

Gelett Burgess's "lark-ness" as a Crucial Element for Yone Noguchi's Success

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I. Introduction

The word "lark" can be found in many well-known writers' literary works, including Shakespeare's, and is associated with a particular type of bird that has a beautiful singing voice. It symbolizes dawn and freedom in many poems. Meanwhile, the same word "lark" has another meaning: to be playful and to play pranks. In that way, the expression "on a lark" or "for a lark" means to do something as a joke or for fun. At the end of the 19th century in San Francisco, California, the American writers and editors Gelett Burgess and Bruce Porter created a little magazine called *The Lark*, in which they did everything "for a lark"—everything from the title of the magazine, to this playful use of language, to whimsical drawings, to the irreverent content. It was in the middle of a "little magazine" movement when many creative small magazines appeared. *The Lark* stood out among them for its uniqueness, and it was known nationwide because of its original content and its "for-a-lark" aesthetic. It was also *The Lark* that gave Yone Noguchi his first literary success.

Yone Noguchi (1875-1947) was the first Japanese poet whose work in English was recognized internationally. The twenty-year old Japanese male had been living in the U.S. for about two and half years by then, and was determined to, or rather dreamed of, becoming a poet thanks largely to a previous visit with the American poet Joaquin Miller. Eventually, Noguchi brought his English poems to Gelett Burgess. Burgess immediately found them unique and published them in

The Lark in July 1896. Noguchi's career as a poet took off from there. The Japanese poet was soon featured in newspapers all over the country at a time when Japanese people in general were looked down upon and largely limited to doing physical labor. Receiving such a powerful reaction to Noguchi's poems, Burgess and Porter Garnett published Noguchi's first poetry book, *Seen and Unseen; or, Monologues of a Homeless Snail*.⁽¹⁾ It was the first English poetry book by a Japanese in the U.S. Noguchi continued to write poems and published a number of poetry books both in English and Japanese throughout his life, and he was well known in and out of Japan. It should be noted that his English poems were not always positively received and debate continues about their literary merit. Still, he became acquainted with many well-known critics and writers, including William Michael Rossetti, W. B. Yeats, and Arthur Symons. The social network he developed and the activities that Noguchi undertook were extraordinary for a Japanese at that time. Considering that this remarkable success started with the publication of these five poems in *The Lark*, it is no exaggeration to say that Noguchi largely owes an important part of his initial success as a poet to Burgess.

In order to shed light on and provide context for understanding Noguchi's early success, I will analyze Burgess's intention in publishing Noguchi's poems in *The Lark*. I will argue that the nonsensical nature of *The Lark* is critical in understanding how it is that a poor immigrant was able to publish poetry in English. Burgess clearly stated in notes that he created for an unpublished autobiography that "the origin of name 'Lark' [has] Double meaning"⁽²⁾ (the bird and "for a lark"). In spite of this, however, Noguchi scholars have not paid close attention to the importance of the double meaning in *The Lark*. Despite Noguchi's desire to be a serious poet, it may be that he was first published not because of his artistic merits, but "for a lark." I will provide background by talking about who Burgess was, the San Francisco's literary scene that Burgess was part of, and the

19th century little magazine movement as a background. I will then go on to examine how Noguchi's poems fit into this context. The goal of this paper is to show the major role that Burgess and *The Lark* played in Yone Noguchi's success as a poet.

II. Gelett Burgess's Background

Although Gelett Burgess published many artistic works, including poetry, novels, children's books with illustrations, and countless articles, there is little information available about his life, as his biography has yet to be published and his autobiography was never completed.⁽³⁾ There are references to him and his work, however. There is a flyer created by the "Lecture Bureau," booking agency, for example, that introduces Burgess as follows:

The one and only

Gelett Burgess

Writer, Humorist, Humane Philosopher, Creator of the "Goops,"
Publicist of the "Purple Cow," Interpreter and Exemplar of the
"Educated Heart," Discoverer of the "Bromide," Expert on Nonsense,
Charming and Delightful Platform Personality.⁽⁴⁾

The description shows that he was multi-talented, but does not provide a clear impression of who he was. One thing he is remembered for is the invention of the word "blurb," which is widely used in the publishing business now.⁽⁵⁾ He was "an intimate friend of a writer [Robert Louis] Stevenson and his family."⁽⁶⁾ Throughout his life he came to know many well-known writers and important people, either through written correspondences or in person, including literary figures such as Frank Norris, Jack London, Henry James, Amy Lowell, and even

President and Mrs. Franklin Delano Roosevelt.⁽⁷⁾

Gelett Burgess was born in Boston, Massachusetts in January 1866. He graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology as a civil engineer in 1887.⁽⁸⁾ He moved to the San Francisco area in California and first worked for the Southern Pacific Railway, then as an instructor at the University of California, Berkeley. Through encounters with bohemians in San Francisco, he seemed to be gradually drawn into writing. It was in May 1895 that Burgess and Bruce Porter founded *The Lark*, which continued to be published for the next two years. Sometime in 1897, Burgess left San Francisco and lived in London, New York, and Paris. He returned to Carmel, a city two hours away from San Francisco by car today, only a year before he died in September 1951.⁽⁹⁾

Even though he spent much of his adult life elsewhere, he “found in San Francisco romance beyond that to be discovered in any other place, American or foreign.”⁽¹⁰⁾ Burgess described the energy that he felt in San Francisco as follows:

And so with no standards but one’s own ambitions, a fair battle for one’s ideals may be fought out, if one can fight without either encouragement or blame, knowing no authorized critic, and caring for none, free of regimental service, a very buccaneer of literature, if so be, he has a ship to sail in, and a compass of his own. He needs no commission save that of his own pen; there is no promotion save by conquest. The spoils, are few and poor, but the life is full of exhilaration for those who rove and ravish adventures from their art, and prefer liberty and a fair wind, to the safety of a commercial-minded coastwise traffic.⁽¹¹⁾

San Francisco was the city where he blossomed as a writer, editor, and artist. However, it was not simply Burgess’ perception that San Francisco offered

something unique; others too had discovered and created something special there, and Burgess was there at the perfect time to develop himself there as well.

