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Modern Allegory in Wartime: Men in Lafcadio Hearn's Japanese Stories¹

Hitomi NABAE

1. Introduction

“Lafcadio Hearn, a poet, thinker, loving husband and father, and sincere friend” —are the word his student Nobushige Amenomori described his teacher in his 1905 memorial article for *Atlantic Monthly*, “Lafcadio Hearn, the Man” (523). As Amenomori conveys in this article, Hearn was much respected in Japan and some of his stories were considered appropriate enough to be used in textbooks not only for English language study but also for moral education.² Nonetheless, Hearn could not stand to be a guileless writer who wrote only about the pleasant aspects of life; as a journalist and writer, he was well aware of the disquieting world at the turn of the nineteenth century. Within a few years of his arrival in Japan, he witnessed the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) and how Japan turned into a military Empire, observing how his young Japanese male students were confused by the new Western educational system. On the other side of the Pacific, the US was gaining power from its victories in the Spanish-American War (1898) and Philippine-American War (1899-1902). Hearn died just before the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), but he was conscious of its signs. Under such circumstances, he continued to write stories and essays published predominantly in the US. His stories, however, are neither a superficial observation of Japan nor a romantic projection of the exotic, as his writings have frequently summarized. Rather, as I would argue, they serve as modern allegories

1 This paper is based on my oral presentation given at Japan Comparative Literature Society Kansai Chapter on 19 September 2016, under the title, “Minokichi no 10-nin no Kodomotachi: Lafcadio Hearn ni okeru ‘Dansei-zo (Manhood)’ [Minokichi and his Ten Children: Lafcadio Hearn’s Manhood].” The research in the revision process is supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number JP16K02498 under the theme of Jeimuzu to Han no ‘Umi o koeru Katari’: Amerika Teikoku Shugi to Toransunationariti [Narrative Crossing the Oceans in James and Hearn: American Imperialism and Transnationality].”

2 Hearn’s story about Shinto, “A Living God,” which was selected for an English textbook, recounts an episode about a village chief who saved the lives of the villagers from a tsunami by burning his harvest. This portion of the story was translated into Japanese and used in Japanese elementary school textbooks until the end of WWII.

in which his socio-political critique and future vision are intricately interwoven.

This paper examines these traits in his stories in the context of the male characters and their experiences of awakening. “Yuki-Onna,” “Oshidori” and “Haru” portray anecdotes of fearful encounters with the foreign, or the Other. “At the Railway Station,” “In Cholera-Time” and “With Kyushu Students” are based on Hearn’s own experiences and render his discovery of the innate love of children in the soul of Japanese men. The awakening of male characters is further assessed in a historical context where Hearn’s other stories and essays will be looked at as references. Examinations of a male awakening reveal the unpredictability of an unsettling time at war. Hearn’s stories thus render public and domestic issues palimpsestically as modern allegory.

Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904), born in Greece to an Irish surgeon serving the Royal Navy on an Ionian Island and a local Greek woman and later orphaned and sent to the US, arrived in the Yokohama bay in 1890 at the age of 40. He had spent the previous 20 years in the US as a journalist in Cincinnati and New Orleans. Although he only meant to spend a couple of years in Japan in order to collect the material for his book, he ended up staying there for the rest of his life. Fittingly, Hearn’s biographer Jonathan Cott calls him “a wandering ghost” and Roger Pulverse an “orphan of Europe.” Hearn was undeniably a child of the British colonial era, being both a child of mixed-race and an orphan. In fact, he consciously called himself a “civilized nomad” in his essay “A Ghost” (119).³ Japan, however, became his adopted country; he started his family, and in order to make his marriage with a Japanese woman official, he became a Japanese citizen in 1896.⁴ Hearn was considered a foreigner who truly sympathized with the Japanese, but, as Pulverse lucidly points out, what must be remembered is his point of view “as wanderer, as nonnative informant of the fiendish

3 Hearn talks about this new kind of orphan in the modern world of imperialistic expansion in his essay “A Ghost” (1889), which he wrote just before he came to Japan: “Perhaps the man who never wanders away from the place of his birth may pass all his life without knowing ghosts: but the nomad is more than likely to make their acquaintance. I refer to the civilized nomad, whose wanderings are not prompted by hope of gain, nor determined by pleasure, but simply compelled by certain necessities of his being, —the man whose inner secret nature is totally at variance with the stable conditions of a society to which he belongs only by accident” (116-117).

4 Hearn was introduced to Setsu Koizumi in Matsue where he had his first teaching position in 1890. He and Koizumi got married though it was not recognized as an official marriage. Together they moved to Kumamoto where Hearn taught at the Fifth Government High School for five years. Then they moved to Kobe where Hearn worked as a journalist for a British newspaper the Kobe Chronicle. It was in Kobe that Hearn acquired Japanese nationality as it was understood that since the marriage was not official Setsu had to live in the foreign settlement as a concubine and was not able to inherit Hearn’s property. See “Koizumi Setsu,” Koizumi Yakumo Jiten.

details of American and Japanese lore.” In Japan, his journalistic eye sheds light on the behind the mask aspects of the Japanese soul among common people and turned his observations into modern allegory to be read by his contemporaries on both sides of the Pacific.

