

Proceedings
LECTURES & MUSIC

*Lascadio
at Home*

8TH October, 2015
The Little Museum of Dublin
Dublin, Ireland



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Lectures & Music “Lafcadio at Home”

DATE: Thursday 8TH October, 2015, 6PM

VENUE: The Little Museum of Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

LECTURERS: Rodger S. Williamson (Professor, The University of Kitakyushu)

John Moran (Journalist, *The Irish Times*)

Paul Murray (Hearn Biographer)

Bon Koizumi (Professor, University of Shimane; Great-grandson of Lafcadio Hearn)

IRISH HARP: Junshi Murakami

CHAIRPERSON: Simon O’Connor (Curator, The Little Museum of Dublin)

An Exhibition “Coming Home—The Open Mind of Patrick Lafcadio Hearn”

DATE: Wednesday 7TH October, 2015—Sunday 3RD January, 2016

VENUE: The Little Museum of Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

CURATORS: Simon O’Connor (Curator, The Little Museum of Dublin)

John Moran (Journalist, *The Irish Times*)

ORGANIZER: The Little Museum of Dublin

CO-ORGANIZERS: Embassy of Japan in Ireland

Sanin Japan-Ireland Association

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Lafcadio Hearn Memorial Museum

The Koizumi Family

Takis Efstathiou

Ireland Japan Association

The Hearn Society

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Foreword



Simon O'Connor

Curator, The Little Museum of Dublin

As part of the Little Museum of Dublin's "Coming Home—The Open Mind of Patrick Lafcadio Hearn" exhibition, the museum hosted a wonderful evening of lectures and music on the subject "Lafcadio at home". Designed to focus on both the personal and local aspects of Lafcadio's life both in Japan and other countries, the lectures were presented by world leaders in the field of Hearn study, and complemented by the wonderful Irish harp playing of Junshi Murakami, the perfect counterpoint to pull the audience from verbal analyses of Hearn's life to the world of wordless aesthetic beauty that he so often inhabited.

Four lectures were presented, the transcripts of which are reprinted here. Professor Rodger Williamson of the University of Kitakyushu spoke of Hearn's work in New Orleans and Cincinnati, an "open-minded rebellion in print" which paved the way for many new forms of journalism in the 20th century.

John Moran spoke with poetic elegance on Hearn's time in the West Indies, most specifically

St. Pierre, and how Lafcadio's records of the city before its devastation by volcano is in fact a priceless record of a society that no longer exists beyond his pages.

Hearn's biographer, Paul Murray gave a broad introduction to the audience on Hearn's affection for Japan, and the closing chapters of his life.

Fittingly, the evening was concluded with a lecture by Lafcadio's great-grandson, Mr. Bon Koizumi, who gave a most-touching and memorable survey of not only his great-grandfather's Japanese characteristics, but also the ways in which he retained and indeed re-manifested his Irishness toward the end of his life.

The museum thanks all the speakers for their time and passion, a special thanks to Junshi Murakami for the wonderful music on the evening, and more importantly to Shoko and Bon Koizumi, Matsue City and the Japan Foundation for working tirelessly to support both the exhibition and the associated events accompanying it.

Lafcadio Hearn: Open Minded Rebellion in Print



Rodger S. Williamson

Professor, The University of Kitakyushu

Lafcadio Hearn writes to his half-sister Minnie Atkinson that life in Cincinnati was a brutal awakening for him. He says that he was “dropped” into the “enormous machinery of life” of which he knew nothing. He tried a number of odd jobs to survive from selling mirrors to telegraph messenger-boy. He failed miserably and found himself on the street. He tells her that, “I was touchy then,—went off without waiting for my wages. Enraged friends refused to do anything further for me. Boarding-houses turned me out of doors. At last became a boarding-house servant—lighted fires, shoveled coal, etc. in exchange for food and privilege of sleeping on the floor of a smoking-room” (Zenimoto). Hearn luckily found lodging with Henry Watkin who would give him meals and a place to stay in exchange for working at his printing shop. Hearn continues that he was quite bitter at the fact of his Great Aunt’s bankruptcy that forced him to leave school and go to look for relatives in Cincinnati. As an abandoned youth in Cincinnati, his father represents everything bad about the west and his mother’s uprooted oriental heritage represents all that is good and just. He is caught between these two worlds, as he becomes a young reporter. Hearn’s feelings for the victims of unsympathetic modern civilization would blossom from these circumstances. As a journalist for *The Cincinnati Enquirer* and *The Cincinnati Commercial*, Lafcadio Hearn exposed social problems, reported on city crime and made important commentary on the social ills that plighted America’s forgotten and neglected minorities. Of course as any journalist, one of

Hearn’s primary motivations was to write articles such as murder investigations that would help increase the circulation of the paper. However, he could care less about the ramifications of his endeavors that irritated civic leaders. His early actions in Cincinnati are key, particularly his marriage to an African American, as they are clear evidence that his motivations went beyond just selling newspapers. Unfortunately, his early endeavors would eventually get him sacked and he would set his sights on New Orleans as a place to not only restart his career but also escape the reaches of an unforgiving social order. Hearn’s uprooting from his life in Ireland became the catalyst for his outlook towards a brutal world that had little respect for non-western cultures and beliefs.

