

What the Son Inherited from His Father? Preceded by A Brief Introduction to the Noguchi Legacy as a Working Hypothesis

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The relation between Isamu Noguchi and his father Yonejirô Noguchi has not been thoroughly investigated. This is partly because the father has been almost ostracized in Japan after the Second World War, and partly because the son would not want to touch upon the subject. Indeed Isamu had to live as the illegitimate son of Leonie Gilmour, as his father refused to recognize him. By way of an introduction to the issue, a brief chronological outline and basic factual data of the main personalities must be given at the outset.

In his last year, in 1988, Isamu reported in one of his final interviews that his father, Yone, “did not quite fit into the picture (of Isamu’s life) too well. It was unfortunate.” Here is the transcription published in English.¹ However, the Japanese version, taken from the same interview, gives a slightly different phrasing. Isamu is said to declare that his father only “planted his seed,” and appeared on the scene only to give birth to Isamu in this world. And Masayo Duus, who wrote an excellent biography of Isamu, asks if this was true.² This question serves as the starting point of this paper.

1. Triangle

Yonejirô Noguchi was born on Feb. 8, 1875. On Nov. 3, 1893, Yone, at the age of 18, set sail for San Francisco as a third class passenger on the steamship *Belgique*. As a disciple of Joaquin Miller, Yone makes his debut as a young poet. His maiden work, *Seen and Unseen--Monologues of a Homeless*

Snail (1896), deserves our attention, as the title turns out to be also relevant in understanding Isamu's life (fig.1). In Feb. 1901, Yone moved to New York, taking a room on the Riverside Drive overlooking the Hudson River. It was then that Leonie Gilmore appeared before him as the editorial assistant so as to "correct" his composition in broken English.³

Leonie was born on June 16, 1874, that is, she is one year and 6 months elder to Yone. Although Isamu did believe that his mother had dropped out of Bryn Mawr College, the record tells that she graduated from the college in 1895. She was teaching Latin and French at a Catholic Girls' School in Jersey when she read a news advertisement by Yone. It is doubtless that the success of Yone's *American Diary of a Japanese Girl* (published as a book in Sep. 1902, and welcomed by more than 70 newspaper reviews) owes to Gilmour's rewriting and editing. The fact that the Japanese author disguised himself into a female narrator was a tactful gender strategy which deserves careful feminist reading. Yone's dependence on Leonie also reminds us of Isamu's relationship with Priscilla Morgan, who served as Isamu's

¹ Isamu Noguchi, interview by Kazue Kobata, spring 1988. Masayo Duus, *The Life of Isamu Noguchi, Journey without Borders*. Translated by Peter Duus, Princeton University Press, 2004, p.11 (hereafter abridged as P. Duus). As we shall see, there is a huge gap between the Japanese 'original' and the English 'translation.' For the sake of convenience, (M. Duus) refers to the Japanese edition whereas (P. Duus) to the English version; the English version is almost half in length compared with the Japanese published version. The gap is in itself a precious indicator to show the difference of culture and conventions in publishing biographies in Japan and in the United States. The most interesting anecdotes for Japanese readers are often omitted in the English version probably for the sake of smooth reading and clarity of paragraph making. The conversations taken from the author's interview are translated at length in the Japanese 'original' version whereas most of them are eliminated from the English 'translated' version. The gap turns out to be a relevant guide so as to pursue the trans-Pacific comparison of the father and the son. As a case of translation studies, the author will write another paper on the gap revealed between the English and Japanese versions of Isamu Noguchi's Biography by Masayo Duus.



fig. 1
Isamu Noguchi with his *Slide Mantra* in Venice, June, 1986. The shape of the spiral reminds the *Song of the Snail* by Yone Noguchi.

manager and business partner from 1959 for the last 29 years of Isamu's career as an artist.⁴

Yone's attitude to Leonie is easily to be blamed for. Their relationship remained ambiguous, to say the least. One letter Yone addressed to Leonie is omitted from the English translation of Msayo Duus's biography.⁵ There, we see Yone explaining himself to Leonie as if it were a warning to her. In this confession, Yonejirô, half self-justifying, and half self-humiliating, qualifies himself as an amorphous animal without head or tail, just looking like a jerry-fish floating in the sea. One may wonder if the jerry-fish in English has as strong a poetical evocative power as in Japanese: Indeed, it appears at the very beginning of the Japanese Mythology,

Kojiki narrating the genesis (if the term is allowed here) of the Japanese archipelago.

Noguchi spent 11 years in the US before his return to Japan in 1904. His departure from San Francisco was on Nov. 17, 1904. Two months later, Leonie Gilmore gave birth to a boy in Los Angeles. *The Los Angeles Herald* put "Yone Noguchi's Babe, pride of Hospital." on Nov.17, 1904. The lead

² ドウズ昌代『イサム・ノグチ 宿命の越境者』講談社、2000、Vol.1、pp.17-18. (hereafter abridged as M. Duus). The paperback edition was also published in 2003, which will be abridged as (M. Duus 2003), hereafter.