1. “Yuki-Onna”: A Call for a Father

Stories collected in his posthumous work *Kwaidan* (1904) dramatize encounters with the unfamiliar. Among them, “Yuki-Onna” presents a special case because although it has been considered an old Japanese story that was translated into English by Hearn, recent researches attest that it is his original story.⁵ If so, it is worth reading closely to discover his fully worked out design. “Yuki-Onna” begins and ends with a snowstorm. In the first scene, Minokichi, a young woodcutter encounters Yuki-Onna, a fearful but beautiful supernatural being, and sees her kill his mentor and peer woodcutter with her icy breath. She spares his life because he is young but makes him promise not to tell anyone about the night. She reappears as a young woman named O-Yuki and, being favored by his mother, becomes Minokichi’s wife and bears him ten children. Long after his mother’s death, one snow stormy night, he is reminded of the fearful night and unthinkingly tells O-Yuki about it. She then reveals herself as Yuki-Onna and in fury accuses him of breaking the promise, but she spares him once again because of their children:

And I told you then that I would kill you if you ever said one word about it! . . .
But for those children asleep there, I would kill you this moment! And now you had better take very, very good care of them; for if ever they have reason to complain of you, I will treat you as you deserve! (11: 231).

This story is about 1500 words, but the phrase “ten children” is repeated twice and the word “children” is used five times. The emphasis on the number of children may well underline the importance of children as well as the multiplied burdens that Minokichi will have to carry in future. Yuki-Onna’s verdict repeating the word “very” resonates with the recurring “r” sounds like the icy wind swirling in the atmosphere.

⁵ “Yuki Onna” as Hearn’s original is discussed in Yoko Makino’s *Toki o Tsunagu Kotoba*, 2011 and Masaru Toda’s *Tensei suru Monogatari*, 2011. They made research from different perspective but both agree that “Yuki-Onna” that later appeared in the collections of old Japanese stories published in the mid-20th century was a translation of Hearn’s text. Also see my paper, “Lafcadio Hearn’s ‘Ghostly’ Narrative: Translation and Re-telling in ‘Yuki-Onna’” (*Kobe Gaidai Ronso*, 2012).

The last scene is fantastically presented, and Minokichi is there only dumbstruck. The ending is ambiguous because it is not known whether Minokichi will keep his promise this time or not, but Yuki-Onna presses him with a warning that she will reappear if he is negligent. What “Yuki-Onna” renders is the importance of promise which in fact functions as a linkage between the two who are of different elements.

One curious example is found in his travel essay titled “The Dream of a Summer Day” collected in *Out of the East* (1895). The narrator stays at an inn by the sea called Urashima-ya, run by a beautiful woman. It is she that makes him promise to pay the driver a good fare. The name of the inn and the beautiful lady makes him think of an old Japanese story “Urashima-Taro,” a story about a man who breaks his promise with the Sea Princess. Urashima-Taro is taken to the Sea Palace and welcomed by the Sea Princess, but he begins to miss his mother and bids farewell to her. At parting, she gives him a box and makes him promise not to open it, but when he goes home and finds his mother long dead, he, feeling desperate, opens the box. A wisp of smoke comes out, the spell is broken, and he immediately ages and dies since a few days at the Sea Palace equals hundreds of years on the shore. Although Urashima-Taro grieves over his mother and forgets the Princess, Hearn’s narrator thinks of the Princess: “I thought again about Urashima. I saw the Daughter of the Dragon King waiting vainly in the palace made beautiful for his welcome . . .” (7: 16). Urashima-Taro, a hero in a fairy-tale, never self-consciously asks the meaning of the box or reflects on the promise made to the Princess, but the narrator becomes self-conscious about his promise with the inn-keeper. Had Urashima kept his promise with the Princess, he might have gained both an eternal youth and the Princess, but that is nothing but a “dream” for the narrator. He adds, “After my reverie about Urashima, the moral of this story seemed less satisfactory than in former time. Because by drinking too deeply of life we do not become young” (7:22). He must keep his promise, a transaction in the commercial world and a way to be socially connected, then he must go on his journey. Time never goes back and there is no chance to be young again.

Like Urashima, Minokichi, when the spell is broken and Yuki-Onna is gone, could have been fated to die at the end of the story, only if he had not had “ten children.” Minokichi having fathered children seems to be the crucial point that makes him different from Urashima. One must live for his children that is a positive sign of life, it seems to be saying, and the other, longing for the dead mother regressively, dies. Still, Minokichi, who sits dumb struck at the end, does not appear like a changed man who starts to take care of his children as Yuki-Onna tells him. His inability needs be

further inquired, but the awakening moments described in Hearn's other stories need to be examined first.