III. The City of San Francisco, Where Burgess Developed as a Writer

The San Francisco that Gelett Burgess came to was still a young city; yet, journalism had already been developing there and there existed a community of writers. California came to be a part of the U.S. in 1848 after the Mexican-American War. In the same year, the Gold Rush started and many people, both from the U.S. and abroad, rushed to California. San Francisco, which had been "a village with two hotels, two wharves nearly completed and eight hundred" people, developed a civilization "overnight."⁽¹²⁾ There were also a few factors that distinguished San Francisco from other usual agrarian frontiers. There was variety in race and social classes, including a noticeable number of college graduates.⁽¹³⁾ People from overseas, such as "Australia, England, Ireland, France, Germany, Russia, China, and Mexico" immigrated there.⁽¹⁴⁾ Most of them were young and male.⁽¹⁵⁾ As described in a book published in 1926, "[a]ll men felt that they were, at last, free and equal. Social distinctions were rubbed out. A man was judged by his conduct, not by his bank account, nor by the set, the family, the club, or the church which he belonged."⁽¹⁶⁾ Burgess found himself among a group of people liberated from normal social constraints.

Franklin Walker called the first two decades of development in the literary scene in San Francisco the "Golden fifties and silver sixties."⁽¹⁷⁾ The first California newspaper, *Californian*, started in August 1846, and the *California Star*, the *Alta California*, and the *Herald* soon followed.⁽¹⁸⁾ By 1850, there were already fifteen newspapers.⁽¹⁹⁾ Weekly periodicals started in 1851; among them, the *Golden Era* and the *Wide-West* were literary ones. The monthly magazine *Pioneer* followed in 1854. There were young and energetic writers who were working for these papers,

journals, and magazines in the still-young city of San Francisco. These included Mark Twain, Ambrose Bierce, Bret Harte, Prentice Mulford, Charles Warren Stoddard, Henry George, Joaquin Miller, and Ina Coolbrith, to name major ones. They were all born outside of California and moved there in their youth in the 1850s, except for Twain and Bierce, who moved there in the 1860s. These young writers created San Francisco's literary scene. They were stimulated and supported by an appreciation for new things and for journalism.

In 1869, the transcontinental railway was completed, and trains connecting the West and East Coasts within seven days were running daily. Around the same time, Mark Twain's work gained recognition and Joaquin Miller successfully published a poetry book in London. Other writers were encouraged by this and became ambitious to succeed on the East Coast and beyond, leading them to leave California. However, the literary culture they had created remained even after they left.

People continued to move to California and it kept on growing bigger and richer. Even with the transcontinental railway, California was still far from the East Coast. This distance, however, also made people feel free from social rules and expectations. Besides Burgess, as mentioned above, many other people commented on how liberating it was for them to live in California. Kevin Starr describes the feelings that Hubert Bancroft felt and expressed in his autobiography: "California encouraged small men to reach beyond themselves... it liberated energies and ambitions."⁽²⁰⁾ Porter Garnett talked about the development in the activity of the Bohemian Club, called "The Midsummer High Jinks," where they gathered together in forests and celebrated their art as follows:

That this growth toward something distinctive should have taken place here in California, where we are sufficiently far away from the rest of the

world, and whither sophistication in art reluctantly pervenes, is, in a way, extraordinary; and yet it is our very isolation that is at the root of the creative impulse displayed in these forest dramas.⁽²¹⁾

California's friendliness and warmth towards newcomers and their creativity was not always appreciated. For example, Frank Norris, the native San Franciscan and a writer, wrote a few long novels on California and San Francisco. However, he was someone who did his best writing in the East Coast.⁽²²⁾ Regarding this, Kevin Starr writes as follows:

San Francisco's isolation might give rise to a splendid originality, but it could also lead to narcissism and a self-justifying tolerance for the third-rate. Part of the problem seemed to be that life was too easy. The picturesqueness, the general comfort of San Francisco living could conspire to make serious work impossible. The soothing critical climate, as well as the sunshine, was in danger of filling up San Francisco with poseurs, unchallenged by circumstances or discernment. ...⁽²³⁾

As described by Starr, San Francisco, and also California in a larger sense, was a very beneficial environment for beginners. Both Burgess and Noguchi, like many other writers before them, took advantage of this element of San Francisco and blossomed as writers there.

IV. Yone Noguchi and His Poems

Yone Noguchi, who did not initially go to the United States with the goal of becoming a poet there, became determined to become a poet while at Joaquin Miller's home, "The Heights," on the day that he visited Miller there. Born in

Aichi in December 1875 and raised soon after Japan opened the country to the rest of the world, Noguchi was interested in the English language and foreign cultures and started learning English at a young age. It was when he was a student of a Buddhist school in Nagoya at the age of twelve that he first learned English from a foreigner, and was influenced by the book *Self-Help* by Samuel Smiles.⁽²⁴⁾ It was this book that made Noguchi want to study English seriously; and through this book, he learned about Western writers, including Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Carlyle, Washington Irving, Oliver Goldsmith, Alfred Tennyson, John Keats and Spencer.⁽²⁵⁾ At age fourteen, he went to Tokyo by himself and he claimed *The Life of Lord Clive* by Thomas Macaulay to be the first English book he read in school in Tokyo.⁽²⁶⁾ In Keio Gijuku, where he stayed less than two years, he read some English literature, such as Spencer's *Education* and *Sketch Book* by Irving; the latter book, according to Noguchi, "made [him] long for England and Westminster Abbey."⁽²⁷⁾ He also said that he encountered a poetry book by John Gray, as well as Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*, which he even attempted to translate into Japanese.⁽²⁸⁾ After he quit Keio Gijuku and started living at Shigetaka Shiga's home as a pupil, he overheard Shiga's guest Den Sugawara, who had returned to Japan from the U.S. temporarily. Noguchi most likely had some curiosity towards foreign countries and had played with the idea of going to foreign countries before. Hearing the conversation, he decided to go. He left from Yokohama on a steamer called the SS *Belgic* and arrived in San Francisco on November 20, 1893.⁽²⁹⁾