³ P. Duus, p.20. Hereafter, if there are no notable discrepancies between the Japanese and the English versions, only the relevant page of the English edition is given. For poetries, both references are given so as to indicate the English and Japanese renderings.

⁴ P.Duus, pp. 288-89.

⁵ Sep. 17, 1902; M.Duus Vol.1., p..59.

remains itself quite ambiguous as the inter-racial marriage was still almost a taboo, and could easily become a scandal in the State of California. But the reality was much worse as Noguchi was then intending to marry Ethel Armes, literary journalist of the *Washington Post*, whom he designated as his “American agent.” Their engagement naturally broke out when Yone Noguchi’s deception became evident. Therefore, Leonie was legally Yone’s “lawfully wedded wife.” But she did know that she was a wife, whom her husband did not love. This was what she wrote in her letter to Yone, on Feb. 24, 1906.⁶

By the time Leonie sent this letter to Yone, he had already married Matsuko in Jan. 1906. Masayo Duus wondered why Leonie decided to move to Japan, despite her doubts about Yone, whose “letters are ominous, to say the least. He warns me not to bring any ‘dreams’ with me,” as she observed in her letter to Frank Putnam, on Jan. 23, 1906.⁷ The only possible answer would be the anti-Japanese sentiment which gathered momentum after the earthquake of 1906 in California. Arriving in Japan, the baby finally was baptized Isamu, at the age of two years and four months. The name was given by Yone. And yet Leonie had to know by the spring of 1908 that Yone had already got another Japanese wife. Isamu would remain an illegitimate son of his American mother.

2. Inheritance

The circumstances above would suffice to understand Isamu’s antipathy to his father, who abandoned both himself and his mother. Yet, it would be quite another matter whether or not the son partakes of some similarity with the father. So as to conduct the comparison between Yone and Isamu, let me take up one anecdote as a guiding thread. Curiously enough this anecdote is entirely eliminated in the English version of Masayo Duus’s biography.

Leonie refers to a curious similarity which the father shares with the

⁶ M.Duus, Vol.1., p.85; M. D. 2003, Vol.1., p. 100; P.Duus, p.42.

⁷ P.Duus, p.46.

son. Yone tends to run to the extreme opposite when he is criticized. So does Yo (as he was called then). When scolded by his mother as he was covered with mud, he jumps into the bathtub without taking off his clothes.⁸ This kind of oscillation is also observed by Priscilla Morgan.

“Isamu’s character is infinitely complicated and at the same time pure and simple as a child. At times he was incredibly sweet and sympathetic, but at next moment he exploded like tornados or instantaneous water heater. He was an untreatable choleric. But he was outstanding in his high pride as an artist and sincerity as a human being. His insight into all kind of things was a constant surprise for me. An intolerably selfish behavior was followed by his dry, original humor which was so natural and intelligent. I know his wonderful smile which he showed when we were alone. Such were constant intoxication for me.”⁹

The instantaneous temper and the oscillation to the extreme opposite seem to be common characters that the son inherited from his father. Yet beyond the heredity, this jerry-fish like flexibility may be understood as one of the essential factors in their artistic creation, constantly oscillating between the two sides of the Pacific Ocean. This reminds me of Hagiwara Sakutarô analyzing Yone Noguchi.

“For the purpose of introducing Japan to the West, Yone Noguchi is the best choice. If we try to show the genuine in-translatable Japan as it is, the foreigners can hardly understand it. It is indispensable to modify it to a certain degree in Western languages so as to render it accessible to them. Yone Noguchi is the top person who is capable of doing this wise job without hesitation. (..) From our Japanese standpoint, however, Mr. Noguchi’s poetry smells too much Western, and we are not satisfied with this incongruity in him which does not fit our national emotions and sentiments. The opposite would be also the case with European observers.

⁸ Passage dropped from the English version; May 27, 1906, M.Duus, vol.1., p.91.

⁹ Interview by Masayo Duus, Nov.14, 1994. The passages are entirely omitted from the English edition of *The Life of Isamu Noguchi*. The quote is a tentative retranslation into English by S. Inaga from the Japanese paper back version, 2003, Vol.2, p.211.

However, this is why his art is constantly new for us, and allows us to feel the fresh sea wind blowing from the Pacific Ocean.”¹⁰

Sakutarô sharply analyzes not only the in-between-ness of Yone Noguchi's poetry but also the fundamental uneasiness of his self divided into two cultural spheres. From the Western point of view, Noguchi's opinion looks as if representing exemplarily Oriental poetics; whereas judging from the Japanese sensibility every line of his utterance in poetics smells strongly Western.¹¹ Yone Noguchi's entire endeavor consisted in this structural double tongue. The intensity of his utterance was sustained by this inner conflict which was inevitably perceived as Yone's constant contradictions. Nobody else grasped better than Leonie how this insurmountable conflict was transmitted from Yone to his son Isamu (and even accelerated) as the driving force of their artistic creation.