2. Women's Gaze and Men's Awakening

In "Yuki-Onna," actors are women; Minokichi follows his mother's advice and marries O-Yuki, and she, or Yuki-Onna, actually has total control over his life and death. Yet, making the hero a passive and obtuse man may have a point. He represents a common man who is weak-minded and lacks discipline. "*Oshidori*," an adaptive retelling of a story from the thirteenth century book, *Kokinchomonju*, collected in *Kwaidan* is a story of a man's awakening. It is originally a Buddhist parable that warns against killing living creatures. What is noteworthy is that Hearn changed the original story to make his story more arresting and modern. In his story, a hunter named Sonjo finds a pair of birds. He knows that it is not good to kill *oshidori*, a couple of love birds, or "mandarin ducks," but, out of hunger, shoots one of them: "His arrow pierced the male . . ." (11: 23, my underline). The verb "pierce" renders the lethal wound inflicted on the male bird. Then that night, the female bird appears in the hunter's dream. In the original, the female bird wept and sang an elegy in his dream, and the next morning the hunter finds her dead by the pond. Such shocking incident humbles the hero and changes his way of life: he became a priest.⁶ In Hearn's version, however, the female bird not only sings an elegy in his dream but also speaks to him in the morning. The word "pierce" is used again but this time he is the one who is "pierced":

"Why —oh! why did you kill him [male bird]? —of what wrong was he guilty? . . . Do you even know what you have done? . . . Me too you have killed . . ." . . . Then again she wept aloud— so bitterly that the voice of her crying pierced into the marrow of the listener's bones . . . (11: 176-7, my underline)

The female bird severely criticizes the hunter's sporadic act of killing, and her voice, like an arrow, "pierced" through his "bones," leaving a deep wound in his heart. The act of his shooting to satisfy his hunger, a primal desire, is equated with a random slaughter. His ignorance is no excuse before the mourning of the female bird over the death of her husband. After a bad night's sleep, he goes to the pond and is shaken up even more. The female bird in Hearn's story, in other words, is still alive, and she

6 See the original story in the appendix to *Kwaidan, Kidan* (Kodansha, 1990).

makes an act of protest before his eyes:

. . . the bird perceived Sonjo; but, instead of trying to escape, she swam straight toward him, looking at him the while in a strange fixed way. Then, with her beak, she suddenly tore open her own body, and died before the hunter's eye . . . Sonjo shaved his head, and became a priest. (11: 178, my underlines)

The woman's gaze, her words, and her suicidal act in total affect him. Her gaze is "strange," which means that it is something that he has never known or thought before. By opening up her own body, she literally forces him to see her inside, or her wound and pain. He is made to look at her and feel the pain of having her husband unreasonably killed. Being ashamed of his unthinking act, Sonjo becomes a priest.

The story clearly demonstrates that it is the female bird that triggers his awareness. It is the gaze of the "strange" woman, or the Other. As this story was written during the Sino-Japanese War, it might be read as Hearn's critique of Japan's imperialistic move in China.⁷ He deliberately gives a translation of "*oshidori*" as "mandarin ducks" in parentheses, and in the footnote says that "in the Far East, these birds have been regarded as emblems of conjugal affection" (11:23). Because the word "mandarin" refers to a public official in the Chinese Empire or the language spoken in Beijing, it may well be associated with China and the Sino-Japanese War: an unthinking hunter (a Japanese) shoots a "mandarin duck" (a Chinese) driven by his erratic hunger (possessiveness). In the original story, the hunter's name is Umano-jo (horse keeper) and he shoots because he is a hunter and not out of hunger.⁸ Hearn changes his name to Sonjo who acts unthinkingly like a hungry child. That his name Sonjo has a word "son" in it is eloquent enough to speak for his immaturity. What is different from the son, Minokichi in "Yuki-Onna" is that Sonjo realizes the gravity of his sporadic act. He is humbled and becomes a priest, abandoning any act of killing living creatures. Sonjo is affected but it must be remembered that it requires a shock treatment, a suicidal act of the female *oshidori*.

"Haru," a story collected in *Kokoro* (1896) is another story about a man's awakening. Haru, meaning spring in Japanese, is described as a paragon of a Japanese woman who is trained to be always "at the mercy of her husband" and "never to show

7 For further discussion on this point in "*Oshidori*," see my Chapter 5, *The Spirit of No Place: Reportage, Translation and Re-told Stories in Lafcadio Hearn*.