Noguchi was a penniless Japanese youth without anybody to depend on. After his arrival in San Francisco, Noguchi switched jobs frequently. He delivered the Japanese newspaper *Soko-Shinbun* and became involved with "Aikoku Domei," a political league.⁽³⁰⁾ He was also a "school boy" for a middle-class white family, a dishwasher at the Menlo Park Hotel in Palo Alto, as well as a translator for the Japanese newspaper *San Francisco News*.⁽³¹⁾ "School boys" or dishwashers

were common jobs for young Japanese immigrants at that time. In his spare time, he continued to become acquainted with English literature; he read Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Lord Byron, and perhaps John Keats as well.⁽³²⁾ Noguchi also read Edgar Allan Poe's poems sometime around this time, as he claimed that he took "only Poe's book of poems with [him]"⁽³³⁾ to Miller's place "[to] try to study his poetry alone at Miller's garden."⁽³⁴⁾ It is beyond the scope of this paper to compare other poets' works to Noguchi's work, but Noguchi was clearly influenced by what he read, particularly Poe and Whitman. Later, he was even accused of plagiarizing Poe's poems, and Joaquin Miller, Gelett Burgess, Porter Garnet, as well as Noguchi himself, defended his work.

Noguchi said that it was in Menlo Park that he heard of Joaquin Miller; at that time, Noguchi had just started writing English poems.⁽³⁵⁾ It seems that Noguchi's interest in American poetry contributed to his desire to see Miller.⁽³⁶⁾ Noguchi said he became physically and psychologically exhausted from his jobs and wanted to rest from the non-stop labor. "Five or six months" after he first heard about Miller, Noguchi finally looked up Joaquin Miller in a Webster dictionary, was impressed by his fame, and decided to visit him.⁽³⁷⁾ Noguchi later said that the "chief reason was in my thought that books should be read slowly but thoroughly after having a good sound rest."⁽³⁸⁾

Either way, Noguchi later wrote about things during his visit to Miller that left a deep impression on him. First and foremost, Noguchi was referred to as "Mr. Noguchi" by Miller. According to Noguchi, Miller was the first white American who addressed him in this way. Until then, Noguchi had encountered a number of white Americans for whom he worked. They all addressed Noguchi as "Charlie," "Frank," or "John," but never his Japanese name. In addition, Noguchi was introduced to Miller's mother as a poet of Japan as, according to Miller, all Japanese are poets, so Noguchi must be one, too.⁽³⁹⁾ Noguchi reacted to

the word “poet.” Until then, Noguchi did not have a title or position in American society. He had moved from one job to the next. Making himself a “poet” did not require employers or a nationality. Also, he could start calling himself a poet instantly, and poetry seemed like the most accessible form of literature for someone whose first language was not English. Noguchi said that he was also fascinated by the poet’s life that Miller was leading. Noguchi said that he “secretly decided that [he] would become a poet.”⁽⁴⁰⁾ As much as this sounds like a retelling of a story, it is conceivable that he decided to become a poet suddenly. This visit was a critical turning point in Noguchi’s life.

Amy Sueyoshi describes the “special kinship” that Miller seemed to feel towards Noguchi and how he welcomed him “with open arms.”⁽⁴¹⁾ At that time, Miller’s place had “many Japanese and Chinese artists” and “had played a significant role in sheltering many Issei men.”⁽⁴²⁾ Yet, there were some noticeable characteristics in Noguchi that attracted Miller. Miller’s first impression of Noguchi was of a “beautiful Japanese flower,” and Noguchi’s hesitant way of using English at the table during his first meal was perceived by Miller as a “provocative reflection of Japanese cultural moderation and restraint,” leading Miller to say, “Japanese silence is precious like gold.”⁽⁴³⁾ It is also at “The Heights” that Noguchi first showed a sign of his “queerness,”⁽⁴⁴⁾ and was introduced to Charles Warren Stoddard, with whom he would have a romantic relationship. Additionally, “The Heights” was where the bohemians “flocked to,” and where “Yone became a part of the community of artists and writers.”⁽⁴⁵⁾ In many ways, Noguchi was drawn deeply into American society, introduced to many kinds of people and ideas, and given an opportunity to try out new possibilities at “The Heights.”

V. Little Magazine Movement at the End of the 19th Century

To understand the literary world of the U.S. at the time Noguchi was there, it is necessary to understand the little magazine movement, which lasted from 1894 to 1903. This boom in little magazines at the end of the 19th century was a countermovement to mainstream magazines. There were more than 250 kinds of little magazines published during this time.⁽⁴⁶⁾ This was part of a larger trend of a dramatic growth in many types of publications. In 1885, there were about 3,300 kinds of periodicals in the U.S. By 1905, the number increased to about 6,000.⁽⁴⁷⁾ During the same two decades, about 7,500 periodicals were newly founded.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Among them, some weekly or monthly magazines were sold for five or ten cents.