3. Warning Bell

In his famous poem en prose, Yone self-mockingly observes his ambiguous position floating in between.

When Japanese read my poetry they say,
His Japanese poems are not so good but perhaps his English poems are better.”

When Westerners read my English poetry, they say,
“I cannot bear to read his English poems, but his Japanese poems must be superb.” To tell the truth,

¹⁰ 萩原朔太郎 Hagiwara Sakutarô, 「ヨネ野口について」 “On Yone Noguchi,” 『詩歌時代』 *Shiika-jidai* (Poetic Era), May, 1925. The apparent logical awkwardness of the translation comes from the inversion of word order which occurs in the English translation of the Japanese original.

¹¹ 亀井俊介 Kamei Shunsuke 『新版ナショナリズムの文学 明治精神の探求』 *Literature of Nationalism: A Research in the Meiji Spirit, New edition*, 講談社学術文庫 Kôdansha Gakujutsu Bunko, 1988, p.258.

¹² Tokyo, 1921; M.Duus, Vol.1, p.73; P.Duus. p.37.

I have no confidence in either language.
In other words, I guess I am a dual citizen.¹²

The stigma of cultural dual citizenship was the destiny the son inherited from his father. During the Second World War, the father had to play the role of a fanatic ultra-nationalist because of his international renown. Otherwise he could have been persecuted in his homeland as pro-American and unpatriotic; likewise, the son suffered from his experience at the compulsory relocation camp of Japanese-Americans in Poston in which he was voluntarily incarcerated.

In connection with his work, *Bell-Child* (1950), Isamu quoted from the last poem that his father, Yone left shortly before he passed away in 1947 (fig.2) .

The Bell rings,
The bell rings, This is warning!
When this warning rings,
Everyone is sleeping,
You too are sleeping.¹³

A photo is left when Isamu wrote in his handwriting this Japanese poem on a blackboard at the occasion of his solo show exhibition at the Mitsukoshi Department Store in 1950. No less than his father, Isamu felt himself to be a warning bell, located in between the two conflicting

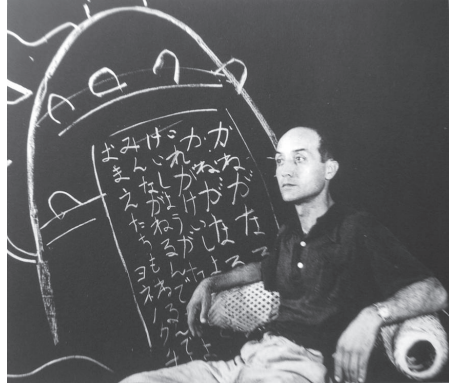


fig. 2

Isamu Noguchi with his hand written hiragana Script of the last poem left by his father, Yone Noguchi, shortly before his death in 1947. At his Solo show exhibition, Mitsukoshi Department Store, Tokyo , 1950.

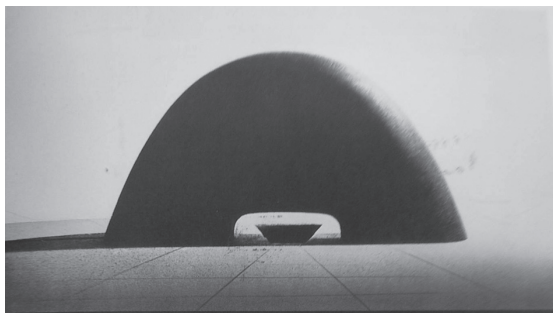


fig. 3
Memorial to the Death
 (1952) Project for the
 Hiroshima Atomic Bomb
 Memorial Park

parties. The bell rings in vain as both of the two parties would not listen to it. The form of the bell, half buried in the field, strongly reminds Isamu's *Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Memorial Project* (1952) (fig.3). Judging from the circumstances, it is undeniable that Isamu's project for the peace memorial was inspired, partly at least, by Yone's last poem after Japan's defeat. And by showing the drawing of the bell, Isamu did not hide his indebtedness to his father. It is well known that his planning of the Hiroshima Memorial Monument was turned down by the municipality of Hiroshima in 1952. The political reason in the backyard is recently revealed to be more complicated than Isamu imagined.¹⁴ Yet Isamu had to feel that he was rejected by Japan because of his American citizenship.

4. *Akari* as Sculpture

Even in his final years, Isamu felt humiliated when the honor of representing the United States was addressed to him at the Venice Biennale in 1986. On that occasion, Isamu is known to have demonstrated his

¹³ Quoted in Bert Winther-Tamaki, "The Ceramic Art of Isamu Noguchi: A Close Embrace of the Earth," in Louise Allison Court and Bert Winther-Tamaki, *Isamu Noguchi and Modern Japanese Ceramics, a close embrace of the earth*, The Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2003, pp.25-27.