Cincinnati had been a wealthy manufacturing hub on the bank of the Ohio River with a large population of German and Irish immigrants. Historically, this was a very turbulent period after the American Civil War when former African slaves were freed but found themselves on the fringes of a predominately white, racist society. Hearn could care less about these racial boundaries and even married Mattie Foley, an African American who worked at his boarding house in Cincinnati. The rediscovery of news articles from Hearn’s early days in Cincinnati clearly shows that his time as a young journalist was a major turning point in his fundamental view of the world. Articles from the early 1870s, such as *Murderers and Clergymen in New York*, *A Hebrew College*, *The Gentleman or the Scholar*, *Pagan Piety*, *The English and the Anthropophagi*, *Bismillah*, *Marquesan Incident* and *A Mild and Just Government*

illustrate his sympathies for those denied basic human rights and victimized or subjugated by the social norms of the day. Hearn was a man ahead of his time and should be commended for his desire to bring these issues out in the open at such an intolerant time in history. He writes in 1873 that civil liberties and religious freedom are the founding ideals of the American Democracy. Hearn praises these ideals and awakens his readers to real stories of injustice, persecution, and religious or cultural biases within American society. He was vigorous and idealistic and sought out subject matter avoided by most journalists such as the life of the poor, murders, racial tensions, and of course, ghosts. His big break was his vivid and outright grotesque reportage of the Tanyard Murder. Hearn broke all decorum of newspaper reporting by putting his reportage of a “Violent Cremation” on the front page with illustrations of the killers and the mutilated remains. The victim, Herman Schilling was thrown into a furnace after being mortally wounded for seducing the extremely young daughter of a saloonkeeper.

For a short time his editors gave him the freedom to explore moralistically divergent issues and ideas. As his editor John Cockerill put it “He prowled about the dark earners of the city, and from gruesome places he dug out charming idyllic stories. The Negro stevedores on the steamboats fascinated him. He wrote their songs, their imitations, their uncouth ways, and he found picturesqueness in their rags, poverty and juba dances” (Findsen 170). His success with the Tanyard Murder made him one of Cockerill’s star reporters. Hearn’s fortune took a turn for the worse when his “openly racist editors” caught wind of his “social transgression” of marrying a mulatto woman that was illegal according to Ohio State Law. Hearn’s actions endangered the reputation of the paper so he was fired for “deplorable moral habits.”

It is, however, this period that is important as Hearn could indulgently explore the underbelly of society and expose “social evils.” In articles such *A Curious Orientalism, Epidemic in Embryo: The Plague Spots of Our Beautiful Community, and A Human Exposition*, he reports on minority groups, the deplorable conditions of factory workers and the outright disenfranchisement of social outcasts. He cleverly employs sarcasm and

humor at times to make his remarks digestible to all readers. These articles also demonstrate Hearn’s deep awareness of the ethnically diverse make-up of his surroundings in a cold, unforgiving society.

In the previously unpublished, *A Case of Lunacy* of July 1876, interestingly the centennial of the founding of America’s young democracy, Hearn writes about the delusions of a drunken mulatto man. Nicholas O’Neil dreams of a place “wherein strangers from the four quarters of the earth might be quartered free of charge, and Civil Rights should be respected.” At this time, though, only a lunatic might imagine such a preposterous vision or at least Hearn had to play to the sentiment of the society in order to keep his employment. Again his marriage with Mattie is not only illegal, but also a social taboo that could ruin him for life.

Once Hearn settles in New Orleans, he writes Watkin about his newfound success. Yet, his past in Cincinnati still hovers like a dark cloud. He writes to Watkin “I have succeeded in getting acquainted & being introduced into the best society. I see my way clear to a position here,—but then I feel sure some one will tell that story on me, sooner or later. Then I will have to go away” (Kuwabara). Amazingly, Hearn was nervous but yet became close friends with George Washington Cable who angered most white southerners with his articles on the plight of African Americans and his advocacy for granting freed slaves equal rights. He shares a story with one of his former colleagues in Cincinnati about a group of fugitives from the South, white and black, heading for the North. The steamer is carrying cotton that bursts into flame and the captain and other white passengers are the first to abandon ship. However the mulatto pilot stays at his post. The ideal of a free society in the North compels the pilot to keep course and try to save the ship. The mulatto man dies a hero while the white passengers escape in cowardice with little remorse for the loss of those left aboard.

He works for the *New Orleans Item* and *Democrat* and later moves to the *Times-Democrat* in 1882 when the *Democrat* merges with the *Times*. He becomes an accomplished and well-known journalist in New Orleans for his exploration of Creole Culture until 1887. Amazingly with the

use of only one eye he would produce his own artwork to go with his articles. During this period he wrote approximately 700 pieces for publication. Hearn also starts to publish literary works in book form such as a translation of *One of Cleopatra's Nights* by Gautier (1882), *Stray Leaves from Strange Literature* (1884) and *Some Chinese Ghosts* (1887). When he becomes an editor for the *Item* he even writes an article that details his duties. In "Our Waste Basket," Hearn tells the readership that denunciations of religion, free thought, and "attacks upon sects of races" are all "equally condemned" and ignored by his editorial staff. Hearn's declares,

...whatever and editor may be in his private life, in his sanctum he has no specific religious ideas, no freethinking aggressiveness, no sectarian prejudices, no humanitarian theories, no vegetarian or carnivorous proclivities, no political preferences. (*The Item*, May 1881)

In 1894 he would reminisce to Chamberlain of his idealistic, yet impossible rebellion. He writes that, "I thought I could overturn the universe." Hearn's tendencies to go to extremes and ignore the social rules of his day are often used as an explanation by his first biographers for a lifestyle of which others could not approve. In *Life and Letters*, Elizabeth Bisland Wetmore suggests that Hearn was "sick, unhappy and unpopular" with the root cause being the resentment of his co-workers. The fact that Wetmore tries to explain away his marriage to Mattie Foley as a "pathetic, high minded piece of quixotism" makes it clear that she did not approve. Hearn was young and naive and his desperate situation "drifted into some connection with this girl."

In Japan, as the editor of the *Kobe Chronicle*, Hearn could tackle issues that had bothered him since his days in Cincinnati. In an editorial of October 20, 1894 he establishes his unique perspective to readers that "by long residence in the Southern States of America" he was "familiar with the abnormal social conditions there existing [...]. He continues that "Rarely can one open an American newspaper without reading of lynchings and killings of negroes; [.and.] It would be impossible to contradict that conditions in

certain parts of the South are not the conditions of civilization" (*Kobe Chronicle*, October 20, 1894).