Until then, mainstream magazines were sold for 25 to 35 cents per copy, and were considered to be luxurious items for high-class people.⁽⁴⁹⁾ The change in price came around 1893. Several other factors also contributed to these trends: *Ladies Home Journal* sold 700,000 copies for ten cents and stimulated the industry, paper and printing costs became cheaper than ever, and a new technique of photoengraving known as halftone was developed in 1880, which made illustrations much cheaper.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Halftone technology was particularly revolutionary; for example, the magazine *Century* which had paid up to 300 dollars for one wood engraving for a page of illustration would now pay less than 20 dollars for a page in halftone.⁽⁵¹⁾ In addition, the postal system was developing and it became possible to send mail at much lower prices. For periodicals of up to one pound, it had been three cents for a monthly and quarterly, and two cents for a weekly. Then in 1885, it became possible to send any of these by second class mail for one cent.⁽⁵²⁾ Under these new conditions, periodicals became available to a wider range of people at very reasonable prices.

Mainstream magazines were making profits from advertisements, too. The most successful magazines that were sold for ten cents were *Cosmopolitan*,

Mursey's Magazine, and *McClure's*. *Mursey's Magazine*, for example, which had 160 pages of content and 80 to 100 pages of advertisements, were selling 500,000 copies on average each month in 1895.⁽⁵³⁾ Most of these successful magazines and more than half of the famous publishers were centered around New York, where editors and printing systems, as well as the biggest number of writers, were based.⁽⁵⁴⁾ The little magazines competed with these mass-produced magazines.

Little magazines are sometimes referred to by other names, such as "Chap-books," "Brownie Magazines," "Fadazines," "Magazetts," or "Freak Magazines."⁽⁵⁵⁾ Frederick Faxon argues that the whole movement started with *Chap-Book*, published in May 1894 and founded by two seniors at Harvard University.⁽⁵⁶⁾ Little magazines, usually consisting of 16 to 48 pages in a very small and thin pamphlet style, were created in many parts of the U.S. They distinguished themselves from mainstream magazines in terms of purpose and market, and commonly expressed their own artistic agendas.⁽⁵⁷⁾ Kristen MacLeod argues that these little magazines were a "revolution" in two respects: they were part of the "emergence of cheap, mass-market magazines" and "an American corollary to the revival of fine printing in Britain led by William Morris." In addition, they "looked into other British and continental European artistic movements such as Decadence, Art Nouveau, and Symbolism."⁽⁵⁸⁾

Little magazines have some distinctive features, including lots of "experimentation with typography, layout, and design" and active support of "young and emerging writers," which contributed to "the development of a national literary culture."⁽⁵⁹⁾ In terms of how pages appear, they had a "book-like appearance," "small formats; wide margins; plentiful white space; fleuron and other decorative ornaments, sparingly used; decorated initial letters; lubrication; old style and experimental typefaces, especially Caslon, Jenson, and gothic; handmade laid paper or imitation handmade paper with deckle edges; floral

motif decorations; woodcut illustrations; decorative features and illustrations demonstrating the influence of *Japonisme* and British and continental European poster art."⁽⁶⁰⁾ They were also extremely non-commercial and included only a few selected advertisements from small presses, publishers, booksellers, and local businesses in order to maintain quality and stay true to artistic purposes.⁽⁶¹⁾ These little magazines were also sold for five or ten cents per copy, the same price as mainstream magazines. Little magazine subscribers were 3,000 to 5,000 on average—5,000 to 10,000 was considered a big number, and the most successful of all was *Chap-Book*, at 16,000.

VI. *The Lark* and its Intentions

Among the little magazines, *The Lark* was considered extremely unique. It was based in San Francisco and published 24 volumes monthly between May 1895 to April 1897, as well as the *Epilark* of May 1897. Two young men, Gelett Burgess and Bruce Porter founded it. From volume four, Burgess was in charge of almost everything. He also received support and contributions from "Les Jeunes:" a group of young bohemian artists and writers to which Burgess also belonged. The number of *The Lark's* subscribers was average, but its impact was disproportionately large. Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich argue in their research on 20th century little magazines that most of the little magazines in 1890s "were not very inspiring," and only four of them, besides *The Dial*, should be given "serious recognition as predecessors of modern little magazines;" one of the four is *The Lark*.⁽⁶²⁾ Robert Morace claims *The Lark* is "the most delightful... the most brilliant and most original of the lot."⁽⁶³⁾ Frank Mott also argues that *The Lark* should be "ranked" among the "leaders" and "the most important" little magazines—*Chap-Book*, *The Philistine*, and the *Bibelot*—because "it was unique in its high spirits and its freshness; and it was as clever as the best of them."⁽⁶⁴⁾

Burgess claimed that he and Porter were paying attention to the literary movement closely at that time, and “the impulse to strike for California grew in us.”⁽⁶⁵⁾ Burgess later recalled that he nor Porter heard “tune ring true” in *Revue Blanche*, *The Yellow Book*, or *Chap-Book*; all of them were little magazines from the East Coast.⁽⁶⁶⁾ They were “rather disgusted with the sophistication of the Chap Book [sic], Bruce and [Burgess].”⁽⁶⁷⁾ Both of them were members of the Bohemian club in San Francisco, and they had an annual event that consisted of spending time in a redwood forest in the summer. Burgess noted that spending time there made them awaken with “simple living and clean-minded pastimes,” which inspired them to be expressive in *The Lark*.⁽⁶⁸⁾ They came to think: “why not make an original contribution—not dependent on others’ work, no satire, no parody, no criticism—no local color, no timeless—just an expression of the joy of life—just for a lark, and so we called it *The Lark*.”⁽⁶⁹⁾ The Lark was a response to the little magazine movement, which was a response to the flood of mainstream magazines. Understanding these layers helps us appreciate the content of *The Lark* more.

