

# THE TRADITIONAL AND THE MODERN IN YONE NOGUCHI'S WRITINGS ABOUT JAPANESE WOMEN UNTIL 1906

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This chapter analyses Japanese women's image described for an English-speaking audience in the works of the poet and writer Yone Noguchi (Noguchi Yonejirō, 1875–1947) between 1899 and 1906. By 1904, Noguchi had shifted his focus from the ideal of a pure and traditional girl, towards figures of women who could represent the duality of Meiji era's elements, traditional and modern. These shifts can be connected to two known women figures, Onoto Watanna (1875–1954) and Sada Yacco (1871–1946), who also embodied those elements of the Meiji era by the time Noguchi met them. Discussing Noguchi's diary novel, short novels, and his essays on women writers and *geishas*, the chapter highlights the way Noguchi presented two ideals, the traditional Japanese beauty, and the modern Japanese beauty.

**Keywords:** Yone Noguchi, Japanese woman, Meiji era, Onoto Watanna, Sada Yacco

## 1 Introduction

Yone Noguchi (born as Noguchi Yonejirō, 1875–1947) is known to be a poet, writer and essayist who played a key role in the changing perceptions between the Japanese and Western, specifically Anglo-Saxon cultures at the turn of the twentieth century. Noguchi moved to San Francisco in 1893 to study English language and literature. After he began to publish his English poems from 1896, he attracted the attention of contemporary literary people and intellectuals, as it was still a rare phenomenon for a native Japanese to become an English poet. By 1899, Noguchi also began to gather experience in prose literature, which led him to take on a new role in which he attempted to introduce Japan's culture, while looking for the right topics that could capture the attention of his Western readers. He also wrote

on Western cultural information, published in Japan for a Japanese audience, but this chapter aims to look at his writings about Japanese cultural information published in English for an English-speaking audience.

This chapter will examine Noguchi's writings focusing on Japanese women between 1899 and 1906. It aims to present the way Noguchi's description of Japanese women changed during this time period, influenced by the progressive movement or by people like Onoto Watanna (1875–1954).

First, this chapter discusses two works which appeared under Noguchi's name from a collaboration with Blanche Partington (1866–1951) without his full consent. Second, it will argue for Onoto Watanna's influence on Noguchi's work, *The American Diary of a Japanese Girl* (1902), which brought him fame as a novelist. Third, it will look at the portrayal of women in his short novels, followed by his essays on Japan women's role in literature. Finally, it will look at his essays about *geishas* and Sada Yacco (1871–1946), who began to represent both the traditional and the modern element of the Meiji era.

This chapter aims to complement previous research, such as Madoka Hori's (2012) or Edward Marx's (2019) and will demonstrate how Noguchi's writings have tended to describe Japan as nurturing, both "traditional beauty" and the "modern woman," while emphasizing the image of Meiji era's Japan as a country that preserved its traditional roots and adopted modern ideas. In other words, Noguchi found a way to describe Japanese women's image as a representation of Japan's Civilisation and Enlightenment movement (文明開化 *Bunmeikaika*).

## 2. Collaboration with Blanche Partington

Following Noguchi's debut as a poet in 1896, Marx relates (2019, 203) that by February 1899, he wrote down his first ideas for his new project of a diary novel and handed over his notes to Blanche Partington (1866–1951), who agreed to do the editorial work. The first chapter will show how this collaboration portrayed Japanese women.

The prospect of Noguchi turning to prose and essay writing without limiting himself to the world of poetry was possible, as many contemporary poets did the same. Noguchi studied literature, used to read theater critiques during his student years in Tokyo (1891–1893) (Noguchi 1938, 351), and worked at Japanese American newspapers in San Francisco (Marx 2019, 102). Moreover, as he was presented to the American public as a native Japanese intellect who wrote poems in English, he could have confirmed through the responses that he embodied a native source of information for readers interested in Japanese culture.

This is to say that during Noguchi's stay in the United States, he could have witnessed various Western reactions towards East-Asia and Japan. On the one

hand, an "anti-Asian sentiment matured the Pacific states," supporting the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), that was extended in 1892. "[T]he anti-Chinese attitudes easily converted into anti-Japanese and anti-Indian sentiments. By the 1890s, large populations of the west coast opposed the immigration of Asians from any nation" (Cullinane 2014, 145–146). Noguchi himself publicly experienced those exclusionist sentiments during his debut (Marx 2019, 134, 190).

Westerners' Orientalism was showing Noguchia a different type of perception of Japan. As Orientalism became an apparent part of the nineteenth century United Kingdom, it produced for example theater plays, which often combined Chinese and Japanese cultural features (Forman 2013, 163). This could be seen in the pioneer Orientalist Japanese play *The Mikado* (1885), William S. Gilbert (1836–1911) and Arthur Sullivan's (1842–1900) operetta, which did not use real Japanese names for its cast and mimicked instead other East Asian names. Despite the play's claim of having a Japanese setting, as MacKenzie wrote (1995, 194), contemporary viewers perceived the play as "satire upon English politics and society." Although he noted that the play belonged to a series of theater plays that were praised for its authentic "arts and crafts of the East" ("fans, costumes, jewels and artefacts"), he also pointed out that "the stage was offering a very unreal vision of South Asia, China or Japan."