The impact of his experiences in Cincinnati can be clearly seen in a number of articles for the *Kobe Chronicle*. Hearn's early writings demonstrated that he was always keen to point out those features of modern civilization that poisoned or victimized other non-western cultures. Hearn, in his criticism of the excesses of western governments, highlights issues similarly spotlighted in his reports on the abuse and horrid conditions of laborers in Cincinnati. As a young reporter he criticized the use of "shot and shell" to bring Christianity to other cultures. His feelings in this regard would strengthen in Japan and he used his post in Kobe to voice what he felt as foul. In an article entitled *Anti-Foreigner Anti Missionary?* of August 16, 1895 Hearn criticizes the actions of missionaries for their collisions with Chinese culture. In an editorial of October 4, 1885 entitled *The Latest Word on International Morality*, he laments over the continual use of violence in relentless wars. At the conclusion of this essay, Hearn attacks "Jingoism" or the excessive nationalism that results in the belief of one nation's complete superiority over all others. Then, Hearn probably makes one of the most profound statements of his career that definitely has its roots in his early journalism.

Certainly it is clear that it is the growth of intellectuality that we must look to for the elimination of race hatreds and the spread of a sane cosmopolitanism. Race hatred itself is based on a sort of perverted emotionalism and sentimentalism, which will disappear only with the substitution of ideals that look to the extension of the limits of law and order from communal to international relations. (*The Kobe Chronicle*, October 4, 1895)

Hearn's strong opinions in these commentaries did not sit well with some readers. However, he stood his ground for the rest of his time in Japan even though he came to feel a sense of alienation from the foreign community.

The late nineteenth century was a time of the overshadowing and marginalization of minority cultures by a process of rapid modernization. In *Gleanings in Buddha-Fields* Hearn confidently states in his essay "In Osaka," that "It is not true

that Old Japan is rapidly disappearing. It cannot disappear within at least another hundred years; perhaps it will never entirely disappear.” Modern civilization is encroaching on the Japanese but “Old Japan survives in art, in faith, in customs and habits, in the hearts and the homes of the people: it may be found everywhere by those who know how to look for it” (*Gleanings* 152). Hearn’s experiences as an outcast during his time in Cincinnati thrust him into a cruel, modern world and could have completely swallowed him up. Ironically, it was these environments that lead him to those on the outskirts of acceptable society to find the faults and vices of American society. These experiences eventually led him away from the unforgiving, racial sentiments of the United States. But in his flight from modern society he gained a respect for other cultures that he brought with him to Japan. He gained an appreciation and, more importantly, a desire to point out the distinctive elements of culture that his contemporaries would ignore.

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Under the Volcano in St. Pierre



John Moran

Journalist, *The Irish Times*

When Anthony Trollope toured the Caribbean islands in 1859 he found the towns on islands under French administration superior in design, architecture and port amenities to those governed from London. Among these French possessions, the town of Saint-Pierre on the island of Martinique was considered the finest of all and was known as the Little Paris of the Antilles.

On his own Caribbean cruise in 1887, the wandering Irishman Patrick Lafcadio Hearn, who had recently abandoned newspaper journalism after a highly successful career in Cincinnati and New Orleans, was also smitten by Martinique. Even the surrounding blue-black sea “bewitches certain Celtic eyes”, he wrote. After dropping off in Saint-Pierre during his three-month tour, he decided to return for a longer period to record the tropical beauty and the daily routines of the inhabitants of an island where Napoleon’s wife Josephine was born.

Lafcadio Hearn stayed in Martinique for two years, sending sparkling and often poetic essays and sketches to *Harper’s Magazine* in New York. These would later form part of his travel classic, *Two Years in the French West Indies*. He also completed a charming novelette, *Youma: the Story of a West Indian Slave*. In the foreword to the most recent edition of the travel book, Martiniquan writer Raphael Confiant notes: “After less than two years of living in Martinique, Lafcadio Hearn had succeeded in penetrating one of the most jealously guarded secrets of our ancient *quimboiseurs* (witch-doctors). This magnificent

traveller was sensitive to colours and sounds and the peculiar way they shape our everyday lives in the Caribbean islands.” Confiant also delights in Hearn’s “ungovernable tendency to associate with black and mulatto people”.

In the two years between 1887 and 1889, Hearn became a familiar sight on the island. He lived mostly in Saint-Pierre in the shadow of its looming volcano, Mont Pelée, which was known affectionately by *Pierrotins* as “*La Montagne*”. To the long-gone Arawaks, and the Caribs who replaced them, it had been known as “Fire Mountain”. Apart from his watchful ramblings around the streets of Saint-Pierre, Hearn also climbed Mont Pelée and went on expeditions into the interior, recording the customs, culture and place in the social hierarchy of the different ethnic groups. Though he was familiar with high-society colonists and Creoles who possessed the latest fashions and ideas from the Metropole, he chose to live among and write about those of African and East Indian descent. It all reminded him of the old French Quarter in New Orleans. “A population fantastic, astonishing—a population of the Arabian Nights,” he noted with delight.

Hearn worked painstakingly, noting the minutiae of the daily routines of the *blanchusseuses*, women who washed clothes in the euphonious river Roxelane, which flows through Saint-Pierre, just as he did with the *porteuses* or porter women who, with sublime grace, carried heavy loads on their heads from the port out into distant country destinations; he

recorded the routines of the *petits canotiers*, canoe boys who dived for coins thrown by passengers and crew arriving on visiting ships. He doggedly travelled throughout the pitons, mountains and mornes, past pious little Marian jungle shrines perched incongruously among the strange vegetation of giant plants and exotic tropical trees. He also heard stories of life on the sugar plantations of the days of slavery.

Hearn particularly revelled in the tales of zombies and *quimboiseurs*, which he gleaned from his neighbours. Echoing his period as a reporter on the police beat in Cincinnati, he seemed to possess a desire to willfully discomfit the comfortably-off readers of *Harper's Magazine* with occasional grotesque accounts of the island's creepy-crawly creatures, once lovingly detailing the putrefying effects of a bite from the deadly fer-de-lance viper.