Burgess’s way of doing things “for a lark” was extremely artistic and creative, yet subtle. I would like to begin deconstructing this for-a-lark quality by looking at the definition of the word “lark.” The first meaning is a bird whose singing often represents spring or dawn. About 80 percent of *The Lark*’s covers have quotations with the word “lark” originally used as a bird, accompanied by a parody drawing of the quoted scene. From these quotations, it is obvious that the word “lark” was used by many well-known poets and writers including Shakespeare. The association of lark and dawn also seems to imply that *The Lark* would be singing songs. On the other hand, another meaning of the word “lark” is to “to play tricks, frolic,”⁽⁷⁰⁾ as well as “to make fun of, tease sportively.”⁽⁷¹⁾ As mentioned earlier, Burgess fully utilized this “double meaning” in their little magazine. Burgess later expressed his pride by commenting, “never was a

periodical better named, for it mingled whimsicality with serious purpose, and most of its songs were set in the key of Humour [sic]."⁽⁷²⁾

It should be noted that in *The Lark*, the two meanings (that of the bird and that of playing tricks) of the word lark were not clearly distinguished. There was no explanation about what was supposed to be "for a lark," or what was intended to be serious; they co-existed artistically. What then could we see in *The Lark* if we kept in mind these two definitions of the word "lark?"

As an example, the first volume has a quotation on the cover page as follows.

' "Who'll be the Clerk?" "I!" said the *Lark*.'⁽⁷³⁾

This was quoted from Mother Goose's "Who Killed Cock Robin." Yet a few features seem to be customized by *The Lark*: the capital C in "Clerk," the exclamation point after "I," and the italicizing of "*Lark*." One of the definitions of the word "clerk" is a person who writes down things for record at courts and city halls. While "Clerk" still implies the element of writing something down, it is important to see it as *The Lark*'s own proper noun. It may imply: "Who is going to write down what has not been written? *The Lark* said it would do it!" It is also important to assume that everything is written "for a lark," as it is *The Lark* who is doing it.

It is followed by a message that also has "lark" in it.

"Hark! hark! the Lark at Heaven's Gate sings!"⁽⁷⁴⁾

This is quoted from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. If it is read as written in the drama, it is to call attention to the singing of a lark; however, when applying the second meaning of the word "lark," what should be listened to is *The Lark* singing as well

as things done for a lark.

It is followed by the next sentence:

A new note—some of the joy of the morning—set here for the refreshment of our souls in the heat of the mid-day. With no more serious intention than to be gay—to sing a song, to tell a story; ...⁽⁷⁵⁾

If “the heat of the mid-day” implies mainstream magazines, as well as other little magazines such as *Chap-Book*, *The Lark* was hoping to be an equivalent of “the joy of the morning” with their experiments and for-a-lark quality. In this case too, the morning is the perfect metaphor for associations to the lark. As can be seen from these examples, *The Lark* implies multiple layers of meaning in a subtle and artistic way.

The Lark became well known nationwide from the time of its first publication. As time went by, its founders recognized that despite their for-a-lark intent, they had developed something of a “policy” of seeking to be “sui generis” (unique), optimistic, and sane yet with vagaries. Not wanting to become stuck in a rut, Burgess decided to create two other even more out-of-the-box little magazines. One of them was called *Le Petit Journal de Refusées* (July 1896); it was published by James Marrison II, who was “one of Burgess’ many pseudonymous identities,”⁽⁷⁶⁾ printed on colorful argyle wallpaper, and only consisted of works that “had been refused by at least three periodicals of repute.”⁽⁷⁷⁾ Yet, Burgess said, “nothing is strange enough, outrageous enough, or original enough to excite a ripple of interest in San Francisco; nothing, at least, in Literature.”⁽⁷⁸⁾ While Burgess was trying to shake up the field of literature with more experiments, he decided to continue the second year of *The Lark*. They had about 3,000 subscribers at that time. It was in the beginning of the second year of *The Lark* that Noguchi visited

Burgess with his English poems.

VII. Yone Noguchi's Poems in *The Lark*

Noguchi began to desire to publish his English poems in the spring of 1896. He wrote a poem, "The Midnight Winds," and sent it to *Chap-Book* one spring evening in 1896, and wrote another poem, "Lines," and sent it to *The Philistine* a few days later.⁽⁷⁹⁾ Even though those little magazines, based in Chicago and East Aurora respectively, replied to him favorably, three months passed without them publishing Noguchi's poems. It was at this point that Noguchi brought about thirty poems to Burgess.

It seems that Noguchi's poems not only impressed Burgess, but they were also just what he needed. As mentioned above, for *The Lark's* monthly publication, Burgess "[did] it almost all [himself], except covers, sometimes them even."⁽⁸⁰⁾ Burgess later confessed that he had "a hard time" producing content and "[t]owards the end of the month [he] was desperate."⁽⁸¹⁾ There was even a month where he finished everything except a verse; he left home at midnight, wandering about and thinking, until finally the verse "was born" at two in the morning.⁽⁸²⁾ Writing a good verse is already a difficult task for almost anyone; writing a verse "for a lark" must be even harder. If it was challenging for Burgess to come up with a good verse that was experimental or had playful elements in the language, as he claimed to be the motto of *The Lark*, Burgess must have found something that native English speakers could not create in Noguchi's poems. *The Lark* was looking for things "for a lark," but also with experimental and unconventional elements; Noguchi's poems certainly qualified in terms of the latter. Burgess described Noguchi's poems as "nocturnes set to words of a half learned, foreign tongue; in form vague as his vague dreams," but he must have liked them, as he could see that "those songs [were] sincere" as they "lack[ed] art (in its technical

sense) in their construction.”⁽⁸³⁾ Burgess modified “only the connectives in accordance with his explanations, and with his consent—preferring rather to excuse the liberties he has taken with the language, than to lose the vigor of his unworn metaphors, unfettered by the traditions of expression.”⁽⁸⁴⁾ Noguchi’s five poems were published in *The Lark* in July 1896.