8 See the original in the appendix to *Kwaidan, Kidan*, pp. 365-66.

jealously, or grief, or anger.” The narrator also adds that to be like such a wife, “she was required to be almost superhuman.” Her husband, though “a clever man of business,” nonetheless, does not “really understand her,” and starts seeing a *geisha* nightly (7: 347-48). Haru, as an ideal wife, keeps quiet, but the narrator betrays how her “jealousy” grows inside her. He explains that it is natural for her to feel jealousy because it is “the feeling . . . older than all training—old as love,” and also “beneath her passionless mask the Japanese wife feels like her Western sister” (7: 350). By saying that women, Western or Japanese, share the same feelings, Hearn demystifies the exotic notion of doll-like Oriental women characterized by writers such as Pierre Loti.⁹

Haru falls ill from jealousy. At the end of the story, she greets her husband as if nothing has happened, but she suddenly collapses, grasping her husband's *kimono*.

. . . the man was startled, because instead of greeting him with the accustomed smile, she caught the bosom of his silk robe in one quivering little hand — and looked into his face with eyes that seemed to search for some shred of a soul — and tried to speak, but could utter only the single word, “Anata?” . . . her eyes closed with a strange smile . . . (7: 353)

An old Japanese social code commands her to be a perfect wife, masking her personal feelings under a familiar smile. On the verge of her death, however, Haru looks at her husband “with a strange smile” that her husband has never known before. Her last word calling her husband “Anata [you]” yet creates an eerie effect. Is she just accosting her husband, or is she about to say something? Whatever is in her mind, she gives him a direct gaze. Haru's last act, clutching, gazing, calling, and her death, altogether affect her husband. Thereafter, he is a different man and attends his work as a generous man “like a priest.” The narrator adds that such change is a “fair evidence that his conscience had been awakened” and he becomes “earnest and silent” (7: 353). Moreover, what makes the story ghostly is that he is haunted by his wife as he often feels her presence near, and her “Anata” echoes in “the solitude of his heart, like a question . . .” (7: 354). The awakening for him is not simply a matter of a moment. It

9 Pierre Loti's *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887) was one of the incentives for Hearn to come to Japan; however, he soon discovered that Loti's Japan was only a reflection of his feelings and is not a realistic depiction of Japan. In letters he wrote between 1893 and 94, Hearn expressed his disappointment in Loti. See “Loti” in *Koizumi Yakumo Jiten*.

constantly visits him, reminding him of the mystery of her “strange smile.”

The female figures in Hearn’s stories discussed in this section hold the key to men’s awakening. The women’s gaze, in other words, makes them conscientious and they become attentive to their conduct. However, they still do not serve as reference models for Minokichi, a father of ten children. Hearn’s stories concerning fatherhood further need to be surveyed.

3. Fatherhood

“At the Railway Station,” the opening story of *Kokoro*, renders Hearn’s view of Japanese fatherhood. He bases his assumption on an actual incident that he has witnessed. The narrator of the story goes to the station to see the criminal who is about to be taken to another city for trial. He appears under police escort and the narrator, a foreigner in town, expects that there will be an uproar at the station. To his surprise, however, silence presides and no one speaks. The police officer summons a woman with a boy child on her back and tells the child to look at the criminal who has killed his father. The boy “steadily and obediently . . . looked— looked—looked—straight into” the criminal’s face (7: 267). The gaze of the innocent child is emphasized by repeating the verb, “looked,” three times, and being gazed at by the child, the criminal in turn falls on his knees and bursts into tears:

Pardon! Pardon! Pardon me, little one! That I did—not for hate was it done, but in mad fear only, in my desire to escape. Very, very wicked I have been: great unspeakable wrong have I done you! But now for my sin I go to die . . . O little one, be pitiful!—forgive me! (7: 267-8)

The criminal also repeats the word “pardon” three times. These repetitions, as it were, create a magical moment.¹⁰ The child could not speak but “looked.” Small as he is, his gaze is mighty enough to affect the criminal’s conscience. The narrator is surprised because, although the local people in that area are said to be “the most dangerous in the Empire when angered,” they are all profoundly touched by the unexpected drama enacted before their eyes and even the policeman was in tears. He then concludes that

¹⁰ Hearn possibly used the repetition on purpose to dramatize the moment, as three would appeal to his Western readers as a magic number. In Christian tradition, the number “three” is a special number; it represents the trinity, and in the New Testament Jesus predicts that Peter would deny him “three times.” Also the three witches in *Macbeth* repeat their spell three times.

it is “the criminal’s sense of fatherhood—that potential love of children which is so large a part of the soul of every Japanese” (7: 268) that has pulled everybody’s heartstrings. Further, what has awakened a sense of fatherhood in the criminal is the gaze of the innocent child. The narrator adds yet another recent example of a murder case to justify his assumption. There happened a horrible slaughtering of seven persons in the household, but the robbers left a little boy intact. He was found smiling in the seas of blood. The narrator confidently infers that even the merciless stay away from a child who awakens their innate fatherly love.