Nature was at her most beautiful in the tropics, but also at her most dangerous, Hearn noted: "A paradise this is, but a paradise of fire." During a virulent smallpox epidemic that laid waste to hundreds of lives, Hearn chronicled the deaths of friends, acquaintances and strangers. His account of the Saint-Pierre Carnival that went ahead at the height of the plague is both sensitive and macabre.

Though only 5 feet 3 inches in height and having the sight of just one bulbous eye, Hearn's determined spirit was evident in his completion of the arduous climb of the 4,500ft Mont Pelée, the volcanic giant that looms over Saint-Pierre and dominates the landscape. Near the top, Hearn rested with a bathe in a crater. Looking down from the summit, he was overwhelmed by the panoramic view down towards Saint-Pierre and beyond. But he was also struck by melancholy: "For all this astonishment of beauty, all of this majesty of light and form and colour, will surely endure—marvellous as now—after we have lain down to sleep where no dreams come, and may never arise from the dust of our rest to look upon it."

Hearn compared the mountain's contours to an exquisitely printed Japanese fan, and went on: "The artist willing to devote a few weeks of travel and study to Pelée has not yet made his

appearance in Martinique." He wasn't to know that by an extraordinary coincidence the French painter Pierre Gauguin lived for four months just outside Saint-Pierre around the time Hearn was actually there. Gauguin was there for the same reason as Hearn—the wild, exotic beauty of its landscapes and people. Gauguin completed a dozen works in Martinique and it is a nice irony that one of these, *Coming and Going in Martinique*, today adorns the cover of a modern edition of Hearn's *Two Years in the French West Indies*.

In 1889, Hearn departed Martinique, which he had "loved as if it were a human being". Within a year he was in Japan, a country whose ancient culture was exciting great interest in the West. Rafael Confiat has said that Hearn "spoke with a Martinique voice", exactly the authenticity Hearn said he hoped to achieve in Japan. (Hearn completed 14 books and made an international name for himself as an interpreter of Japan at a time when things Japanese were all the fashion in London and Paris and New York.)

Back in Martinique, from late February 1902, 13 years after Hearn left, fumaroles on Fire Mountain began emitting sulphuric gases that wafted down and whorled all around the streets of Saint-Pierre, fouling the air with the noxious pungency of rotten eggs. As the months wore on, there were successions of eruptions of steam and dust, sometimes accompanied by frightening roars and growling earth tremours.

Things got worse for Pierrotins as spring arrived with invasions of the city by yellow ants, large black centipedes and a host of other creatures, fleeing the boiling emissions. Not least among these invaders were the hundreds of fers-de-lances which seethed around the streets and homes of Saint-Pierre striking out at anything that moved, leaving 50 dead, mostly children.

Though some fled the gathering horror, the military forced them back. The majority stayed, having been advised to do so by the town's conservative white politicians who wished them to vote in an important election on May 11th. "Where better could you be than in Saint-Pierre?" asked *Les Colonies* newspaper in its final Saint-Pierre edition.

Mont Pelée gave its answer on May 8th, 1902, at 7.50am, when two enormous clouds of volcanic material exploded from the side of the mountain, sending smoke and debris hissing down the side of the mountain in a “glowing avalanche” as it gained relentlessly on the port of Saint-Pierre. Within minutes, pyroclastic surges began engulfing the city.

In the harbour, sailors and passengers on board ships had at first cheered the “magnificent spectacle” as the volcano blew, but soon saw “glimpses of hell”, with scenes of blind panic on the shore as spectral figures shrouded in ash fled through the suffocating maelstrom of boiling magma, frantically seeking shelter.

But there was none. Even the sea was boiling. Hundreds who sought sanctuary in the town’s cathedral died there. In just under an hour all those in the city—up to 30,000 people—were annihilated.

All those in the city save three, that is. One of whom was Aguste Ciparis, aka Ludger Sylbaris, a prisoner in the dungeon of the city jail. Although badly burned, he survived. Within a year Ciparis was the star attraction, in the US, of Barnum and Bailey’s circus freak show as “the evil survivor of the city of death”.

On the other side of the world the next day, the professor of English literature at the prestigious Tokyo Imperial University, Lafcadio Hearn—or Koizumi Yukumo, as he was now known—was perusing the foreign pages in his morning

newspaper when a one-paragraph account of the fate of Saint-Pierre shattered his calm. All his friends and those he had written about so affectionately had died in the most appalling of circumstances. A forlorn Lafcadio Hearn recorded his anguish: “But all this was—and is not! Never again will the sun or moon shine upon the streets of that city; never will its ways be trodden again—except in dreams.”

For long after the disaster, Saint-Pierre was deemed unsafe and for many, cursed. Fort-de-France became the island’s principal town, but in time green shoots began to appear through the carpet of volcanic debris around Saint-Pierre and rebuilding began. Today, Saint-Pierre is a chic Caribbean port and Martinique is a full *département* of France where now you may buy goods with euro. The town’s comeback is marked each year on the anniversary of the disaster with a jazz festival and a candlelit procession of remembrance from the cathedral.

And thanks to the delicate, fretful art of Patrick Lafcadio Hearn—the forgotten Irishman of letters—wherever *Two Years in the French West Indies* is read, the old city of Saint-Pierre will live again in the imagination, and that generation of Pierrotins who perished in that cruel spring of 1902 will be remembered.

From an article in the *The Irish Times* in the centenary year of Hearn’s death, Saturday, April 24th, 2004

A Fantastic Journey: the Life and Literature of Lafcadio Hearnd



Paul Murray

Hearn Biographer

The research for my biography, *A Fantastic Journey: the Life and Literature of Lafcadio Hearn*¹, began in the New York Public Library in September 1980. My interest in Hearn went back to my posting at the Embassy of Ireland, Tokyo, as Deputy Head of Mission, from 1978 to 1980, from where I moved to North America in the summer of 1980.