Meanwhile, Orientalist literature as well as theater plays, began to feature stories set in Japan and providing an image created by Westerners for Westerners about Japanese culture. Among those, the French pioneer work of the genre, Pierre Loti's (1850–1923) "autobiographical journal" *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887), which was translated into English and published in book form in 1889, greatly influenced Europe's image of Japan at the end of the nineteenth century. It brought about many "imitations and variations," such as the American John Luther Long's (1861–1927) popular short novel, *Madame Butterfly* (1898) (Reed 2010, 1). Both Loti and Long's works focused on the contemporary issue of interracial relationships between visiting foreign navy officers and local Japanese *geisha* girls, both ending with separation. Loti's novel established the idea of *geishas* and the "kind, fleeting Japanese girl" (Hori 2012, 69), and popularized the word *mousmé* as "French slang for a pretty girl" (Reed 2010, 4). However, both provide a Westerner's viewpoint of a race-centered society, depicting Japanese women as small dolls that lack intelligence, even questioning their beauty as women, all of which merged into the image of Japanese women.

The Orientalist theater plays and literary works were written or directed by foreigners, based on their perspective and imagination rooted in a limited cultural knowledge, which also resulted in depicting an unrealistic Japan, and failed to differentiate between two sovereign East Asian cultures. Noguchi repeatedly criticized these "Japanese-stories" in his works, for the exaggerated representation of his culture, as he elaborated in the following example:

We are much misrepresented on the foreign dramatic stage and in books; especially in so-called Japanese stories. Exaggeration is the only tool handled by the poor actors and dime novelists. The trouble is that there are so many poor actors and dime novelists. Under this unnecessary exaggeration[,] Japan has been made to look perfectly ridiculous. Exaggeration is cowardice, if it is anything. (Noguchi 1906a, 6)

This serves to demonstrate that these works indicated for him the need for more reliable native sources to correct the exaggerated depictions.<sup>1</sup> Marx (2019, 181) also shows us that Noguchi's parents became financially strained due to floodings in Japan in 1897, and could no longer send financial support to the twenty-two year old. Noguchi wanted to move from San Francisco to the East coast of the United States, but had no means to carry out his plans (Marx 2019, 185). This situation continued until 1899 (Marx 2019, 215). Noguchi needed means of income and contemporary exclusionism and Orientalism could also offer him a greater opportunity to gain reader's attention.

It is possible that Blanche Partington, who agreed to help with editing Noguchi's works from February 1899, was also aware of the benefits of the publicized identity of Noguchi. Furthermore, as Marx (2019, 199) pointed out, Partington experienced financial difficulties after her father's death in January 1899. These circumstances might have led Partington to make decisions that abused Noguchi's trust, namely, to publish under his name without his consent and use his writings that were entrusted to her.

The first of two of such abused writings was *The Diary of Miss Cherry Flower* (1899), which was the result of Partington and Noguchi's collaboration. This was the first chapter of a planned serial publication, but the magazine ceased to exist after its December issue, thus the diary novel remained unfinished. Marx (2019, 221) relates that Noguchi had disagreements regarding the printed version, for it was released without his final consent. Marx also noted that Noguchi did not wish to provide a romantic storyline for the Japanese girl protagonist, but Partington disregarded Noguchi's will. This indicates that Partington wished to follow the trend of successful Orientalist stories, which all had a romantic plot complicated by difficulties, such as difference in race or culture, or an engagement previously decided by the parents. Despite all of this, this is the first prose writing where Noguchi depicts Japanese women. The story is a reverse version of Orientalist works such as Long or Loti's, where a Western man describes his cultural experiences in Japan, positioning the Japanese as inferior to a superior Western culture's

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<sup>1</sup> Hori (2013, 63) argued that Orientalist theater plays made Noguchi realize that the essence of Japanese theater needs to be presented to Westerners.

point of view. In Noguchi's story, it is a Japanese girl who describes her first culture shock in the US, while praising Japanese customs.

This work remarkably comments on three topics regarding Japanese women, all being in align with previous Orientalist works. Loti (1887) emphasized, for example, the image of Japanese women being accustomed to kissing, writing that "no matter where one goes, in houses one enters for the first time, one is quite at liberty to kiss any mousme who may be present, without any notice being taken of it." Miss Cherry Flower presents the topic from a woman's perspective, as follows. "Kiss! Too sweet for open place! Foreigners think Japanese know not this rose of love, but I blush to say!" (Noguchi 1899, 52). In addition, she also remarks on the hospitality of girls working at Japanese hotels, as well as the misfortune of women in arranged marriages. The opening scene of the diary relates that the protagonist was freed from her engagement and married for love, a happy ending that can also be seen in *The Mikado*. Finally, it is important to note that this information on women could also be told by a male protagonist. By portraying a Japanese woman protagonist with wit, courage and the desire to learn Western customs or language, it brought, however, freshness to Orientalist stories.