There is another touching story concerning fatherhood in *Kokoro*. “In Cholera-time” begins with an ominous reference to “China’s chief ally in the late war.” One will soon understand, however, that it is the cholera epidemic that has spread on the heels of the Sino-Japanese War. The mocking tone is deceptive since it has killed “thirty thousand” people (7:460). The war evidently does not end with the nation’s victory and people’s life at home is turning worse. The narrator notices less and less children outside playing since Cholera has taken their lives away. And he quotes an episode.

One day, a pipe-stem seller is invited in as the narrator wants to have his pipe-stems fixed.¹¹ He carries “two large boxes suspended from a bamboo pole balanced upon his shoulder.” In one are his work tools, and in the other his own baby and a “mortuary tablet” of his deceased wife. Hearn’s old servant Manyemon finds out that his wife has asked him to keep her child near her mortuary tablet:

. . . I pray you to leave the child always united with the Shadow of me: never let him be separated from my *ihai* [mortuary tablet], so that I may continue to care for him and to nurse him . . . This, my last asking, I entreat thee, do not forget. (7: 465)

The story draws sympathy from the narrator’s old servant who is much moved by the story of the baby being nursed by his mother’s “mortuary tablet” wherein resides her spirit. Yet, it is not a ghost story since the narrator carefully adds that it is the father that is feeding the child with “rice gruel and *amé* syrup” (7:465). The pipe-stem seller,

11 A pipe-stem in Japanese is *kiseru*. Hearn was fond of smoking and in Japan discovered the joy of smoking with pipe-stems. He appreciated their craftsmanship and collected as many as one hundred pipe-stems. The pipe-stem seller appears as a peddler but is a man of skill and an artisan that makes and repairs crafted items. This particular pipe-stem seller had to leave his workshop and became a peddler because of the child.

therefore, manages both child rearing and a money-making business just as cleverly as he carries the two boxes “balanced upon his shoulder.” The narrator finds in him a humble and loving father who has listened to his wife’s last words and acted accordingly. Hearn must be impressed by what he calls “the potential love of children” in him, a common Japanese man. Although the number of deaths of children increases in his neighborhood and many young men died in the Sino-Japanese War, the narrator finds a moment of peace in the life-giving story of the pipe-stem seller and his child.

In reality, however, Hearn was getting anxious about the future political turn both within and without Japan. As is mentioned briefly in “At the Railway Station,” Hearn knows how the quiet and humble Japanese people could easily turn into “the most dangerous.” Moreover, the excitement of the victory in the Sino-Japanese War would drive the Empire of Japan into a series of battles of conquest. Hearn’s position in Japan is insecure because, although he became a Japanese citizen in Kobe when he was writing these stories collected in *Kokoro*, he is not of Japanese race and there is no guarantee that a racially mixed family will be protected in times of war. Hearn’s stories about the sons during the Sino-Japanese War also question the security of the foreign born like him and his hybrid children.

4. Sons at the War

In “After the War,” also collected in *Kokoro*, Hearn writes about a shocking moment of capturing a young soldier’s chilling “smile.” As in the case of Haru’s “smile,” it is a smile that is absolutely uncanny. It was the day when returned soldiers were to march through the streets of Kobe. The story begins with a festive mood: the early summer sky is blue and people are preparing for a Japanese festival for boys. People pray for the strong and healthy growth of their sons. After Japan’s victory over China, however, war heroes are idolized, and war toys replace the old decorations of the festival.

The toymakers put suddenly into the market legions of ingenious mechanisms, representing Chinese soldiers in flight, or being cut down by Japanese troopers, or tied together as prisoners by their queues, or kowtowing for mercy to illustrious generals. The old-fashioned military playthings, representing samurai in armor, were superseded by figures . . . of Japanese cavalry, infantry, and artillery . . . (7: 332-3)

Boys play with toy weapons, and miniature Chinese soldiers become their target as enemies. The festive atmosphere of the story, however, takes a sudden turn in the scene where the narrator watches the real soldiers, winners they are, march. They are welcomed back with cheers, but none of them speaks nor looks around, and the narrator cannot believe that they are the same vigorous young men he has seen before:

The dark blue winter uniforms were frayed and torn, the shoes worn into shapelessness; but the strong, swinging stride was the stride of the hardened soldier. Lads no longer these, but toughened men, able to face any troops in the world; men who had slaughtered and stormed; men who had also suffered many things which never will be written. The features showed neither joy nor pride; the quick-searching eyes hardly glanced at the welcoming flags, the decorations, the arch with its globe-shadowing hawk of battle—perhaps because those eyes had seen too often the things which make men serious. (Only one man smiled as he passed; and I thought of a smile seen on the face of a Zouave when I was a boy, watching the return of a regiment from Africa—a mocking smile, that stabbed.) (7: 344-5, my underlines)