Immediately after their publication, *San Francisco Call* reviewed them as “remarkable verse, bold in metaphor, deep and mystical in meaning, jagged and uneven in rhetorical properties... .”⁽⁸⁵⁾ They clearly noticed his non-native-like usage of English; yet, it is a strongly positive review. Noguchi was featured in many newspapers from coast to coast; some of them wrote about him as follows:

It is always more fascinating to see the thought of a man from the Far East expressed in our Occidental speech than to read beginners’ poetry in native English ... these English words wherein he has found expression become here in a measure the very language universal of mankind. Or if that is too mystic a way to put it, read the lines that follow, and see how difficult it is to make adequate comment.⁽⁸⁶⁾ (*The Transcript*, Boston)

It is like Stephen Crane with all the affectation removed, but more like an Oriental Walt Whitman, yet not so universal as personal.⁽⁸⁷⁾ (*New York Tribune*)

One thing is very sure, his writing are immeasurably [sic] superior to Crane’s in the fineness of thought and the sweetness of the dreams he struggles to portray.⁽⁸⁸⁾ (*Courier*, Buffalo)

The first review clearly notes Noguchi’s being a non-native English writer, yet

admires the poems as expressing "the very language universal of mankind." In the next two, Noguchi is compared with Whitman, the most admired American poet (already deceased by then), as well as the young rising star of the time, Stephen Crane. *San Francisco Call* happily featured these reports: "the discovery by the Lark [sic] of a new poet in Yone Noguchi, the young Japanese living with Joaquin Miller on the Heights, back of Oakland, has aroused no little interest in Eastern papers."⁽⁸⁹⁾ The publicity Noguchi found nationwide made the *Chap-Book*, which not only was Noguchi's first choice, but also had the very first opportunity to publish his work, regret not having done so. They wrote: "the current issue of the 'Lark' contains some few pages of verses by Yone Noguchi, and I find that the pleasant opportunity I thought to have of first printing his writing is denied me. Perhaps I am a little envious."⁽⁹⁰⁾

Because of the for-a-lark element in Burgess's work, Noguchi's poems were sometimes seen with that bias, as for example:

there are the places where we are half-inclined to think it all a huge joke and ourselves the more fools for taking it seriously. And we remember that the editor of these poems was the author of the "purple cow," and the man who would "rather have fingers than toes" that delightfully inconsequential nonsense, which many wise people took to be a burlesque on this very sort of writing.⁽⁹¹⁾

On the other hand, because Noguchi was Japanese, people could not deny some "oriental" elements in his works, as shown below:

... At the same time, one at all in sympathy with Oriental thought cannot read Noguchi's lines without finding indications of real poetic feeling

and occasional poetic expressions. And granted this much one realizes how easy it would be to read into all the verses deep meanings and subtle beauties, and like Narcissus, become quite enraptured with our own reflection in this stream of words.

Noguchi's work being perceived as something done "for a lark" or "oriental" may have been within Burgess' calculation. Noguchi's poems were clearly "strange enough, outrageous enough, or original enough:" precisely the qualities that Burgess had been wanting to present in *The Lark*.

VIII. Conclusion

Burgess published ten poems by Noguchi in five volumes of *The Lark*. From there on, as introduced at the beginning of this paper, Noguchi's career as a poet expanded enormously. Shunsuke Kamei argues that for Yone Noguchi scholars, publishing Noguchi's work and helping him become recognized is the biggest accomplishment of Burgess and *The Lark*.⁽⁹²⁾ Noguchi scholars have not, however, explored the nature of this accomplishment.

In order to understand Noguchi's success, we have to take seriously the possibility that his big break came about not because of his artistic merits, but because of the "for a lark" aesthetic that suited the particular needs of Burgess and his little magazine. We do not have evidence on what Noguchi thought about *The Lark* or whether he understood its whimsical intent. He himself may not have fully understood the reasons behind why he was given this opportunity. As we have seen, many critics questioned the quality of his work, and some even thought that Burgess had invented Noguchi.⁽⁹³⁾ It is clear, however, that Noguchi did not consider his work to be "a lark." It is ironic, then, that a magazine dedicated to rebelling against the trends of serious literature is what helped Noguchi achieve

fame as a serious poet—something that he desired very strongly.

Burgess established his artistic style through *The Lark*. What is more, even though he lived in San Francisco only for about ten years in his twenties, "in the public mind he has been identified with San Francisco" as it was the city where his creativity blossomed.⁽⁹⁴⁾ Burgess wrote in his letter to Wells, "[m]y people in Boston were rather ashamed of No. 1 [*The Lark*]. They thought it a fizzle. ..." ⁽⁹⁵⁾ However, he was not deterred by his family's criticism. He was away from home, free from any rules or expectations, supported by his fellow Bohemians, and encouraged by San Francisco's energy. San Francisco was a key to Burgess's success, just as Burgess was critical to Noguchi's career as a poet.