I discovered Lafcadio Hearn as a young diplomat in Japan. In the 1970s Hearn's reputation was at its nadir. I recall seeing a television documentary on Hearn—on NHK, I think—in which the various academics interviewed were united on one thing: that while Hearn's life was interesting, his work was no longer of relevance. In 1979, Professor Sukehiro Hirakawa of Tokyo University, the dean of Hearn scholarship, commented:

Hearn's writings are today so discredited among American Japanese specialists that if a young student quotes Hearn sympathetically, he is almost certain to be criticised by his academic advisers and considered a belated romanticist unfit for serious scholarship. There is, however, no problem at all with quoting the authoritative [Basil Hall] Chamberlain².

My reaction was precisely the opposite: when I began reading Hearn in 1978 I felt that there was a hard kernel of meaning in Hearn's interpretation of Japan that transcended, not just his contemporary Japanologists, Basil Hall Chamberlain, Ernest Satow and William George Aston, but even much of the analysis encased in the massive volumes

then running off the academic presses. While Hearn had been well served by biographers since his death, most recently in the 1960s by the excellent Elizabeth Stevenson, none of his Anglophone biographers had lived in Japan and none had seen his analysis of that country as central to their work.

I felt that a new biography was needed which would place at its heart Hearn's interpretation of Japan. My reasoning was that if Hearn had fallen overboard and drowned on his way to Japan in 1890 he would be little more than a footnote to American literary history. The thirteen major books³ that he wrote in his fourteen final years in his adopted country established him as a writer of significance, one who was worthy of remembrance and, indeed, of biography. Also, it was in Japan that his style matured from an attempt to mimic his French literary idols in New Orleans to the simple, uncluttered and highly effective prose of his Japanese work.

I set about trying to persuade those I felt were better qualified to undertake this work but none was interested. One prophesied that, after five years of intensive work on Hearn, I would not be able to bear hearing the sound of his name. He could hardly have been more wrong. Finally, my wife advised that I should write the book myself. I had, after all, a background in publication, having edited a fortnightly magazine, *Ireland Today*, for the Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin for three years, 1975–78, prior to my departure for Japan. My wife, a graduate of the Royal College of Art in London, had been the designer of *Ireland Today* and other Foreign Affairs publications that we had produced together. I was confident that with her help

transcribing research material I could write a short biography in about eighteen months: it would take thirteen years.

I had a stroke of luck in that while I was cross-posted from Tokyo to Ottawa in the summer of 1980, I spent about four months each autumn assisting at the Irish Mission to the United Nations in New York. Here were kept some of the great collections of Hearn primary material. A librarian at the New York Public Library provided a list of the primary source collections in the United States and these would provide the bedrock of research material that would be the backbone of my biography, a first draft of which was written in the mid 1980s. On my return to Ireland in 1985 I found new material which illuminated Hearn's early years and this was added to the existing draft. A chance meeting with Paul Norbury, publisher of the Japan Library, in London, where I was posted as a diplomat in the 1990s, led to *A Fantastic Journey* being published in 1993. Paul arranged for its subsequent publication in America by the University of Michigan Press in 1997 and in Japanese translation by Kobunsha in 2000.

Biography, however, never stands still. Not alone do new writers appear but established ones such as myself continually find new material that adds to or modifies their understanding of the subject. Only last August, I was giving a paper at a history conference in Maynooth University on newly-discovered material on Bram Stoker, which radically transforms our understanding of the origins of *Dracula*⁴, when I wandered into the campus bookshop. There I found a book on American post Civil War Reconstruction which included an illustration of an 1868 cartoon by Thomas Nast in *Harper's Weekly*⁵. The cartoon features three figures, an Irish-American holding a club; an ex-Confederate soldier brandishing a dagger; and, a Jewish financier holding aloft a bundle of money, each of them with a foot on top of a crushed black man. The point being made, in the midst of a Presidential election, was that an unholy alliance of the Irish, Southerners and Jews were conspiring to deny the black man his rights: the Irishman and Confederate by force and the Jewish financier by bribery. It is noteworthy that while the black man is sympathetically portrayed, the Confederate and the financier are

at least depicted as human; the Irishman alone is sub-human, a drunken, violent animal.

A modern commentator provides context: "The figure on the left is Irish-American. He wears working-class clothing, has an alcohol bottle in his hip pocket, a pipe and a cross in his hat, and holds a club in a striking position. '5 Points' [emblazoned on his hat] refers to a neighborhood in New York City, populated at the time primarily by poor Irish immigrants. The man's features are ape-like, a common way the Irish were portrayed in nineteenth-century illustrations."⁶ This cartoon was not a once-off: Nast was the most influential—and feared—cartoonist of the age who consistently targeted the Irish. *Harper's Weekly* was a leading intellectual journal with a national audience at a time when most media in America was local or regional and so its potential negative impact on a young immigrant like Hearn could have been substantial.

It was probably these cartoon that Lafcadio had in mind when he wrote to the publisher, Will H. Coleman, in 1886 (on contemporary representations of Chinese beauty): "They no more represent the finer type than the caricatures of Irishmen in *Harper's Weekly* represent the Irish University graduate or Irish colonels of a Light-Horse brigade."⁷ Here Hearn is making it clear that he does not fit this stereotype of the Irish as apes: his reference to graduates and army colonels clearly relates to his own family, so many of whom were graduates of Trinity College Dublin and officers in the British army. But he was still Paddy Hearn, who was not a WASP on account of his Roman Catholic background, with a Dublin accent, albeit it an educated one. On the other hand, he would not have fitted the self-image of the Irish themselves, most of them Roman Catholics of peasant background. He was therefore in an identity no-man's land.