The soldiers are worn and torn. They are still young, but they are no more “lads.” They saw a hell on earth and their experience must have been so gruesome that it can never be “written” or told. They have become “men” who have “slaughtered and stormed.” They do not look his way nor at any of the welcoming decorations for the triumphant march. It is then that the narrator snatches a glimpse of one soldier’s “smile.” It makes him shudder, and at once reminds him of his childhood memory of having seen a Zouave soldier’s “mocking smile.” There are no more descriptions in the story about this “Zouave soldier,” but it is enough to say that his “smile” has been stored in the narrator’s memory and is now awakened as something uncanny, unforgettable, and incomprehensible. It is that of disdain and rejection, not of sympathy or interaction. Moreover, since a Zouave soldier is African by birth serving for their colonizer French army, Hearn perchance might have captured a sign of a foreign origin in the “smile” of the young soldier enlisted in the colonizer’s army, or a fate of the mixed-blood in times of war. But the narrator refrains from making further comment and lets his servant, “dear innocent old head” Manyemon speak. He faithfully welcomes back all soldiers, including the “souls” of the dead sons of the Japanese who fought for the Emperor.

The old man answered with simple earnestness: “Perhaps by Western people it is thought that the dead never return. But we cannot so think. . . From China and from Chosen, and out of the bitter sea, all our dead have come back — *all!* . . . And they will hear them also in that day when the armies of the Son of Heaven shall be summoned against Russia.” (7: 346)

The story begins with the celebration of the boys’ festival, then gives observations of the triumphant march, and ends with the good old Manyemon’s praise of the “souls” of the sons of the Japanese. His last word, “Russia,” sharply indicates that even the old servant knows who the next enemy is and suggests that the victorious march is but a beginning of another war.

Hearn’s oldest son, Kazuo, writes about that day in Kobe when he was taken to see the march. What he remembers is an old lady who was restless as she was not able to find her son among the soldiers and his mother, Setsu, attended and pacified her. Kazuo writes as follows:

That old lady was crying, I heard, as she looked many times up and down the marching troop but could not find her son who was supposed to return on that day . . . Father got me a toy pistol . . . but, over the heads of the crowd, he stared seriously at the heroic soldiers, holding a monocle to his one-eye. I still remember the extremity of his tense expression on his face on that day. (96-97, my translation)

This episode is a side story hidden behind the triumphant march described in “After the War.” The old woman is unable to think like Manyemon and would not be appeased by the idea of mythologizing her son as a war hero of the Empire. His physical presence, not the dead soul, matters for her. Manyemon’s innocent belief in glorifying the dead soldiers speaks for the public principle of the Empire but undermines the cynicism glimpsed in one young soldier’s smile as well as the tears of the old lady. Kazuo at least remembers the extremely tense glare of his father. There is no knowing what was in Hearn’s mind. He may not have noticed his wife comforting the old lady, or his son gazing at him, but was aware that the life and spark of the marching soldiers were wearing away.

5. A Japanese Hero

“With Kyushu Students,” an essay collected in *Out of the East* (1894), is based on Hearn's students' compositions which are quoted and analyzed. He finds that his students prefer old ways of education of the pre-Meiji, or pre-westernization, period, and that their ideal hero is quite different from a Western one. For example, they do not praise a hero of a mere physical force like Heracles.

. . . as a mere idealization of physical force, Heracles could interest Orientals very little: their own mythology teems with impersonations of strength; and, besides, dexterity, sleight, quickness, are much more admired by a true Japanese than strength. No Japanese boy would sincerely wish to be like the giant Benkei; but Yoshitsune, the slender, supple conqueror and master of Benkei, remains an ideal of perfect knighthood dear to the hearts of all Japanese youth. (7: 43)

Yoshitsune,¹² the narrator comes to know, is one of the beloved legendary heroes who was not a masculine type but a “slender” and “supple” youth who was also skillful in music. Hearn then ends the essay with a portrait of his peer, Professor Akizuki who is “one precious survival of the mutual love of other days in the old Samurai Schools” and “by all the aged Professor of Chinese is revered; and his influence over the young men is very great” (7: 50). He taught the “wisdom of the Chinese sages which is eternal — and loyalty, and honor, and all that makes the man” (7: 51). Once he brought Hearn presents, a *bonsai* of a plum tree full of blossoms, wine, and a scroll of poetry to celebrate the birth of Hearn's son: “I remember words of affectionate encouragement about my duties . . . But all was like a pleasant dream; for his mere presence was a caress, and the fragrance of his flower-gift seemed like a breathing from the Takama-no-hara [plain of high heaven]” (7: 53). He might have heard that Akizuki used to teach at Samurai School in a northern Japanese city, Aizu, and lost his students in the revolutionary war of 1868; they were cornered and committed suicide. The deaths of his young students might have made what he is: a magnanimous fatherly figure for Kyushu students. For the celebration of Akizuki's sixtieth birthday, Hearn wrote a congratulatory note in which he called him “father”: “Here is the father of us all, who