The second work published under Noguchi's name was the article *What Americans Really Know about Bewitching Geishas* (1900), but as Marx had demonstrated, the article is a mixture from Noguchi's diary notes handed to Partington, and Partington's own thoughts. Noguchi's consent was entirely omitted, although Partington notified Noguchi after the article went into print. Partington at the time wrote theater reviews for the San Francisco Call, thus the aim of this article was to promote the play *The Geisha* (1896), which was being performed at San Francisco's Tivoli Opera House, between June 25 and July 15 (Marx 2019, 248). Even the article's subtitle *By Yone Noguchi, After a Study of the Play*, aimed to reassure the reader that it was delivering Noguchi's critical ideas after watching the performance. This British musical comedy of Sidney Jones (1861–1946) was another popular story of an interracial relationship set in Japan. In contrast with other Orientalist plays like *The Mikado*, it shifted its focus more towards the women characters instead of the men. The following quote from Partington's article clearly relates how Japanese women, especially *geishas*, were misrepresented due to a lack of cultural knowledge. "American hairdressing is natural – so natural as a summer cloud. It speaks of highest freedom, careless gracefulness, sweet passion – while Japanese shows slavish ceremony, polished machine-made beauty and graceful coldness. The former is the plain, democratic country's expression, while the latter is the romantic kingdom's." (Noguchi 1900). The description of the two cultures suggests it being Partington's perception. It is not clear whether this quote is based on *The Geisha*, but Japan's label of being "the romantic kingdom" could have been derived from

*The Mikado* as well. Similarly, perfectionism with a lack of emotion in Japanese women's portrayal can be seen in writings such as Loti's, where a beautiful *geisha* is perceived as emotionless during their parting. This quote therefore corresponds with the contemporary American perception, based on previous works made by Westerners. The following part of the article does show some, however, a certain cultural knowledge, that suggests the influence of Noguchi's ideas. "And how they move! As Japanese *geisha*, trained from baby girl to move like music, like flower in the wind, like butterfly in air, with sweet looks of child, of woman, of angel? [...] American girl has not learned to look down; she looks at all the world as a bright morning, without veil or mystery. Cast down your eyes sometimes, dear American lady, as evening shadows over beautiful scene; it is good that man wonders a little what is under the long eyelashes. Try it *geisha* of the Tivoli, to make truer the picture of Japan." (Noguchi 1900). This quote reflects a traditional expectation of Japanese men towards women's behavior and points out the American performer's lack of this cultural knowledge, thus resulting in a lack of Japanese authenticity. The article's portrayal of Japanese *geishas* can be summarized as beautiful women with elegant movements and restrained behavior. In other words, it did not provide new information regarding the image of *geishas*.

Overall, Noguchi's first attempts after poetry, an unfinished diary novel and an article of a theater review do not bring much content, but clearly did not aim to reshape the existing image of Japanese women. Instead, these writings offered the same images that brought success to many Orientalist stories, under the name of a Japanese poet.

### 3. Onoto Watanna's influence

Noguchi's first success as a novel writer will be discussed next in terms of his double woman figure, and how it was possibly influenced by Onoto Watanna.

After the unpleasant experience with Partington, Noguchi made new notes for a new diary, and hired Léonie Gilmore (1873–1933) to edit the manuscript in February 1901 (Marx 2019, 246). Noguchi's new manuscript was accepted in July 1901 (Marx 2019, 250) and *The American Diary of a Japanese Girl* (from here on, *The Diary*) was published in October 1902 (Marx 2019, 269).

There are several possibilities to consider as sources of inspiration for *The Diary*. Previous research mentions works from Noguchi's juvenile years, such as *Makura Zōshi* (1002) from Sei Shōnagon (966–1017), *The Citizen of the World* (1762) from Oliver Goldsmith (1730–1774) or *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* (1819–1920) by Washington Irving (1783–1859), and contemporary works such as Loti's the *Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff* (1889), Long's novel, or *A Japanese*

*Nightingale* (1900) by Onoto Watanna (Hori 2012, 71; Marx 2019, 256). In the following section, I will consider the influence of Watanna's works.

Watanna was the pseudonym for Winnifred Eaton, who debuted with a short story about Japan in November 1896, a few months after Noguchi debuted as a poet. She was of Chinese-Canadian origin, but with her debut work she created a fake Japanese identity that would present her as a native source for cultural information. As Marx (2019, 234) has argued, Watanna met Noguchi in May 1900, and arrived together in New York by the new year of 1901. Therefore, her works during that timeline possibly had an influence on Noguchi, but her earlier works also need reconsideration, as it was rare at the time for a Japanese person to publish in English, and thus could have caught Noguchi's attention.