¹⁴ See Gen Adachi's paper in the present volume.

dogged determination to have the *Akari* light sculpture recognized as legitimate art. Masayo Duus remarks that Isamu “seemed to take pity on them, as if they too had been branded as “bastards” or “half-breeds.”¹⁵ These “nomads, restless wanderers between the realms of art and design,” literally symbolized Isamu’s own existence. The Biennale was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to legitimize not only his *akari*, but his whole career as an “in-between” person. This in-between-ness inevitably implied uncertain identity, preventing Isamu from being fully recognized as a typical American cultural hero.

Until his death, Isamu Noguchi’s artistic identity remained uncertain. He was suspended, as it were, between “sculptor” and “industrial designer” from the Western critical view point. While enthusiastic in his garden project, Isamu clearly refused to be treated as a half-Japanese gardening craftsman (*niwashi*). In the final analysis, however, Isamu’s greatest strength was “that he does not belong,” as Calvin Tompkins put it.¹⁶ Curiously enough, this no-belonging-ness was what Shunsuke Kamei, in his seminal study on Yone Noguchi, had singled out as the key term to understand Isamu’s father’s poetry.¹⁷

Obviously, the destiny unwillingly shared between the father and the son complicates their relationships. Although it was inevitable that Isamu negatively talked of his own father, it would be superficial to take his words simply at face value. Beneath a personal rejection and hatred lies a deeper semi-unconscious sympathy or empathy which would be worthy of investigations. Instead of exacerbating the opposition, I would like to propose here, as a working hypothesis, a tactics of mutual elucidation between the father and the son. Masayo Duus maintains: “Ironically, his father’s passionate dream of conquering two cultural worlds had taken firm root in his bastard son.”¹⁸ “The more he longed for the absent father, who never recognized him as a son, the more he despised him—and the more

¹⁵ P. Duus, p.370.

¹⁶ Calvin Tompkins, “Rocks,” *New Yorker*, 56, Mar. 24, 1980, p.76; P.D., p. 359.

¹⁷ Kamei 1988, p. 238.

¹⁸ P.Duus, p. 109.

he wanted to be like him.” “In taking his father’s surname without his father’s permission [Isamu] was not only reclaiming his rights as a “Japanese,” [Isamu] was also transforming his smoldering anger into a vital creative drive.”¹⁹

And yet, this ambivalence in creative drive cannot be fully understood without taking Isamu’s mother into account. Indeed, without Leonie’s editorial intervention, Yone’s early success in North America and Great Britain was unthinkable; without her initiative, the artistic career of Isamu could not have been achieved as we know it today. Especially his keen sense of space in architecture was fostered through his experience of designing the Triangular House in Chigasaki with his mother and supervising its construction work²⁰ (fig.4).

As Fujimori Terunobu, architect and historian of architecture, judiciously points out, Isamu’s interest in the Japanese lamp in the Gifu province in the 1950s owes to his skill in manipulating the Japanese plane, *kanna* (which is used by pulling and not by pushing). Around 1915, while they were in Chigasaki, Leonie had a Japanese cabinet maker initiate his son into the skill of using the plane. The mother judged it to be useful for the son of uncertain future to be accustomed with the toolbox of the Japanese carpenter. Without this special hand craft training in his childhood, Isamu would not have had the chance to bring the *akari* light sculpture into existence.²¹ The *akari* lighting sculpture thus turns out to be a good guiding



fig. 4
The Triangular House, Isamu designs with Leonie and supervises its construction in 1913-14, At the age of 10. Photo, Isamu Noguchi.

¹⁹ P.Duus, p.109.

²⁰ M.Duus: vol.1, 141-152; P.D, p.74.

²¹ 藤森照信 FUJIMORI Terunobu, in M. Duus 2003, vol.2, pp.437-439.

metaphor and a pilot lamp for our investigations into the Noguchi legacy.

5. Garden

It was in 1950 that Isamu visited Keio University where Yone had taught for almost 40 years. Isamu could see many of the professors who knew his father well. On that occasion, Isamu was “honored by the suggestion that I (Isamu) might design something in his (Yone’s) memory.” The project came into reality through the construction of a Reception House by Yoshirô Taniguchi combined with a sculpture garden by Isamu. Recalling the issue of their collaboration, Isamu wrote in 1952.

“It was felt that a room and garden would be the best expression I could offer, wherein the spirit of my father could be best perpetuated. It was to be a place of relaxation and contemplation upon the ideals of beauty expressed by my father’s poetry. I like to think that my undertaking this was appropriate not merely because I was his son, but because by my background and birth. I happened to be that combination of viewpoints of East and West embodied in his poetry. I felt that if I could offer a continuation of that bridge which is the common language of art, I will have offered my part to the human outlook that must one day find all people together.”²²

Isamu tells that the project was part of the “reconciliation of wounds” caused by the War, and the words implicitly suggest that it was also a process of his reconciliation with his late father. Once again, however, Isamu’s interest in the Japanese garden seems to be awoken thanks to his mother rather than because of his father.²³ While the visit to the gardens in Kamakura with his mother was deeply inscribed in Isamu’s memory of his childhood, Yone practically left no substantial observation on the subject in