12 Musashibo Benkei (1155-1189) was a Japanese warrior monk who served Minamoto no Yoshitsune (1159-1189). Yoshitsune appears in *Heike Monogatari* (c. 13th C.) and became a legendary figure who was not only strong at sword but also kind to the lesser, and skilled at music and literature.

is never tired, and whose soul is always glad within him.” This “father” is the one who brings “cheerfulness and warmth,” and makes “everything happier by [his] presence” (*Koizumi Yakumo Jiten*, 7). A true wisdom, Hearn discovers, is in a man who has experienced sorrow which, instead of making him cynical, makes him profound but open and sympathetic, full of love for his students. Hearn was appreciative as the old professor welcomed the birth of his son. He still feels “something very sweet” haunting in his room, making him happy, “just because he loved me” (7:53). The “father” in Akizuki means one who can serve as a mentor for his students with his open-minded generosity and above all things, love them.

In the Appendix to his posthumously published study of Japan, *Japan: An Interpretation* (1904), Hearn included Herbert Spencer’s letter to a Japanese official Kentaro Kaneko (1853-1942). Hearn was an avid reader of Herbert Spencer who advocated “survival of the fittest” in *Principles of Biology* (1864).¹³ In the letter, Spencer advised Japan to “keep Americans and Europeans as much as possible at arm’s length” and avoid possible future subjugation of the entire Japanese Empire by them in order not to follow the example of India. Moreover, he pointed out that it was “impossible that the Japanese, hitherto accustomed to despotic rule, should, all at once, become capable of constitutional government” (12: 459-62). In short, Spencer proposed a non-interference policy for Japan to survive, because Japan, which has not grown out of the feudal state yet, would not be able to survive the struggles against the Western powers.¹⁴ Spencer’s idea goes in concert with the decision made by a son of Samurai at the end of “A Conservative,” the last story in *Kokoro*. The hero, who has no name, having studied in Europe, becomes assured that “the larger and larger expansion of the power of that civilization” will result in “an irresistible, inevitable, measureless inundations of world-pain” (7: 419). Thus, he sees Japan’s attempt at taking part in Western civilization a losing battle:

The wastefulness of Western life had impressed him more than its greed of pleasure and its capacity for pain: in the clean poverty of his own land he saw strength; in her unselfish thrift, the sole chance of competing with the Occident. Foreign civilization had taught him to understand, as he could never otherwise

13 As to a discussion on Hearn and Spencer, see Tomomi Nakagawa’s “The Scientific Thought of Lafcadio Hearn: A Case of Interpreting Japanese Art.”

14 Japan’s later advancements in technology and science as well as economic growth in the course of the 20th century have proven this view incorrect, but Hearn seems unable to deny Spencer’s theory.

have understood, the worth and the beauty of his own . . . (7: 419-20)

The hero becomes broad-minded enough so as to be able to compare the Western civilization with that of old Japan and ends up choosing Japan and becomes “a conservative.” It is ironic, because the hero’s choice will correspond to Spencer’s decision. Yet, a crucial point in “A Conservative” is that the hero is torn between the two values and believes there is no way but to choose one, old Japan. He does not have a model who can see him through with a suggestion to create, for example, a middle-way. He sees the two values in conflict, one is selfish and aggressive, the other is communal and modest. The only solace he finds is in his past memory of old Japan: he envisions his dead parents, and his dead mother takes him by the hand and leads him to the family shrine (7:420). Such conclusion may go against the movement of the time, the flow of government-led westernization and offend the rigorous government officials. Still, Hearn may have humbly yielded to Spencer’s theory and saw Japan as a regressive nation that may never be able to survive in the evolutionary battle of western civilization.

Nonetheless, “A Conservative” is not a treatise to illustrate Spencer’s theory. Hearn’s deliberate portrayal of the hero’s inner struggles attests to the fact that Hearn shares a sense of anguish and isolation of a man who has been to the other side. Such a man is mentally torn-apart, finding nowhere to belong to. When younger, he happily called himself “a civilized nomad” and a free-floating way of life. Now a grown-up responsible man, he regards home security essential, or a home for scattered children of the globalizing world to come back.