Having said that, Watanna's writings until 1901 combined and criticized both Japanese and American cultures,<sup>2</sup> as did *The Diary's* protagonist. Noguchi's new diary novel also became an Orientalist novel, which again aimed to broaden reader perception of Japan, while delivering a fresh viewpoint by reflecting on contemporary American culture as a native Japanese. Watanna employed relatively few Japanese expressions in her Orientalist works, but usually included their meanings as well. In contrast, *The Diary* is rich in Japanese words, but they often lack an explanation or cultural context for readers to decipher the delivered information. This suggests that in spite of *The Diary's* aim to provide cultural information on Japan, it remained within the boundary of entertainment by simply promoting interest in the culture.

The story of *The Diary* mainly revolves around the perceptions of its protagonist, Morning Glory, who travels with her uncle from Japan to the US. Hori (2012, 70–71) discussed that the protagonist represents the image of a modern woman, for reasons such as her ambition to work, her objection to patriarchy and criticism of the *omiai* custom of arranged marriages. As she has pointed out, the protagonist declares herself to be a "revolutionist" (Noguchi 1902, 169; Hori 2012, 72). In addition, it is important to note that these characteristics also reflect Onoto Watanna's image and her works. Watanna's works explored difficult contemporary topics regarding relationships between the same or different races or cultures, mainly on Japan and America at the time. She offered stories for critical thinking on the topics of honor, obligation to patriarchy, and pre-decided engagements. She therefore preceded Noguchi in disclosing different aspects of these topics. Moreover, as Watanna introduced herself to the public as a Japanese girl, who first lived in Japan and later moved to Canada with her family, she became known as the daughter of a "well-known English consul" (Watanna 1896a, 27), thus related

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<sup>2</sup> She described, for example, problems such as the idea of race in American society (Watanna 1899), or how the obligation to Japanese patriarchy leads to tragedy (Watanna 1900, 15).

to high society. Watanna's similarity to *Morning Glory* is apparent, as *The Diary's* protagonist left Japan with his uncle, and was associated with consuls, which also served to symbolize the protagonist's relationship to high society. *Morning Glory's* use of American humor and sarcasm (Hori 2012, 70) could also reflect Watanna. We can draw the conclusion that *Morning Glory* is portraying Watanna. Nonetheless, Watanna could represent a role model for Noguchi in more aspects. At the time they met, Watanna was already a working and educated woman, who established her fame as a Japanese writer, despite expressing criticism of both of her claimed cultures. Considering Marx's notion (2019, 234) as to how Noguchi seemed not to realize that Watanna's Japanese identity was fake, Watanna could possibly be the first Japanese woman Noguchi met, who adapted modern ideas and had a critical mind.

*The Diary's* protagonist travels to a foreign country, adapts Western customs and learns English, thus illustrating the possibilities for a modern Japanese woman. Simultaneously, it also describes the contemporary Japanese women, as follows. They wear silk clothes and have paper cords in their hair, but do not wear earrings. Their aesthetic is expressed through the face and shoulders. Intimacy is shown by the act of crying instead of a kiss, which is not known (Noguchi 1902, 12, 59, 84, 103, 105, 111, 159). This information, however, also did not exceed the preceding Orientalist works' portrayal, but it did provide a more striking contrast with the protagonist. There is one figure in the novel, Miss Pine Leaf, who embodies the traditional Japanese woman living in Japan, looking for a husband. Her name also suggests symbolism, as Noguchi often wrote in his later works about the pine being a symbol of Japan (see Noguchi 1908). Regarding the topic of kissing, Noguchi contradicted his first diary novel, thus he did attempt to reshape this image described by works such as Loti's *Madame Chrysanthème*. Noguchi was not the first one to do this, however, as Watanna did it as well (Watanna 1896b, 27). Coupled with the description of the looks and behavior of girls, *The Diary* also slightly touches upon the topic of arranged marriage. It emphasizes that Japanese women are not allowed to be familiar with men, and choosing a partner is the job of the matchmaker, which leads to loveless relationships, as women do not have the right to decline these marriages.<sup>3</sup> Once again, it can be concluded, that although Noguchi did not build *The Diary's* plot on a dramatic love story, it did describe the topic of arranged marriages, which also occupied the center of Orientalist works.

<sup>3</sup> Literary: "The Jap 'gentleman' - who desires the old barbarity - persists still in fancying that girls are trading wares. When he shall come to understand what is Love!" (Noguchi 1902, 10) "They have only to doze and wait for the footsteps of a matchmaker with a young man." (Noguchi 1902, 160) "Well, then, how did you come to know young men in a country where familiarity with one is regarded as a crime for a girl? [...] The dictionary of Jap girls comprises no such word as 'No'." (Noguchi 1902, 169) See also Noguchi (1902, 212–213).