²² An untitled message first published in Japanese translation by Saburô Hasegawa, in *Shin-Kenchiku*, Vol.27, No.2, Feb. 1952; here, Makiko Sugiyama, *Banraisha, A Poetic Architecture by Yoshiro Taniguchi and Isamu Noguchi*, Kajima Institute Publishing Co. Ltd, 2006. p.69.

his extensive writings on Japanese art.²⁴

The *Sunken Garden* for Chase Manhattan Bank Plaza in New York (1961-64) may be regarded as the prototype of Isamu Noguchi's earthwork. Here the sand garden (such as the Raked Garden of Hôkokuji Temple in Kamakura) and the arrangement of the stones (like that of the Ryôanji Temple in Kyoto) were successfully combined. It is evident that Isamu learned a lot from the painstaking trial and error apprenticeship at the garden for the UNESCO headquarters in Paris (1956-58), where he had experienced frontal collisions with the Japanese garden master, Kiichi Sano, future Tôemon the XVI.²⁵

In my opinion, the idea of the sunken garden seems to have been fostered in the artist's mind through his intimate appreciation of Paul Klee (1879-1940). His *Versunkene Landschaft* (1918), executed during the First World War, depicts flowers and vegetations around the pond reflected on the blue of the water surface. The underground location of the Chase Manhattan Bank with a huge round opening court of 60 feet in diameter surrounded by the glass well-hole allowed Isamu to integrate all these elements into an appropriate arrangement with intensive aesthetic effect. Saburô Hasesgawa's (1906-1957) recollection is worth mentioning, because it reinforces our hypothesis as of Isamu's inspiration. Hasesgawa accompanied Isamu in his trip to Kyoto in 1950 for visiting gardens and was delighted to hear Isamu declaring Klee's affinity with the Japanese sensitivities.²⁶

6. Grave Stone

These experiences of designing gardens attracted Isamu to stone hunting. This brings us to India. Once again the leading thread of our

²³ Masayo Duus, 2003, Vol.1, pp.302-33.

²⁴ See Shigemi Inaga (ed.) *Yonejirô Noguchi's Books on Ukiyoe and Japanese Arts in English*, Tokyo, Edition Synapse, 2008, reprint edition in 3 volumes.

²⁵ Dora Ashton, *Noguchi East and West*, University of California Press, 1992, pp.146-47.

²⁶ M. Duus 2003, Vol.2, pp.25-26. Passage omitted in the English edition.

hypothesis resides in Masayo Duus's biography. And once again this important passage in her preface of the Japanese edition is completely eliminated from its English "translation." Here, let me use a retrospective description as it is better fitting to explain what is "lost in translation" of Isamu's relationship with Yone in this context. In her prologue, Masayo Duus speaks of the so-called *Chrisna's Butter Ball*, a huge egg shaped rock which miraculously clings on the slope of a hill near Mahabalipuram, located on the way to the south from Chennai to Pondicherry²⁷ (fig.5).

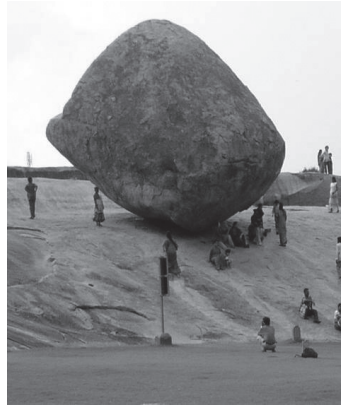


fig. 5

Chrisna's Butter Ball, Mahabalipuram, India, 2005 (photo, S. Inaga)

Chrisna's Butter Ball remains there since the immemorial past, as if dropped from the sky and attached to the earth on the spot. The biographer recalled that she was at a loss how to get out of the labyrinth of her monumental research of the mercurial Isamu world when she saw by chance the photo of this mysterious stone. Isamu's mentality was often likened to mercury, so unstable and hard to locate. In fact, mercury is difficult to treat as it tends to split in infinite number of small elastic balls when one tries to accumulate them. But when one gives up collecting them in one parcel and leaves them as they are, they secretly attract with each other and amalgamate by themselves as if by their own will without being noticed by human beings.

Isamu's relationship with India was just like such mercury balls. Looking back we recognize that Isamu visited India almost every year since his first trip in 1949. In India, he realized that there was a close and intimate tie between people and stones, and he felt that stones there have their own vital power. Why then was Isamu so deeply attracted to India?

²⁷ M. Duus, 2003, Vol.1, pp.13-15; P. Duus, pp.7-9 (in English edition, the passage in question is completely missing).