Notes

- (1) Noguchi, Yone. *Seen and Unseen; or, Monologues of a Homeless Snail*. (San Francisco: G. Burgess & P. Garnett, 1897).
- (2) Gelett Burgess papers, circa 1847- 1951 (bulk 1900- 1951). BANC MSS C-H 52, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Carton 4. # 10.
- (3) In Bancroft Library, there is a manuscript of Gelett Burgess's "autobiography" but it seems unfinished and therefore unpublished. *Ibid.*
- (4) Gelett Burgess Papers, BANC MSS C-H52. Carton 4, # 1.
- (5) Burgess, Gelett. *Bay Side Bohemia: Fin De Siecle San Francisco and Its Little Magazines*. (San Francisco: The Book Club of California, 1954). vii.
- (6) Wells, Carolyn. "What a Lark!" *The Colophon: a book collectors' quarterly*. (1931). 6.
- (7) Gelett Burgess Papers, BANC MSS C-H52. Box 2.
- (8) Wells, "What a Lark!," 6.
- (9) Gelett Burgess Papers, BANC MSS C-H52. Carton 4, # 4.
- (10) Burgess, *Bay Side Bohemia*. ix.
- (11) *Ibid.*, 17.
- (12) Walker, Franklin. *San Francisco's Literary Frontier*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1939; 1970). 6.
- (13) *Ibid.*, 7.

- (14) *Ibid.*, 7.
- (15) *Ibid.*, 8-9.
- (16) Harte, Geoffrey Bret. *The Letters of Bret Harte*. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1926). 86.
- (17) Walker, *San Francisco's Literary Frontier*. 352.
- (18) *Ibid.*, 21.
- (19) Merwin, Henry Childs. *The Life of Bret Harte with Some Account of the California Pioneers*. (Boston and New York City: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911). 195-196.
- (20) Starr, Kevin. *Americans and California Dream 1850-1915*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973). 119.
- (21) Garnett, Porter *The Bohemian Jinks: A Treatise* (San Francisco: Bohemian Club, 1908). ix.
- (22) Starr, *Americans and California Dream 1850-1915*. 260.
- (23) *Ibid.*, 260.
- (24) Noguchi, Yone. *The Story of Yone Noguchi Told by Himself*. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1914). in *Collected English Works of Yone Noguchi Poems, Novels, and Literary Essays*, ed. Shunsuke Kamei. (Tokyo: Edition Synapse, 2007). 5.
- (25) Hori, Madoka. "Nijukokuseki" *Shijin Noguchi Yonejiro*. (Nagoya: Nagoya University Press, 2012). 23.
- (26) Noguchi, *The Story of Yone Noguchi Told by Himself*, 6.
- (27) *Ibid.*, 7. Noguchi also wrote, however, that it was in the classroom of the Manzanita Hall (preparatory school for Stanford University) that Noguchi read *Sketch Book* for the first time and longed for Westminster Abbey in England. *Ibid.*, 38.
- (28) *Ibid.*, 8.
- (29) Hoshino, Ayako. Yone Noguchi: *Yume wo Oikaketa Kokusai Shijin*. (Tokyo: Sairyusha, 2012). 34.
- (30) Noguchi, *The Story of Yone Noguchi Told by Himself*, 29. Noguchi writes "The League was then publishing a daily paper called the *Soko Shinbun* or the *San Francisco News*." However, according to Amy Sueyoshi, it was "more than likely titled *Soko Shinpo* or even *Soko Jiji*." Sueyoshi, Amy. *Queer Compulsions: Race, Nation, and Sexuality in the Affairs of Yone Noguchi*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012). 156.
- (31) Noguchi, *The Story of Yone Noguchi Told by Himself*, 31, 35, 38-39.
- (32) *Ibid.*, 32-33. However, it could be later that Noguchi was reading Keats as he did not indicate that he read it. Since he wrote that when he was traveling to Los Angeles after Noguchi started living in Miller's place, he took Shelley with him.

- Ibid.*, 20.
- (33) *Ibid.*, 16.
- (34) *Ibid.*, 17.
- (35) Noguchi, Yone. *Noguchi Yonejiro Senshu: 3 Kaigai Bungaku Shiron*. (Tokyo: Kabushiki-gaisha Kurusu Shuppan, 1998), 38. Noguchi, *The Story of Yone Noguchi Told by Himself*, 55-56.
- (36) Sueyoshi, *Queer Compulsions*, 21.
- (37) Noguchi, *The Story of Yone Noguchi Told by Himself*, 55.
- (38) *Ibid.*, 17.
- (39) Noguchi, *Noguchi Yonejiro Senshu*, 41-42.
- (40) Noguchi, *The Story of Yone Noguchi Told by Himself*, 41.
- (41) Sueyoshi, *Queer Compulsions*, 23.
- (42) *Ibid.*, 21.
- (43) *Ibid.*, 24.
- (44) *Ibid.*
- (45) *Ibid.*, 26.
- (46) MacLeod, Kirsten. "The Fine Art of Cheap Print: Turn-of-the-Century American Little Magazines" in *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880-1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernism*. ed. Ann Ardis, Patric Collier. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). 182.
 There have been little magazines at other times in the U.S. There has been research on little magazines in the 20th century which was revolutionized with the publication of *Poetry: The Magazine of Verse* (1912) which has an origin in *The Dial* (1840-1844). Margaret Fuller and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Hoffman, Frederick J., Allen, Charles., and Ulrich, Carolyn F. *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947; New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1967). 2-6. However, it seems that most of the actual features of the little magazines in the 20th century can be described by the features of the little magazines at the end of the 19th century as well.
- (47) Mott, Frank Luther. *A History of American Magazines*. vol. IV: 1885-1905. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1957). 11.
- (48) *Ibid.*, 11. Half of the 7,500 periodicals were either discontinued or merged with other similar magazines.
- (49) *Ibid.*, 2.
- (50) *Ibid.*, 4-5.
- (51) *Ibid.*, 5.