In summary, *The Diary* confirmed the portrayal of the traditional character of Japanese women and used this traditional look as a tool to emphasize the modernity portrayed by the protagonist. Thus, Noguchi did not add original new information related to women's traditional character. It is true, as Horii (2012, 72) stated, that Morning Glory's image exceeded Japanese women's portrayal seen in previous Orientalist works. It is important to point out, nonetheless, that Noguchi did not add original new information related to the image of contemporary Japanese women who embody tradition, but rather envisioned its opposite, a modern Japanese woman who comes from this tradition, however, employs Western culture. The freshness of *The Diary* thus entirely lies in this Japanese girl and her numerous critical remarks about two cultures gathered in one novel. Although *The Diary of Miss Cherry Flower* was also based on the same protagonist, it is possible that Watanna was the role model for both novels. In conclusion, for Noguchi, Watanna could have been the first person to embody the prospect of a modern Japanese woman.

#### 4. Traditional Japanese beauty in short novels

The next chapter will argue about the images of Japanese women depicted in works written after Noguchi completed the manuscript of *The Diary*. These writings show how Noguchi shifted his focus from the modern towards portraying the traditional.

After *The Diary's* manuscript was accepted by its publisher in 1901 July, Noguchi published his first short novel *The Wedding Bell* (December 1901). It followed the structure of Noguchi's previous works, with diary entries after an opening section, and with a frame given by the opening and ending scenes of ringing the temple bell. The story tells about an ex-student of the Imperial University and now a Buddhist priest, living a solitary life at Tado mountain's temple and reading George G. Byron (1788–1824). The protagonist meets the most beautiful girl from the neighboring village, who came to carry out a seven day long praying ritual for the recovery of her mother. The story tells how the girl fell in love with the sight of an educated and self-studying person, which led to the priest's solidarity being replaced with love. As Marx (2019, 257) summarized, it is a "conventional romance", but it needs to be added that the protagonist is clearly based on Noguchi and how he probably envisioned himself due to his familial Buddhist roots (Marx 2019, 46–56), in case he did not travel to the US after learning English and literature in Tokyo, but had instead to become a Buddhist priest in Japan. *The Diary* was also based on Noguchi's cultural experiences, and again it is possible that he was influenced by Watanna to try out this genre, as she wrote her first short novels about Japanese couples, presenting these as her real experiences (for example, Watanna 1896b). Similarly, Noguchi's idea

of a contemporary traditional Japanese beauty and her relationship with a man and husband is reflected in his novel. Filial piety, deep religiousness and domestic work are emphasized here as a woman's virtue. The girl's beauty is repeatedly expressed, coupled with a short remark on her sexual attractiveness suggested by the priest's attraction to her breast or naked feet. In other words, the novel described a Japanese girl's inner and outer beauty. Finally, the beauty's naivety was related to her purity, which was reflected by her not knowing what a kiss is, in contrast to the learned priest who was knowledgeable about Western literature.

After his first short novel and *The Diary's* publication, Noguchi traveled to England between November 1902 and April 1903. His new short novel *The Carnation* (September 1903) was consequently published in a Chicago short story magazine for women. It described a budding interracial love, with both parties being attracted to the other, but ending without expressing these feelings clearly. Following in *The Diary's* footsteps once again, it describes two types of Japanese women. On the one hand, there is the traditional Japanese beauty, portrayed by the female protagonist. She is again described as the most beautiful girl in the neighborhood, who is shy to express her love which deeply affects her with its smallest motions. The novel briefly remarks how unrelated men and women do not have physical contact or spend time alone together. Thus, the protagonist ends up mostly admiring the American guest in secret and expresses her feelings using the symbolism of a single flower. The novel ends without a clear indication as to whether the man will find or understand the message before his next visit. As can be seen, this portrayal of traditional beauty is again naive and pure, and well-mannered, as her hospitality is shown by domestic work such as serving tea or sewing the guest's sleeve. The latter is also described as an act of kindness in both of Noguchi's first short novels. The male protagonist provides, in contrast, an account of another type of Japanese beauty in a recollection. This woman is described as having an education, but being a flirt, and her prejudice against foreigners is causing her to only play with foreign men's hearts. "Who cares for a hairy idiot! He is only a Western-sea man – that's all! I am fooling him a bit, – that is all!" (Noguchi 1903, 502). In contrast to Noguchi's diary novel, here it is the educated, the modern woman's role to emphasize a contrast in favor of the traditional woman.