This question brings us back to an Indian woman writer, Nayantara Pandit (1927-), whom Isamu met for the first time in 1943, when she was 16. Her mother, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, was Nehru's younger sister, and was to become India's ambassador to the United Nations after its independence in 1947. Her father, Ranjit Sitaram Pandit, like Nehru, came from a well-known Kashmiri Brahmin family, and was to die in prison in India that year, under the British rule. Mahatma Gandhi was an old friend of Ranjit Pandit's father.²⁸ Isamu thus got acquaintance with the most distinguished Indian family residing in New York. Replying to Masayo Duus's interview, Tara, as she was then nicknamed, frankly replied that she had been amazed at Isamu's deep knowledge of traditional Indian art and culture.²⁹

Why, then, did Tara, at the age of 16, find in Isamu, "the human being closest to my heart, the person whose opinions I most respected"?³⁰ As always, the English "translation" eliminates the hint that the Japanese "original" does not fail to mention. Shortly before Isamu's first departure to the "pilgrimage to the East," he had received a letter from her mother, saying that in India Isamu should not forget to contact his father's friends, Rabindranath Tagore and Sarojini Naidu (letter, June, 16, 1930).³¹ Isamu's intimacy with things Indian stems from this experience in situ. And Yone was the person who not only initiated Isamu to India but also facilitated Isamu's access to the VIPs. Yone himself was going to be sent to India on a cultural mission and made an extensive lecture tour in India in 1935-36. His interviews with Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and Sarojini Naidu, Indian poetess (1874-1949), marked an important moment in the

²⁸ P. Duus, pp.186-87.

²⁹ From P. Duus, p.408, we know that the Masayo Duus's interview with Nayantara Sahgal took place on Jan.31, 1996, but the passage quoted above from the Japanese edition is missing in the English "translation" and we cannot locate the source for lack of reference in Japanese "original" published from the editor Kôdansha, M. Duus 2003, Vol.1, p.427.

³⁰ Nayantara Sahgal, *Prison and Chocolate Cake*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf. 1954, p.208; P. Duus, p.188.

³¹ M. Duus 2003, Vol.1, p.426. This letter is not mentioned in the English version.

intellectual exchange between India and Japan shortly before the outbreak of the China-Japan War.³² Not only Mahatma Gandhi but also Sarojini Naidu, Yone's intimate friend from his London days, was closely related with Tara's family. It is true that the English version mentions the hearsay that members of the India League of America welcomed Isamu as the son of Yone Noguchi, whom they knew not as a "Japanese fascist" but as a friend of the poet Rabindranath Tagore.³³ However, these important details accounting for Tara's intimacy with Isamu could not survive in the American publication.

Judging from the circumstances, we cannot deny Isamu's father's close ties with India as well as Isamu's indebtedness to his father in his discovery of India. However, mentioning his father in full detail seems to have been judged as irrelevant for the readers of the English edition of Isamu's biography. In reality, however, Isamu's deep involvement in Indian spirituality is closely related with his relationship with Nayantara Pandit, and the ground for their fruitful encounter had been prepared by Isamu's father. Yone Noguchi's fame as one of the representative poets in Asia in the pre-War period was at least highly helpful for the son.

As for Isamu himself, it should be stressed that without his encounter with the *Chrisna's Butter Ball*, New Yorkers would have never seen the *Red Cube* (1968) on the Broadway, in Manhattan, statically spinning on the ground by supporting itself at one point of the cubic edge. In addition, the huge stone facing the Yashima Island at the hill of the Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum in Shikoku also undoubtedly demonstrates Isamu's enchantment with the *Chrisna's Butter Ball*, which he transplanted to his own favorite

³² Madoka Hori's Ph.D. Dissertation 堀まどか『野口米次郎 - 「二重国籍」詩人の生涯と作品』(*Yonejiro Noguchi, Life and Work of a poet of 'double-nationality'*), presented to the Graduate University of Advanced Studies, in 2008, Ch. 13, p.1-53 meticulously reconstructs Yone Noguchi's itinerary in India and unearths many of the forgotten sources of information from various local papers and primary sources. As an essay in reconstructing the intellectual debate between Yone Noguchi and Rabindranath Tagore, see also, Rustom Bharucha, *Another Asia, Rabindranath Tagore and Okakura Tenshin*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 168-171.

³³ M. Duus 2003, Vol.1, p.420; P. Duus, p.186.

site, as his own grave stone. Isamu had rescued the egg-shaped huge stone, named *mannari-ishi* in Okayama three years prior to his death.³⁴ The stones such as these seem to exercise emanating vital power of attraction, putting together diverse elements of Isamu's mercurial life which would otherwise have remained scattered without finding out any convergent focal points. Moreover, the reason why Masayo Duus ended her story with this grave stone is hardly understandable without the anecdote of the *Chrisna's Butter Ball* she inserted as if an aside in the Prologue of her Japanese edition (fig.6).



fig. 6
The Mannari-Ishi Stone, Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, Facing at Yashima

7. Posthumous Legacy

Moere Numa Park was open to public in 1998, in the northern Island of Hokkaidô ten years later than Isamu's sudden death on Dec.30, 1988 because of the unexpected pneumonia. From this complex earthwork, let us mention just two factors. *The Play Mountain*, a nineteen foot high artificial hill consisting of a huge stone stratification in the guise of staircases, was already conceived as early as 1933, but remained unrealized for more than 64 years after Noguchi's proposal was rejected by the city of New York. One cannot help being astonished at its similarity with Paul Klee's *Ad Parnassum* (1932), executed only one year earlier than Isamu's original plan. It seems as if Paul Klee's vision was materially put into reality. In the park one can

³⁴ M. Duus 2003, Vol. 2, p.418-19; P. Duus p.395.

also find out a corn-shaped (*konide type*) mountain, with a spiral slide for children. The shape strongly reminds us of the famous volcano Mount Fuji, which every Japanese knows.