6. Yuki-Onna’s Last Words

Wherever he went, Hearn listened to women and gathered stories. He preferred their oral stories because they revealed unusual stories of pain and pathos. It is also said that he had searched for some evidence of his mother, who left him when he was small. She remained as the ultimate story-teller of his life, thus explaining why he was attracted to women who could tell stories. Such a view, as Yoko Makino reiterates, represents the mainstream Japanese scholarship on Hearn as articulated by male scholars. In this line of reading, “Yuki-Onna” may well project Hearn’s own

romantic desire to be united with his mother.¹⁵ Nonetheless, the beautiful and fearful presence of Yuki-Onna is more than just a projection of the author's desire. One interesting feminist reading is Mami Fujiwara's "Zoshoku Suru Yuki-Onna [Multiplying Yuki-Onna]" where she argues Yuki-Onna reigns over Minokichi completely and Minokichi is dragged down from "the head of the household to the level of a servant and nurse" (129). Thus, as the ten children grow up, the fear of Yuki-Onna will be multiplied tenfold, and he will never be free from that fear. Fujiwara concludes that the story can be read as a revenge horror story of superhuman power against humans since Yuki-Onna's language of the Other forever overrules Minokichi's human language. Such a rivalrous relationship between Yuki-Onna and Minokichi, or the supernatural vs. humans, however, leaves out the question of their children. The essential issue that must be considered here is the future of the mixed-blood.

"Yuki-Onna," one of the last stories Hearn wrote, can be read differently as a modern allegory in the context of the post-Sino-Japanese War. It may well project the anxiety of the sons of the new generation, the fruit of miscegenation across national borders. The marriage between Yuki-Onna and Minokichi can be read as one of such outcomes: an interracial marriage. Yuki-Onna possesses an absolute superhuman power, but her rules seem to alternate according to circumstances. She kills the old man but spares the young one. Minokichi breaks his promise, but she again spares him because of their children. In other words, she continuously keeps him alive. With her last words she commands him to be a good caretaker of their children. Her interdiction, however, does not lower his status, but urges him to become a better human being who is aware of his own ability to "love" children, the kind of love that Hearn sees in the souls of Japanese men as we have seen in "At the Railway Station." The last scene of the story portrays Minokichi dumbstruck, quite unable to do anything. But Yuki-Onna, as if she knew his weakness, warns him that if he is negligent, she will remind him of their promise. He will be forever guided so that he is capable of taking care of his children. The point of this ending, therefore, can be interpreted as a never-ending reinforcement to make a father take on the responsibility of his children.

15 See Makino, "Yuki-Onna no 'densho' o Megutte," pp. 98-100. Makino traces Hearn scholarship by male scholars that presupposes Hearn's yearning for his mother whom he last met when he was six and how he sought for his "mother" tongue in women and her stories. It is important that she argues that the question of woman and mother needs to be examined from a viewpoint other than that of previous male scholars. As to the discussion on women and the search for the mother, see Hirakawa, *Koizumi Yakumo, Seiyo Dasshutu no Yume*; for women as story-tellers, Nishi, *Rafcadio Han no Mimi* and *Mimi no Etsuraku*; for Hearn's incestuous desire projected in "Yuki-Onna," Toda, *Tensei suru Monogatari*.

It is hard to imagine that Hearn was not thinking about his own children when he wrote about “ten children, boys and girls” being “handsome children all of them, and very fair of skin” (11: 230).¹⁶ Hearn must have loved the “fair skin” of his own children. Projecting the global phenomenon of mixed-blood children on Minokichi's children, we can but read the love of a father, Hearn, who prayed for the sound survival of these children in the future.

7. Conclusion

Hearn's Japanese stories and essays, as I have discussed in this paper, serve as a modern allegory in the context of global expansion at the turn of the nineteenth century. They are not just travelogues of exotic culture; they also challenge readers to reflect upon their own circumstances, be it Japan or the US. Times then were unsettling and battles were exploding in every corner of the globe. It was a hard time especially for the weak, children and young men who went to battle, not to mention those of mixed-blood. Hearn, around this time, was looking for a chance to return to the US to give a series of lectures. *Japan: An Interpretation* was originally prepared as his lecture notes; he was also thinking about taking Kazuo, his first born, to the US in order to provide him with an American liberal education.¹⁷ He was still proofreading his manuscripts, including “Yuki-Onna,” when he had his fatal heart attack. From a corner within the Empire of Japan, Hearn pursued his role as a journalist and writer. Nonetheless, perhaps what he most sought for was not the mother but the father within himself and “the potential love of children” within all men.

16 Hearn made Kazuo dictate dialogues as guidelines. One is as follows: Pap. “When papa is dead, how will you make some money?” I. “I do not know.” . . . Papa. “If you do not know, this house will be taken and sold — and you will have no home — and your mamma and grand-mamma will be dead — and you will have no friend. Then you will find how cruel people are in this world” (257).

17 He died too early to realize this last dream to go back to the US. In 1903, he wrote to his old-time friend and editor at *Cosmopolitan* magazine, Mrs. Wetmore, about prospective lectures in America: “I could attempt a series of lectures upon Japanese topics,— dealing incidentally with psychological, religious, social, and artistic impressions, — so as to produce in the minds of my hearers an idea of Japan different from that which is given in books” (14: 487).

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