Noguchi's novel again can be defined as a reverse version of some Orientalist novels, but it is important to note that Watanna already preceded him with the idea of similar plots; such as the plot of a Western male protagonist who could not break the Japanese girl's heart in contradiction of some Orientalist novels (Watanna 1899a), the plot of an educated American flirt who drove a Japanese man to suicide (Watanna 1899c), or the plot of a Japanese girl using American men's love for financial support (Watanna 1901). Noguchi's described modern Japanese woman can be interpreted as the Japanese version of Loti or as Watanna's

Cleo Ballard (Watanna 1899c). Prejudice was a recurring topic in Watanna's works (see also Watanna 1899b), but Noguchi also suggests the influence of Westerner's behaviour in Japanese women's prejudice, pointing out Loti's responsibility, as follows. "All gallant foreigners, I declare, come to Nihon in a dream of acting a love-story with one of our brown girls, tracing Loti's hero in *Madame Chrysanthemum*." (Noguchi 1903, 502). This note also highlights that Noguchi's American protagonist is contradicting previous Western male protagonists of Orientalist works, as he is able to appreciate Japanese women. Finally, Noguchi predicts that Westerners will have the chance for an innocent Japanese love only after prejudice "vanishes from girls' minds" (Noguchi 1903, 502).

Finally, a third short novel of Noguchi was also published, entitled *The Mountain Nightingale* (July 1904). Just as in previous works, it focuses on a shy and "innocent" (Noguchi 1904e, 33) Japanese girl, who does not know about kissing, lives according to filial piety and knows hospitality, described again by serving tea. By highlighting her "crimson lips," "long eyelashes," and "tiny legs," Noguchi portrayed a "perfect model for any sculptor" (Noguchi 1904e, 33), a Japanese beauty. He attempted to improve his image of pure women, saying "Japanese girls handle many a little trick eloquent as kisses," and confirmed their sexual appeal by describing their "slender neck" (Noguchi 1904e, 33). This portrayal is further supplemented with the "sweet laughter of tea-house style" (Noguchi 1904e, 30) recalling works like *The Geisha*, and "hereditary expressions for confusion" (Noguchi 1904e, 32), the latter being fidgety with their sleeves by measuring or biting it. This portrayal shows a similarity with Watanna's work with an identical title (Watanna 1901).

In addition, this novel also describes an untrustworthy woman in parallel with the traditional beauty. This time it is the figure of a cheating woman, the mother of the traditional beauty. The novel emphasizes a parent's right to make decisions over a daughter's life, by describing the tragic story of the father, who learned from his wife that love is an illusion, and brings her daughter to the wilderness, to protect her from love. Although it needs to be pointed out that the story shows a twenty-six-year-old American protagonist becoming attracted to a fourteen-year-old Japanese girl, it nevertheless describes an unfulfilled Western attraction while justifying Japanese paternalism.

In summary, even in the case of Noguchi's first short novels, Watanna's influence can be assumed. It is possible that Noguchi's choice to place a focus on the traditional Japanese beauty instead of a modern one, also relates to Watanna. Noguchi's pure and naïve, religious, kind and well-mannered traditional beauty who knows filial piety, domestic work and hospitality, could probably also be considered his own ideal. These short novels suggest the clear image that Noguchi aimed to deliver to Western readers in contrast to the *geishas* who were

accustomed to men in teahouses, as it was depicted in popular Orientalist works. This figure was also highlighted with the portrayal of a different type of woman, who had the characteristics of cheating, prejudice, and flirting. Finally, despite Watanna's possible influence on Noguchi's short novels, Noguchi did not choose arranged marriage as a topic – although he left some possibility for interracial romance, and was not critical about obligation to parents, but instead expressed support for women's filial piety and paternalism. All of this suggests that Noguchi's ideal of a Japanese woman and his idea of relationships could have been quite in contrast to the modern woman and concept of love represented by Watanna, despite writing about the modern first.

## 5. Women writers

Next, we will discuss some of Noguchi's earliest essays on Japanese culture that he began to write from 1904. For his essays, he tried out various cultural topics over the coming years, in order to find the ones that would grab foreign attention and prove the value of Japanese culture in an age of cultural hierarchy. This chapter will examine his early essays on literature, which led him to a new realization and recognition of Japanese women.

First, the essay *Evolution of Modern Japanese Literature* (March 1904) remarks on Nansui Sudō's (1857–1920) novel, the *Ladies of New Style* (新粧之佳人 *Shinsō no Kajin*, 1887) which described a fictional Japanese woman embodying the results of the American progressive movement. Noguchi mentions that this character caused a revolution between Japanese women, but later contradicts himself, suggesting that Japanese women are not erudite by stating, "[o]ur Japanese woman rarely reads" (Noguchi 1904a, 263).