Nast's cartoons caused me to revisit the Cincinnati of Hearn's era. Intense anti-Roman Catholic/anti-foreign hostility had been directed at German immigrants, mostly Roman Catholics, who had been arriving there in large numbers from 1830s. The "Know-Nothing" Party of the 1850s was a reaction to the growing numbers of Jews, Roman Catholics and blacks. In 1855, three days of violence followed the importation of nativist thugs to seize ballots in

German areas (the Germans had established their own quarter, Over the Rhine, where they mostly congregated). Hearn arrived at the end of the following decade, just four years after the Civil War, when the USA was convulsed by the racial issues inherent in Reconstruction. Hearn never wrote explicitly of these larger political and social issues but he quietly defied convention by his interest in black culture and by marrying a black ex-slave at a time when inter-racial marriage was illegal in Ohio.

The racial prejudice that Hearn encountered in America would have been a shock given that he had grown up in an Ireland where it was notably absent. Since writing my biography, I became aware of the experience of Frederick Douglass, the great black American statesman who toured Ireland in 1845 while still a slave and was amazed by its lack of prejudice:

Eleven days and a half gone and I have crossed three thousand miles of the perilous deep. Instead of a democratic government, I am under a monarchical government. Instead of the bright, blue sky of America, I am covered with the soft, grey fog of the Emerald Isle [Ireland]. I breathe, and lo! the chattel [slave] becomes a man. I gaze around in vain for one who will question my equal humanity, claim me as his slave, or offer me an insult. I employ a cab—I am seated beside white people—I reach the hotel—I enter the same door—I am shown into the same parlour—I dine at the same table—and no one is offended... I find myself regarded and treated at every turn with the kindness and deference paid to white people. When I go to church, I am met by no upturned nose and scornful lip to tell me, *'We don't allow niggers in here!'*⁸

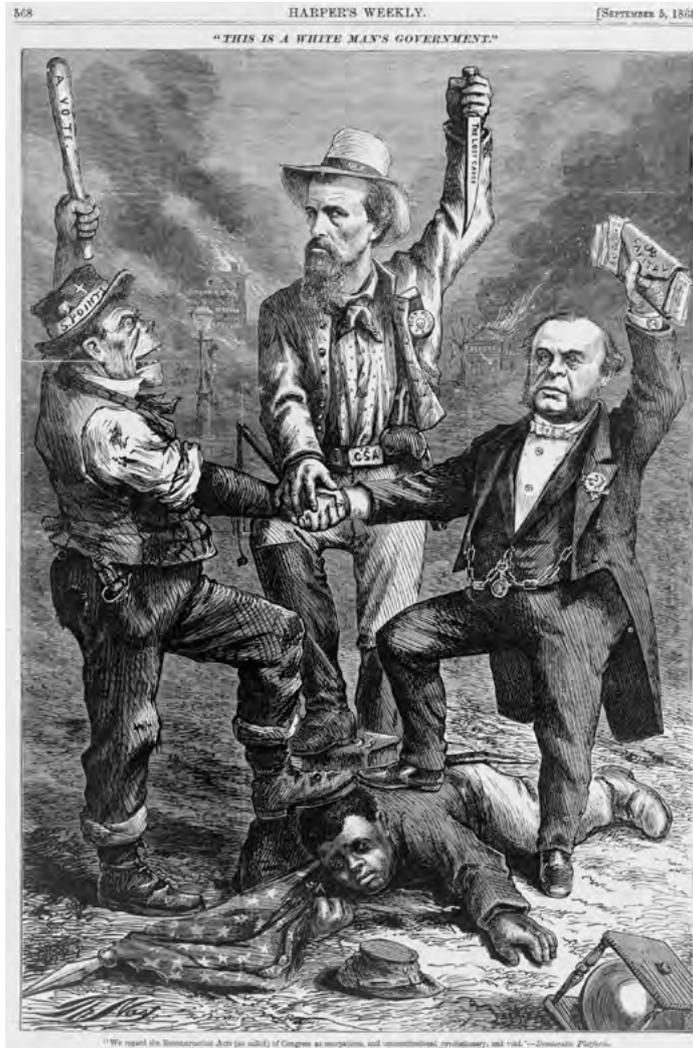
Cincinnati therefore presented Hearn with challenges of race, nationality and religion which he had solved by the time he left in 1877 by severing his links with Irishness and Roman Catholicism and becoming more circumspect on the racial issue. He had come to the US as an insecure, nineteen-year-old, Patrick or Paddy Hearn, traumatised by the sudden decline in his fortunes over the previous two years; he would now transform himself into Lafcadio Hearn, confident litterateur, and such he would remain.

While I was aware of negativity towards the wave of Irish immigrants in mid nineteenth-century America, it was only when I saw Nast's cartoons that I realised the viciousness of contemporary racism and what this might have meant for the formation of Lafcadio Hearn in the maelstrom of Reconstruction America. It also raises the question as to whether his celebrated break with Harper shortly after his arrival in Japan could have been influenced by these factors. His letter severing the relationship is one of the most remarkable passages of scatology in English literature:

...liars, —and losers of MSS, —employers of lying clerks and hypocritical, thieving editors, and artists whose artistic ability consists in farting sixty-seven times to the minute, —scallywags, scoundrels, swindlers, sons of bitches... Know also that there exists one particular individual, whose name is at the end of these words, whom all the money of all the States of America and Mexico could not induce to contribute one line to your infernally vulgar beastly-goodey's-Lady's-Book-Magazine, you miserable beggarly buggerly cowardly rascally boorish brutal sons of bitches.⁹

This scatological invective is unparalleled in Hearn's letters and had serious consequences for him: he had now sundered his relationship with Harper, the source of his income and his lifeline to America, on which he would continue to be largely dependent both for publishing and readership. Could his extreme anger—which is otherwise difficult to explain, even for one as passionate as Hearn—have reflected a long-held grudge based on Harper's racial stereotyping?

Similar chance encounters have led me to reassess other aspects of Hearn's life. Conversations with kindly Greeks on a visit to the mental hospital in Corfu where Hearn's mother spent her final decade, after I had attended a 2014 Lefkas conference devoted to Hearn, resulted in a good deal of new material coming to light on the relationship between Hearn's parents in the Ionian Islands and the very specific nature of the then United States of the Ionian Islands, a nominally independent, British protectorate where he was born which is usually, inaccurately, described as "Greece".¹⁰



A book¹¹ on the Corrib area in the West of Ireland, which I came across by chance, has transformed my understanding of the Elwood family, at whose residence the young Patrick Lafcadio experienced the happiest days of his childhood in Ireland. Space, however, precludes providing detail on these explorations: it is sufficient to say that the fantastic journey on which I embarked with Patrick Lafcadio Hearn in 1980 continues apace, thirty-six years later.