Is it a sign of Isamu's return to his father's land? Or was it a kind of lip service to the Japanese mercenary? What did the Mount Fuji stand for in the creation of Isamu Noguchi? These questions bring us back to his father for one last time. In his *Hokusai*, published in 1925, Yone Noguchi recalls his first experience in London.

"It was in London where I tired with difficulty to find my own poetical way through winter's mists, and my manuscripts of poems did not appear then to help me much. One of my poet-friends who perhaps wished to cheer me up, took me one evening to a night reception of an other poet. When we reached the place, I found that the faces of guests that filled the room were already growing dim under the cigarette smoke. I was thrown among those faces unknown to me, as a heathen devil in shabby clothes or a lonely god with a Yankee accent. (Then I came to London not from Tokyo but from New York). I was uncomfortable in my situation. I looked around. There on the wall above the mantelpiece I found Hokusai's Fuji in the colour of red ochre, a piece I called "Windy and Fair," stretching its proud legs over the marble-white shoulders of the one lady who sat in front of it."³⁵

At this unexpected encounter with Hokusai in a foggy winter in London, Yone confesses that "suddenly I felt that I regained my original strength like that of Fuji Mountain frowning down on the West. I became so cheerful" that, when he returned to his lodging late that night, he wrote a poem in praise of Mount Fuji (I come back to this poem later). The reconstruction proposed by Dr. Madoka Horii allows us to suppose that it was at a party held at the house of Thomas Sturge Moore (1870-1944), and

³⁵ Yone Noguchi, *Hokusai*, London: Elkin Mathews, 1925, pp.30-31. Included in the first volume of the above mentioned reprint edition. The volume is dedicated to the American photographer, Alvin Langdon Coburn, famous for his pictorialism under the influence of James McNeil Whistler and his *Japonisme*.

Yone was accompanied by Laurens Binyon (1869-1943), poet and keeper of Oriental Art in the British Museum.

Yone narrates the story as if it happened shortly before the publication of his *From the Eastern Sea* (printed on Jan.13, 1903 in 73 page private edition), i.e. at the very end of 1902. However, in the chronological explanation given to the Japanese version of the same collection of poems (1924), Yone's visit to Moore with Binyon is recorded in the entry of Feb. 11, 1903, shortly after the publication.³⁶ One may well suspect a temptation to dramatization, but at the same time one cannot deny the psychological factor: in Yone's mind the rediscovery of Hokusai coincided with his own successful debut as a poet in London and was engraved as such in his memory.

By identifying himself with Hokusai and his Mount Fuji, Yone recovered from his lapse of confidence in isolation. Yone also highly appreciated Hiroshige as the landscapist and published a book from a New York editor in 1921. Yone states that in Hiroshige, "art is born in parochialism and dies in universalism" by quoting from George Moore. "There is nothing more interesting and mysterious in the world's annals of art than how Hiroshige entered into Europe." As an example, Yone takes up the case of J. McNeil Whistler's *Old Battersea Bridge*, and remarks that the "faithful followers of Whistler" "will be unable to deny the fact that he owes many things to our Hiroshige" and agrees that "Hiroshige, since discovered in the West, was interpreted and reconstructed by a decidedly new understanding." Yone recognized that he himself, as a traveler newly returned home from abroad, shared the same eye of "Hiroshige in the West."³⁷

While Hokusai emphasized eccentricity in his treatment of the Mount Fuji, Hiroshige popularized the sacred mountain as a symbol of "the spirit of Japanese Art," where the Japanese poet detected a sort of "polyphonic prose" akin to the style in *Epics of the Heike Clan* or that of *Noh* plays.³⁸ The book itself is illustrated with Hiroshige's *Fuji Mountain seen at Miho no Matsubara*, or the volcano seen *à travers* the pine tree alley at the shore

³⁶ Madoka Hori, Ph.D. Dissertation (op.cit.), 2009, Ch.4, pp.1-20.

of Miho, a typical “polyphonic” composition. In this context, Masayo Duus’s remark is revealing. In fact, poems such as “The Pine Tree in Japan” begins to appear frequently in Noguchi’s verse and prose from the period around 1914, when Leonie Gilmore moved in Chigasaki and took the habit of daily looking at the Mount Fuji from her house with her children and walking back and forth through the alley of the pine tree of the Tōkaidō Road, which Hiroshige depicted ca. eighty years earlier.³⁹ At that time, Yone Noguchi made his third stay in London and delivered series of lectures on “The Spirit of Japanese Art” (to be published in 1915) as the sequel to his precedent “Spirit of Japanese Poetry.” The year 1918 was also the 60th anniversary celebration after Hiroshige’s death and Yone’s commemorative lecture on Hiroshige was published in *Arts and Decoration* (London: Feb.-Mar.1920).⁴⁰ Staying in Japan, Leonie continued to check and brush up Yone’s versatile and prolific English writings destined for foreign markets.