He revised his argument, however, for his next article, *Modern Japanese Women Writers* (May 1904). Here he outlined women's relationship with literature inside the context of the progressive movement. He described the Heian period (794–1185) when Japanese men legitimized literary women, who then became oppressed by Confucianism until the Meiji period. Regarding the Meiji period, he presents modern, educated Japanese women, for example, Ichiyō Higuchi (1872–1896) as an "interpreter of Japanese women's sacrifice and passion" (Noguchi 1904b, 429). Noguchi's note on Higuchi's short stories might have been his attempt to gain foreign attention for a writer resembling Watanna. It is important to point out, however, that Noguchi tried to emphasize these Japanese women writer's value, by making notes on their education, family background and status, or their appreciation by the Japanese Empress or foreigners. In other words, Noguchi took a new turn and attempted to introduce a new, modern image of Japanese women that fit the contemporary progressive movement, but also elitism.

The reason for this was, one assumes, his presentation of the article's advanced sheet at the Reading Room of Columbia University's Barnard College on 16 April 1904 (*The Lounger* 1904, 305–306). This women's college was founded in New York to give an opportunity for women's education. Noguchi's closing statement of "there are a hundred poetesses, though none of them has achieved any distinction," (Noguchi 1904b, 432) delivers once again a negative description of women's image, with the credibility of a Japanese poet. In short, even within a renewed narrative, Noguchi's opinion remains that contemporary Japanese women do not possess the ability for poetry.

Noguchi soon revised his views once again and published another article on the topic, entitled *Japanese Women in Literature* (July 1904). The new narrative portrays Japanese women in a constant relationship with literature, and thus with erudition. He corrects himself by strongly stating that "Japanese women have been literary from an age unknown," and that "[t]heir skill in phraseology and their delicacy of sentiment were far superior to the men's" (Noguchi 1904c, 88). In addition, he highlighted how Heian period's Japanese women writers surpassed Western women's literary progress. In other words, in this new essay Noguchi attempted to revise his previous two articles and establish the image of intellectual Japanese women by emphasizing their historical relationship to literature. In addition, this can be also seen in his short novel, *The Mountain Nightingale*, in which Japanese women's natural connection to literature is suggested by the American man's remark on the fourteen-year old girl's ability to sing a love song without understanding its meaning yet (Noguchi 1904e, 33).

Last, Noguchi's essay entitled *Theatres and Theatre-Going in Japan* (July 1904), also shows this new portrayal. Here he emphasizes that "[t]he Japanese women are passionately devoted to the drama" (Noguchi 1904d, 170) and are "extremely sentimental" (Noguchi 1904d, 167) compared to the male escort, who would often sleep during the performance as he is only "obliged to escort his women relatives" (Noguchi 1904d, 170). This essay described a theater enthusiast's day in a *kabuki* theater, which Noguchi at the time viewed as the representative Japanese theater.<sup>4</sup> It is also focused on defining women as its main audience, depicting Japanese women theatre-going as Western women.<sup>5</sup>

Overall, Noguchi clearly looked for the element of the modern to add to the portrayal of contemporary Meiji era's Japanese women. First, he attempted to describe Japanese women in the frame of the progressive movement, then expanded this portrayal by describing their continuous relationship to literature, that

<sup>4</sup> Noguchi referred to *kabuki* in *The Diary* as "Japan theater," or "Japanese stage" (Noguchi 1902, 134–135).

<sup>5</sup> "[...] the Japanese Matinee Girl (fully as important a person in Japan as in America) who loves to sit in the theater as long as possible and weep over the play" (Noguchi 1904d, 167).

historically pioneered Western cultures. In other words, he described Japanese women as intellectuals, further supporting this image by depicting them as frequenting theaters. It is also important to point out that he expanded this image to every Japanese woman, present and past. It can be seen how Noguchi also finally withheld his criticism about women poets to achieve his new aim of a flawless image.

## 6. The real geisha

Last, this chapter will show how Noguchi turned toward the topic of *geisha* right after moving back to Japan in 1904, portraying them in a similar way as literary women.

As it has been discussed, Noguchi criticized the way *geishas* were depicted in Orientalist theater plays and novels. Since *geishas* appeared as protagonists in most of those works at the time he arrived in the US in 1893, thereby being the main figure portraying Japanese women for foreigners, it is understandable that he focused on Japanese women from the moment he started his prose writing. In his article *Evolution of Modern Japanese Literature*, he explained that novel writing was not recognized in Japan as "gentleman's work" before 1895, and suggested that the reason for it might have been for the "depiction of the lower class of women," because "[t]he geisha was their favorite heroine" (Noguchi 1904a, 262). This remark could have also been Noguchi's attempt to make his readers critically reflect on Orientalist writers.

