

「日本において中世英語英文学を担ったパイオニアたち」

野口俊一 (1933-2011)

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Shunichi Noguchi (野口俊一、1933-2011)

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Shunichi Noguchi (野口俊一) was born in Phyöngsan-kun near Pyongyang (黄海道平山群) and brought up in Kurayoshi, Tottori Prefecture (鳥取県倉吉). He went to Hiroshima University to read English language and literature, where he was taught by Michio Masui and Jiro Ogawa. In 1964 he received a scholarship from the British Council, by the kind offices of Fumio Kuriyagawa, to pursue his research on Malory under the guidance of Eugène Vinaver of the University of Manchester and Derek Brewer of the University of Birmingham, and consequently returned to Japan with expertise in textual criticism, a specialisation which was extraordinary in the Japanese academic community of his generation, and yet laid the foundation of the manuscript/early book studies that would be vigorously undertaken in Japan from the 1980s onwards. This was a pivotal experience in the development of his scholarly career. After teaching for nine years at Fukui University, he moved to Osaka University of Education in 1971 and there devoted himself to research and teaching activities in medieval English studies for more than a quarter of a century until his retirement in 1998. Undoubtedly he was a distinguished professor of high integrity and unflinching personality, attracting not only many fellow scholars by offering helpful advice and suggestions based on his wide intellectual interests, but also many young students by showing them the authenticity and quintessence of English studies. Almost his every utterance, whether in his tutorials or while strolling together, was directed towards improving their understanding of a textual problem or clarifying the crux of an issue under discussion amongst his colleagues.

He extended generous help and assistance to any institution that requested it of him. Among other things, his assiduous devotion to enhancing the quality of articles contributed to academic journals was noteworthy; he served on the editorial board of the English Literary Society of Japan and the Japan Society for Medieval English Studies.

He also played an important role as a leading member in the Centre for Medieval English Studies (Tokyo) by editing newsletters and a series of academic publications. His particular declarations, insisting for example on the intrinsic differences between the terms 'Eibungaku Kenkyu' (英文学研究) and 'English studies', are surely still echoing in the minds of those who heard him speak. Such great love of his chosen foreign language and culture is amply illustrated by his numerous precisely written English articles, but it can also be demonstrated by his long and faithful membership of the British Branch of the International Arthurian Society, while his effortless bilingualism is proved by his stunningly sudden shifts from Japanese to English during his lectures and classes.

As John Lawlor put it, Noguchi had a 'true gift of friendship'. It is testified by the publication of two festschrifts acknowledging his warmheartedness towards others along with his wealth of academic achievements—*Arthurian and Other Studies* (Cambridge, 1993) and *Essays on English Literature and Language* (Tokyo, 1997). There also took place a symposium in his memory entitled 'Malory and his Tradition', held as part of the 2011 International Arthurian Congress (Japan Branch). In the tribute session, Noguchi's working copies of Vinaver-Field's three-volume edition were shown on slides. The margins of each page were adorned (!) with his characteristically tiny and tidy handwritten annotations. These textual notes were breathtakingly elegant and were unquestionably the result of his rigorous, insightful collation methodology. One glance at the page below should suffice to convince us that he, like Chaucer, truly considered 'wordes' to be 'deedes'. (As for the figure of Noguchi as a knight-scholar, see Toshiyuki Takamiya's succinct obituary of him. 「頑固一徹の侍—野口俊一先生を偲んで」『本の世界はへんな世界』(2012) 所収)

Noguchi's respect for the written text did not restrict itself to Arthurian studies; whilst being an avid reader of English literature in general, over the years he produced and published specific textual studies ranging from *Beowulf* to *Ulysses*. In his later years, as is seen in the publication list, he became interested in the communicative or performative aspect of literary works and emphasised the need to read the text aloud for a complete and comprehensive interpretation. Noguchi's culminating scholarly contribution was an article on the metrical system in Chaucer's *Troilus*. In this and related writings, he seems to be declaring to us, 'Read aloud, in order to reveal the facts.'

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