- (52) *Ibid.*, 20.
- (53) *Ibid.*, 597.
- (54) *Ibid.*, 83.
- (55) Faxon, Frederick Winthrop. "Ephemeral Bibelots": *A Bibliography of the Modern Chap-Books and Their Imitators*. Bulletin of Bibliography Pamphlets, No. 11. (Boston: The Boston Book Company 1903). 3. In addition, there are other names such as "fadlets," "Mushroom magazines," "periodical bantlings," "decadents" and "toy magazines." MacLeod, "The Fine Art of Cheap Print," 182-183.
- (56) These students were Herbert S. Stone and Hannibal Ingalls Kimball. They graduated from Harvard in the summer of 1894, and together with *Chap-Book*, moved to Chicago from there. Faxon, "Ephemeral Bibelots," 3.
- (57) MacLeod, "The Fine Art of Cheap Print," 185.
- (58) *Ibid.*, 185-186.
- (59) *Ibid.*, 188-9.
- (60) *Ibid.*, 188.
- (61) *Ibid.*, 187.
- (62) Hoffman, et al, *The Little Magazine*, 7. The three others were *Saturday Press*, *Chap-Book*, and *M'lle New York*.
- (63) Morace, Robert A. "The Lark." in *American Literary Magazines: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*. ed. Edward E Chielens. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986). 209.
- (64) Mott, *A History of American Magazines*. 388.
- (65) Burgess, *Bay Side Bohemia*, 19.
- (66) *Ibid.*
- (67) Wells, "What a Lark!," 10.
- (68) Burgess, *Bay Side Bohemia*, 20-21.
- (69) Wells, "What a Lark!," 10.
- (70) *Oxford English Dictionary*. Lark. V.2. 1. intr. Accessed September 1, 2014. www.oed.com/view/Entry/10588?rskey=fnYXzq&result=5isAdvanced=false#eid.
- (71) *Oxford English Dictionary*. Lark. V.2. 2. trans.
- (72) Burgess, *Bay Side Bohemia*, 20.
- (73) *The Lark*. No. 1. (May 1895). in *Yone Noguchi and the Little Magazines of Poetry: A Facsimile Collection of "The Lark", including "The Epilark", "The Twilight" and "The Iris"* ed. Shunsuke Kamei. (Tokyo: Edition Synapse 2009).

- (74) *Ibid.*
- (75) *Ibid.*
- (76) Drucker, Johanna. "Le Petit Journal Des Refusees: A Graphical Reading." *Victorian Poetry* 48.1, Spring West Virginia University (2010), 140.
- (77) Burgess, *Bay Side Bohemia*, 28.
- (78) *Ibid.*, 28-29. Another magazine was called *Phyllida: or the Milkmaid* (January 1897). Only two volumes were published.
- (79) Noguchi, Yonejiro. *Eibei no Juh-sannen*. (Tokyo: Shunyodo, 1905), 1.
- (80) Wells, "What a Lark!," 11.
- (81) *Ibid.*, 12.
- (82) *Ibid.*
- (83) *The Lark*. No. 15 (July 1896).
- (84) *Ibid.*
- (85) "'Seen and Unseen'" *San Francisco Call*, June 28, 1896.
- (86) Noguhi, *Eibei no Juh-sannen*. 4.
- (87) *Ibid.*
- (88) *Ibid.*
- (89) "Blend Lead the Blind" *San Francisco Call*, August 9, 1896.
- (90) *Ibid.*, 4-5.
- (91) "Books and Bookmakers," *San Francisco Call*, January 24, 1897.
- (92) Kamei, Shunsuke. "Bessatsu Nihongo Kaisetsu," in *Yone Noguchi and the Little Magazines of Poetry*. 21.
- (93) Gelett Burgess Papers, BANC MSS C-H52. Carton 4, #25.
- (94) Gelett Burgess papers, circa 1847-1951 (bulk 1900-1951). UCB Library catalog. Accessed August 30, 2014. <http://oskicat.berkeley.edu/search~S1?/Xgelett+burgess&searchscope=1&SORT=D/Xgelett+burgess&searchscope=1&SORT=D&SUBKEY=gelett+burgess/1%2C225%2C225%2CB/frameset&FF=Xgelett+burgess&searchscope=1&SORT=D&8%2C8%2C>
- (95) Wells, "What a Lark!," 12.

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Wells, Carolyn. "What a Lark!" in *The Colophon: a Book Collectors' Quarterly*. 1931.

詩人ヨネ・ノグチを輩出したジレット・バージェスと *The Lark* の試み

星野 文子

本論文では、日本人ヨネ・ノグチ（野口米次郎、1875-1947）が、国際詩人として成功するに至った過程を理解する上で重要な要素として、ノグチの詩をアメリカで初出版したリトル・マガジン *The Lark* と、同誌の編集者ジレット・バージェスに注目した。ノグチは1893（明治26）年、17歳で単身渡米したが、約2年半後には英詩を発表し、全米で話題となった。その後、詩集出版を重ねたノグチは、生前、詩人としての高い知名度を保っていた。

これまでノグチ研究において、このノグチの成功の発端として、ノグチを居候させ、ホイットマンの詩などを紹介したアメリカ人詩人ウァキーン・ミラーのノグチに対する貢献度は幾度となく論じられてきた。しかし、バージェスに関しての関心は薄く、*The Lark* にノグチの詩を掲載し、ノグチの初の詩集を手がけたことは紹介されてきたものの、その詳細な分析はなされてこなかった。本論文では、バージェスの活動拠点であったサンフランシスコの歴史と文化および、19世紀後半のアメリカに於けるリトル・マガジン運動の発展との観点からバージェスが創刊した *The Lark* について分析した。さらに、カリフォルニア州立大学バンクcroft図書館に保管されている一次資料も参照しつつ、既に知名度を得ていた同誌の意図や、“for a lark” の意味合いも汲んだ上で、同誌でノグチの詩を初めて発表するに至った理由について論じた。貧乏な移民青年であったノグチが、日本人が弱い境遇に置かれていた19世紀末のカリフォルニア州で詩人ノグチとして紹介され、成功した過程において、バージェスは欠かすことのできない人物であったといえる。