Following Noguchi's return to Japan in late September 1904, however, a new article *The Real Geisha* (November 1904) indicated that he immediately researched the topic of the *geisha* after accessing native sources in Tokyo. Noguchi had experience with *geishas* from his student years in Tokyo, and here he defended the profession of *geishas*, pointing out that the idea he encountered in the US, the family home being the "chiefest retreat" will be "[t]he destroyer of the geisha business." (Noguchi 1904f, 61). The article also described the upbringing and the way of income for *geishas*, expanding the human side of their image for the readers. Contrary to previous works, it also provided photos of *geishas* instead of drawings and paintings, explaining that "[t]he superficial in beauty is the whole thing for them" (Noguchi 1904f, 60). In brief, this article can be regarded as Noguchi redeeming his image related to knowledge about *geishas*, after the article *What Americans Really Know about Bewitching Geishas* (1900).

Noguchi went even further in another article *The Geisha Girl of Japan* (January 1905), which suggests research work, and reshaped his image of *geishas* entirely. Noguchi provided a detailed explanation about Japanese men visiting *geisha* houses, the operation of tea houses, *geisha* districts in Tokyo, and included photos with names of contemporary famous *geishas*. He regarded *geishas* as "the

most interesting and the least understood abroad of all the national institutions" (Noguchi 1905a, 20), as they are portrayed as a "mere waitress or attendant, [...] a common dancer, entertainer or musician" (Noguchi 1905a, 20) in Orientalist works. For this reason, he focused on emphasizing the education of *geishas* as "a work of infinite labor and patience," stating that *geishas* are "the ideal beauty evolved by Japanese culture" (Noguchi 1905a, 22).

Finally, we can see Noguchi's attention moving toward one specific *geisha*, Sada Yacco. At the time, she was already known as theater *shinpa*'s actress, who gained fame in the West during her theatrical tours between 1899 and 1902. Noguchi described Yacco in the article *Shakespeare in Japan* as "a charming woman – and superbly gifted" (Noguchi 1905b, 235). Noguchi probably saw in Yacco the potential to display a *geisha* who embodies the combination of beauty and erudition, in other words, to represent the ideal beauty that he described in previous articles. Yacco was a well-known figure and a living example for a *geisha*'s image, contradicting the image of *geishas* in Orientalist works. She did not only represent a traditional profession, thus traditional Japanese culture, but she also added the element of modernity to a *geisha* image by being an actress in the *shinpa* theater. Noguchi's interview with her, entitled *Sada Yacco* (Noguchi 1906b), reflects a similar image to *Morning Glory*, *The Diary*'s protagonist, who was based on the figure of Watanna and Noguchi's life experiences. This figure of Yacco, who was part of a traditional profession that she learned to perform in a modern theatrical group, and traveled to the US, shows a similarity with *Morning Glory*, a traditional Japanese girl who became accustomed to Western customs, and also traveled to the US.

It is possible that in Noguchi's life experience, Sada Yacco might have been the first Japanese woman strongly possessing both elements. It is not clear how much tradition Noguchi could have seen in Watanna, but undoubtedly Sada Yacco was the first Japanese woman Noguchi had an interview with. She could be considered the second most important contemporary Japanese woman figure regarding the influence on Noguchi's works, if we consider that Noguchi probably perceived Watanna as Japanese. As regards her actual identity, Watanna was known to belong to two cultures, but Yacco was born Japanese which probably made her more eligible to represent contemporary Japan. In this view, Sada Yacco could be considered not as a new Watanna, but as a later found better version of her, the first real *Morning Glory*, whom Noguchi met in person.

In summary, after moving back to Japan, Noguchi aimed to correct the image of traditional Japanese beauty represented by *geishas* in the previous Orientalist works. He portrayed *geishas* as the ideal traditional beauty of Japan, who worked and were educated, thus could take part in the contemporary Meiji era of Japan, which also had traditional roots and employed modernity, just as *geishas* and Sada Yacco.

## 7. Conclusion

This essay discussed Noguchi's portrayal of Japanese women between 1899 and 1906, which focused on two types of Japanese woman, with the aim of correcting the image depicted in Orientalist works. One of these was the figure of a naïve and pure, young and beautiful girl, with characteristics of filial piety, domestic work or hospitality. Between 1899 and 1904, this figure represented the ideal traditional Japanese beauty in the way Noguchi perceived it. Another figure of Japanese women was depicted as a girl who came from traditional Japan but learned the customs and language of the West and was thus able to criticize both. This figure portrayed Watanna and attempted to embody the Meiji era's characteristics of the traditional and the modern in a symbolic way. Although, up until 1904, Noguchi had fewer writings on this image of a Japanese girl, from 1904 he realized that women writers also embodied this symbolic duality of the Meiji era. Noguchi was probably influenced by the contemporary progressive movement and expanded Japanese women's image abroad by depicting them as erudite. It is important to point out that Noguchi did not multicolor the characters of his women figures. His new ideal of educated and naturally literary women, represented by women writers, changed to *geishas*, following his return to Japan in September 1904. He realized that the *geisha* and *shinpa* actress Sada Yacco, the new Watanna and the first real Morning Glory in Noguchi's life experience, can represent traditional roots and modernity indicated by Japan's Civilisation and Enlightenment.

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