attraction to women, rather being a temporary love, much like nanshouku.¹⁰¹

The Diary and Letters, though written by a Japanese immigrant, are certainly a work in the style of American humor. Inspired by the works of popular humorists and

bohemian writers, with whom Noguchi developed his craft, the novels utilized both structures prevalent elsewhere in the genre and captured its artistic and moral purposes. If anything, Noguchi intensified genre’s guiding message to advance a critique of racial and gender ideologies that constricted how he viewed himself as well as how others viewed him. Noguchi intended for his novels to do more than to directly confront American misconceptions about the Japanese. He also intended for Miss Morning Glory to serve as a likable proxy for his whole country, one that not only denied stereotypes but replaced them by capturing audiences her wit, humor, and artistically inspired views. Noguchi reframed acceptance by confronting exclusion and the idea of a racial hierarchy on their own terms and intermittently insinuating Japanese superiority and calling on the U.S. to take the initiative in change; this action coopted the ideas of racial hierarchy for his own purposes, and may relate to rising notions of imperialism back in Japan. These instances of confrontation are placed sparsely throughout the Diary, in a way that the novel does not necessarily read as an aggressive attack on American values, and placed within the humor, it is difficult to discern exaggeration from actual stance, yet it is clear that Noguchi used the Diary to communicate his inner frustrations.

These frustrations also related to his changing identity. Though change excited Noguchi, he struggled to reconcile Americanization with staying Japanese at heart, and misguided conceptions of the Japanese simply made it more difficult for Noguchi to assert his ethnic identity. The Diary was similarly an outlet for Noguchi’s sexual interests, his love for Stoddard and his own femininity were discreetly explored in the pages. Noguchi used Morning Glory to break down the boundaries of that gender drew, placing her in situations where she herself privately put on the role of masculinity.
Noguchi is still relevant today because of how many structures his novels touched upon, and how unique his fortunes were within the U.S. He defies many categories as an Asian immigrant in the late nineteenth who became accepted into middle-class, American society. Yet, even in these conditions, Noguchi’s works reveal the barriers he faced in his private and professional life due to conceptions of race and gender. The *Diary* and *Letters* also present interesting source materials for the way persons resisted racial marginalization and exclusion in society. In some ways, Noguchi was ahead of his time; the deconstruction of Orientalist ideas in American popular culture has only deeply been approached by scholars in the last half century. Similar structures presently affect our society, and Noguchi’s struggles are a reminder of how essential concepts such as gender, nationality, or culture identity can be to individual identity and how significantly the outside world affects them.


Primary Sources