8. A Shadow of a Haunting White Woman

As we have seen above, Yone, upon returning from the party at one night in 1902-03, wrote a poem in praise of the Mount Fuji. In this, we see Yone invoking as below: “O white-faced wonder, /O matchless sight, / O sublimity, O Beauty! Fuji Yama, / Touched by the divine breath, /We return to the shape of God, / Thy silence is song.” This reminds us of the branch of the first manuscripts that Yone had handed to Leonie for editing at the beginning of their collaboration. Among them was “Apparition” that many reviews cited. It begins:

³⁷ Yone Noguchi, *Hiroshige*, New York: Orinetalia, 1921, pp.8-11. The volume is dedicated to Arthur Davison Ficke. Included in the above mentioned reprint edition, first volume.

³⁸ *Ibid.* pp.8-9.

³⁹ M. Duus, 2003, Vol.1, pp.167-168. The corresponding passage does not exist in the English “translation.”

⁴⁰ Shigemi Inaga, “About Yone Noguchi’s *Books on Ukiyo-e and Japanese Art*,” Edition Synapse, 2008, p.5

'Twas morn;
 I felt the whiteness of her brow
 Over my face; I raise my eyes and saw
 The breeze passing on dewy feet.⁴¹

Those who are familiar with Lafcadio Hearn's (1850-1904) ghost stories, *Kwaidan*, can immediately understand the affinity of Yone Noguchi's "Apparition" with the "*yukionna*" or "snow woman" story that Hearn eternalized. It could not have remained a simple coincidence. From 1908, Leonie is known to have served as an English teacher to Kazuo Koizumi, Lafcadio's eldest son. Isamu, then at the age of 4, remembers having played with elderly children at Hearn's house in Nishi-Ôkubo. Setsu Koizumi (1868-1932), widow of the late American writer, took care of Leonie, when occasions were provided.⁴² Masayo Duus judiciously surmises that Setsu's sympathy with Leonie stems from her knowledge that Leonie's help was indispensable for Yone's English writing. Setsu herself had told stories at her husband's request in the evening, and the Japanese oral transmission had been transformed into English written narratives. In 1909, Yone's poetry collection, *The Pilgrimage*, was published in London, and the Valley Press brought it out in a private edition in Japan. The book was dedicated to Leonie, who represented in fact the Valley Press by herself.

These elements related to Yone Noguchi allow us to suppose what could have been compounded in the realization of the Mount Fuji shaped hill in the Niere Numa Park, which the son, Isamu was to conceive at the end of his life. The "white faced wonder" of the Mount Fuji was also secretly

⁴¹ M. Duus, 2003, Vol.1, p.62; P.Duus, p.27.

⁴² M. Duus 2003, Vol.1, pp.134-35; P. Duus, p.56-57. Yone Noguchi is also the author of a biography of Lafcadio Hearn. *Lafcadio Hearn in Japan* was published in 1910 and another book on Hearn in Japanese was issued in 1926. It seems that the disagreement between Yone and Setsuko Koizumi was caused primarily by Setsuko's learning about Yone's "another wife" rather than the trouble about the priority of the materials that Yone borrowed from Setsuko.

connected with the horror of the snow woman, whose “breeze passing on dewy feet” can easily kill her lover, when his deception is revealed. “The whiteness of her blow” may easily allude to Leonie herself, as a white woman. Just as the Japanese ghost story crossed the national and language boundaries, thanks to the collaboration of Setsu and Lafcadio, Yone’s early success as a Japanese poet in English expression was also the product of Leonie’s collaboration with Isamu’s father.

The corn-formed mountain was at the same time a symbol of Japanese nationalism that his father worshipped and the primal scene for the son, a landscape full of nostalgia of his happy childhood with his mother in Chigasaki (The volcano was just in front of their house, and Isamu is said to have designed a round window at their house so as to appreciate the Mount Fuji through it). Covered by the white snow, the shape of the mountain may suggest reconciliation of their parents. The volcanic eruption is for the male creativity just as the covering white snow is for female protection. But the metaphor of the snow-covered volcano also reveals the menace of the female revenge in the guise of the snow woman. With all its ambivalence, the corn-shaped mountain in the Niere Numa Park summarizes Isamu’s life and his “longing for someplace” where he belonged, as a child who was “born bearing the burden of two countries.”⁴³

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⁴³ *Isamu Noguchi: The Sculpture of Spaces*, directed by Kenji Hayashi and Charlotte Zwerin, Sapporo Television Broadcasting, 1995; quoted in P.D. p.393.

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