Notes

1. Paul Murray, *A Fantastic Journey: the Life and Literature of Lafcadio Hearn*, Folkestone: Japan Library, 1993
2. "Supplementary Comment on the Lafcadio Hearn Paper", Professor Hirakawa Sukehiro, paper given at the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C., 19/7/1979; published in *Lafcadio Hearn: Japan's Great Interpreter, A new anthology of his writings 1894-1904*, Louis Allen & Jean Wilson (ed), Japan Library: Sandgate, Kent, 1992, 302-8
3. Available at that time under the Tuttle imprint; I recall buying the entire set in a Kanda bookshop in the autumn of 1978
4. Paul Murray, "Puritanism and the formation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*", Fifth Tudor and Stuart Ireland Interdisciplinary Conference, Maynooth University, 28-29 August 2015
5. Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, New York: Harper & Row, 1990; 'This is a White Man's Government.', *Harper's Weekly*, 5 September 1868, 568
6. "This Is A White Man's Government", *HarpWeek* (John Adler, publisher), <http://blackhistory.harpweek.com/7Illustrations/Reconstruction/ThisIsAWhiteMansGov.htm> (last accessed 23 March 2016)
7. Quoted in Murray, *A Fantastic Journey*, 85
8. Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library, Part II, 371
9. Quoted in *A Fantastic Journey*, 133
10. The most significant item to come to my attention was a Greek language article, "Roza Antoniou Kassimati (Mother of Lafcadio Hearn)", Eleni Charou-Koroneou, *Kythyrean*, May 2006; kindly translated for me by the then Ambassador of Cyprus in Ireland, Michael Stavrinou, a friend and neighbour
11. Richard Hayward, *The Corrib Country*, with illustrations from drawings in wash by J. Humbert Craig, R. H. A., Dundalk, Ireland: W. Tempest, Dundalgan Press, 1943

Considering Lafcadio Hearn's Open Mind from the Point of View of One Descendant



Bon Koizumi

Professor, University of Shimane; Great-grandson of Lafcadio Hearn

I would like to talk about Lafcadio Hearn's open mind from a point of view of one descendant.

Hearn's one-way ticket journey that crossed over half the globe enabled him to accept different cultural characteristics of each place wherever he dropped. I believe, his remarkable cosmopolitanism emerged from the result of this fantastic journey. I am sure it was Ireland that presented to him the wandering spirit, which had been fundamental for his whole life. By the way, I partially inherit this spirit from him, so I had already wandered around Japan when I was only twelve years old. I am proud of inheriting this wandering spirit.

Though many scholars have researched the roots of Hearn family, only one thing is certain that Daniel Hearn, Lafcadio's great-grandfather settled in Dublin in the early eighteenth century. Yesterday, the Lafcadio Hearn Reading Performance was held at St. Ann's Church, where Daniel had served. He would later become the Archdeacon of Cashel, and establish the foundation of Hearn family in Ireland. As tracing back further from Daniel, it is said the ancestor of Hearn family was a lord of a town in Northumberland, Northern England.

About six years ago, an elderly woman Ray Hearne visited Matsue, where we live, from North Carolina.

"I have the same family name "Hearne" as you, but it is slightly different," she said, "My family name is Hearne, "e" is attached after "n." But I think you and I have common ancestors. Recently, I have visited a village le Heron, locating near Rouen, Normandy. There I got a

book titled as *Hearne History*, so I will give you some part of its copies."

As she said so, she presented them to me. It explains that, though there exist seven different spellings of the family name Hearn, our common origin converges on the Heron family in Heron village. Following William the Conqueror, my ancestor seemed to go to England. Later, the descendant of the ancestor, William Heron was designated as the Governor of Bamborough Castle in Northumberland. If William Heron has some relationship to Hearn, the Hearn family is descended from the Anglo-Norman. But, of course, there exists no particular proof in fact.

When I visited Le Heron in 2009, I asked a villager the reason why this village was named Heron. The villager answered, because a large number of small fish live in L'Andelle River, herons gather for them to prey. In fact, until the nineteen-forty's, there existed the castle named "Chateau du Heron" in the village. Besides, in front of the village, I found that there was a board on which a heron was painted. By the way, the crest of Hearn Family in Ireland includes four herons, and a heron is also designed in the Koizumi Family's crest. This crest was produced by an art teacher, who was a colleague during Hearn's Matsue days. I felt wonder in this coincidence.

In Hearn's later life, a peddler came to his house to sell baby herons. As he saw them, he felt pity and bought one of them. He raised it with great care, and finally released it in a forest. Hearn had been sympathetic toward the aggrieved throughout his life. About forty years later, in the middle of the Second World War, my

father was boarded on a naval ship, but it was destroyed by an American submarine at the Mariana Trench, the deepest trench in the world. Recognizing he was going to die, he found a shadow of a ship far away. Surprisingly, the name of this ship was “Sagi,” which means a heron in Japanese. Saved by this torpado boat named Sagi, in other words, heron, he would survive until two-thousand zero nine. Furthermore, the pretty symbol flower of Setagaya Ward, Tokyo, where I was born, is “Sagiso.” As the figure of this plant looks like that of a flying heron, so it was named like this. I still remember my mother grew it in my house.

I suppose both Hearn family and members of the Koizumi family have been tied with herons supernaturally for a long time. Throughout his life, Lafcadio was the kind of person who had respected such supernatural sensitivity.

At 30th August 1890, Hearn assumed his teacher’s post in Matsue; but its winter climate was so severe for him, so Setsu Koizumi, a daughter of ex-samurai class, took care of him kindly. She proved to be a good storyteller later. Hearn and Setsu publicly married on 1896 when they were in Kobe.

Later in his life, Hearn became absorbed in collecting and retelling Japanese ghost stories, and he greatly appreciated her role as his informant, a role that had provided original stories for him. Setsu had no academic background according to the economic distress of her family, but she was a kind of a girl who liked stories so much that she had always asked the adults around her to narrate some stories. The stories to which she had listened during her childhood were very meaningful for creating his literary works. However, when Setsu attempted to tell some stories to him from a book of ghost stories which she had obtained in a secondhand bookstore, Hearn order a strict demand to her immediately:

“Do not take a look at a book. Stories must be just your own speech, your words, and your thought.”

Hearn probably thought the true charm of oral culture should be what came from storyteller’s own words and interpretation.

In addition to that, Hearn did not simply listen to Setsu’s stories, but instead told to his family members his Martinique episodes and

Irish stories which he had heard from his nurse during the Irish days, Catherine Costello. The Koizumi Family has been abundant in stories.

Our family has inherited two Irish folktales from Hearn for my generation. I would like to introduce them.

The Three Wishes

In a country of Ireland, there were a husband and a wife who worked so earnestly in farming though often quarreled.

A night just before Christmas, the God appeared in front of them and said:

“Though thou quarrel so often, thou work hard,” the God said, “Because of this, your three wishes will be fulfilled.”

“A sausage I want to eat!” the husband said. Soon after saying thus, a sausage appeared just in front of him.

“A sausage! Oh what a fool!” the wife complained immediately. “Why don’t you say you want the mountain of gold coins!”

As usual, they began to quarrel.

“A sausage,” the husband cried “would suit your nose, because you’re so greedy!”

As soon as he cried so, the sausage attached to her nose.

They grudgingly favored to the God to unfix it. Finally, the three wishes were all fulfilled.

The Animal Languages

Once in a year, the king of cats appeared, and cats gathered there to hold a general assembly.

An honest peddler smoked a cigarette wearily in the grass in the middle of his journey. To quench his thirst, he drank water gushing near the spot where he was resting.

Soon after drinking, to his great surprise, he heard voices behind the grass. But, because it was midnight, so it was improbable for him to believe that they were those of human beings.

Watching carefully, he noticed many cats had gathered around him. He seemed to be able to listen to the words of cats. As he listened to them, the beginning of the general assembly of cats was declared.

“Well, are you doing well?” the king of cats said.

“Welcome to the general assembly of cats. I’m glad of meeting all of you again.”

“By the way, do you think human beings are foolish? A lot of gold coins are buried under that

tree. But they wouldn't like to dig that spot. Oh, what a real fool are they! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you have anything to discuss?"

Some are discussed, the assembly was closed peacefully in the meantime.

"All right, so we'd like to meet you again here the same day next year! See you again!"

As hearing this, the honest peddler tried to dig the spot under the tree. To his surprise, he could find gold coins which were really glittering. So he became a rich man.

A greedy peddler heard this, and tried to consider the way to become rich. Then to encounter the general assembly of the next year, he went to the spot, drank the fresh water, and secretly climbed to a tree nearby the spot. From there, he watched the assembly.

After a while, the king of cats exclaimed.

"Well, are you doing well?"

"I'm glad of meeting all of you again.

"By the way, do you know there was a spy of a human being in the last year's assembly? Our important secret was leaked to him. Eventually, we were completely cheated.

"We never let him do such a thing in this year. So, before the assembly, we have to search the spy thoroughly! If you find him, you may scratch and kill him immediately! Are you ready?"

"Oh!"

Cats searched thoroughly the grass and trees around the spot of the assembly.

The greedy peddler was immediately found by the cats, and finally became the victim of their sharp nails.

These two stories seemed to be told to Hearn by his nurse Catherine Costello. Recently, notes about her were found in Virginia State University. One of them says:

The name of my nurse is Catharine Costello,—a tall girl from Connaught. There is another servant in the house named Catharine—a gentle humble girl with big brown eyes; but everybody called her "Kate." Nobody would dare to call my Catharine "Kate." Her skin is very white hair is black, her eyebrows are black; and her blue eyes are green.

Later, in 1901, in a letter to W. B. Yeats, Hearn said:

But forty-five years ago, I was a horrid little boy "with never a crack in my heart" who lives in Upper Leeson Street, Dublin; and I had a Connaught nurse who told me fairy-tales and ghost stories. So I ought to love Irish things, and do.

It is the Irish atmosphere surrounded by storytelling that greatly contributed to Hearn's future career as a retelling writer. Later in the life, he told the charm of storytelling in "The Dream of a Summer Day," written in his Japanese days:

A Story which had lived for a thousand years, gaining fresher charm with the passing of every century, could only have survived by virtue of some truth in it.

In addition to this, in a lecture of the Imperial University in Tokyo, he told to the students:

The ghostly represents always some shadow of truth, and no amount of disbelief in what used to be called ghosts can ever diminish human interest in what relates to that truth.

The two quotations above were the manifestation of the real feeling of Hearn, who lived together with storytellers and loved folk literature throughout his whole life. His affection for folk literature, which has had universality and flexibility beyond religion, formed his open mind and creativity at the same time.

In fact, Hearn never let his eldest son go to a Japanese elementary school until he became ten. Instead, Hearn privately taught to him collections of folktales such as Hans Christian Andersen and Andrew Lang as the textbooks. He had always thought the teaching method adopted Japanese schools tended to heighten the ability of memorization disproportionately, not to nurture that of imagination. Our family still keep these twenty-nine books that Hearn used in teaching to his eldest son.

I assure, it is his Ireland experience that greatly contributed to the formation of Hearn's open mind blooming in his late life. I also assure, the experience was always fundamental for his whole life.



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The Open
Mind of
**PATRICK
LAFCADIO
HEARN**
Coming Home
LAFCADIO HEARN
GATHERING
IN IRELAND
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