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The spirit of no place : reportage, translation and re-told stories in Lafcadio Hearn

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The Spirit of No Place

Reportage, Translation and
Re-told Stories in
Lafcadio Hearn



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in

Lafcadio Hearn

Hitomi Nabae

“A tradition is kept alive only by something being added to it.”

Henry James, “Robert Louis Stevenson,” *Century Magazine* (April 1888)

“We owe more to our illusions than to our knowledge.”

Lafcadio Hearn, *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* (1894)

“I am in truth a spiritual exile, not because I have no friend, but because I lost somewhere a tradition and environment to which I think I should belong. And I hear the voice calling from a hidden world where more than one moon ever shine; alas, I do not know how to come there.

Yone Noguchi, *Through the Torii* (1914)

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Introduction

A Wandering Life

Born, in 1850, of an Irish surgeon and his Greek wife, in Leucadia, Ionian Islands, Hearn had roamed far and wide -- in Ireland, England, France, and Spain, the United States of America and the French West Indies, --finding nowhere peace to his mind or to his body; and finally came to Japan to end his life in maturing the ideas he had gotten from his studies and travels.

Nobushige Amenomori, "Lafcadio Hearn, the Man," *Atlantic Monthly*, 1905 (523)

The ghost of Lafcadio Hearn has returned, haunting the Trans-Pacific world. Best known as a Japanologist who traveled to Japan in 1890 and died a Japanese citizen in 1904, he is now being invoked in places where he was once a cultural icon. *Lefkada News*, a webzine from Lefkada, a Greek island where he was born and after which he was named, posted an article introducing him as a poet from Lefkada (30 December 2012). *Greek World Reporter* has similarly called him "the Greek National Poet of Japan" (18 September 2012) and *The Irish Times*, "Irish writer Lafcadio Hearn" (18 September 2012). Lyric FM, a radio station in Ireland where Hearn spent his teens, ran two one-hour programs (25 January and 1 February 2013), introducing his life-long journey from Greece to Japan, via Ireland, the US, and Martinique.¹ With the publication of *Lafcadio Hearn: American Writings* in the American Library series in 2009, Hearn also has gained a place in American Literature. In an interview, Christopher Benfey, editor of the Hearn volume declares without hesitation that he is "completely convinced that Hearn's time has come." Though recognized more as an eccentric writer who was interested in the gruesome and the exotic and thus dismissed as an "oddball," Benfey explains, Hearn "retained an incredible zest and

¹ See "Ο Έλληνας απ' τη Λευκάδα, Λευκάδιος Χέρν, είναι ένας εκ των εθνικών ποιητών της Ιαπωνίας" <<http://www.kolivas.de/archives/128559>>; "Lafcadio Hearn: The Greek National Poet of Japan" <<http://world.greekreporter.com/2012/04/30/lafcadio-hearn-the-greek-national-poet-of-japan/>>; "Irish writer Lafcadio Hearn's Japanese descendant makes pilgrimage to Cong" <<http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-33655556.html>>.

openness for new experiences and places.”² In fact, the twenty-first century accelerated Hearn scholarship as well as worldwide interest in “Hearn, the man” who traveled and wrote, and was influential in his own way. Primarily known as a Japanologist who introduced traditional Japanese culture and translations of Japanese stories, a lesser known fact remains that his *Japan: an Interpretation* (1904) influenced American General Bonner Fellers and lead him to propose to the Occupation forces the importance of keeping the Emperor in place in post World War II Japan. Subsequently, Fellers’ report convinced General MacArthur to decide that there would no criminal prosecution of the Emperor. This story was recently reworked for the Hollywood film, *Emperor* (2012), produced by a Japanese mother and son team, Yoko Narahashi and Eugene Nomura with British director Peter Webber. Although the film does not refer to Hearn explicitly, it is not too much to say that his writings were influential enough to change the course of modern history.³ Hearn indeed was a nomad writer who was a product of British imperialistic expansion and a witness to American imperialistic economic expansions as well as the birth of imperialism in the Orient, Japan.

What is it that has sparked present day readers’ interest in Hearn? Benfey, in the above interview adds, “what Hearn was really interested in was the astonishing variety of human life” (1). Indeed, he was always attracted by something different—be it lifestyles, foods, clothing, songs, stories, dance, and ways of worship. Moreover, he transcended the boundaries of nation, race and even religious belief beyond any cosmopolitan traveler of his time. And today in our ever changing world, it is most appropriate to call him a “global soul,” to borrow Pico Iyer’s book title, with his openness and interest in “varieties of human life.” At the foundation of Hearn’s racial, linguistical and national border-crossing lay Hearn’s search for a borderless homeland with global access extending to his fellow modern nomads. For Hearn, such a homeland did not require a specific geographical place; rather, it was to be a place, or “no place,” that could be constantly lost and found wherever a “global soul” like Hearn happened to be. What I phrase “a spirit of no place” revises a

² “The Library of America Interviews Christopher Benfey about Lafcadio Hearn.” *The Library of America e-Newsletter*, 2009. PDF file. 1. Significantly, the American Library edition of his *American Writings* calls attention to his American period (1870-1890) which highlights his keen observations of American social realities that were often overlooked—people of color, women, immigrants and criminals. It is, therefore, not that he was only interested in the exotic and the Orient but that he wrote and pursued his goal to become a writer, maintaining his journalist as well as ethnologist spirit.

³ See Tetsuro Kato, “Hahn mania no joho shoko Bonaa Feraazu” [Hearnmania, Information General Bonner Fellers,” *Hahn no Hito to Shuhen: Koza Koizumi Yakumo I [Hearn, the Man and His Environs: Koizumi Yakumo Encyclopedia]* (2009), 597-607. See also, Suhekiro Hirakawa, *Koizumi Yakumo to Kamigami no Sekai [Koizumi Yakumo and the World of Gods]* (1988).

spirit of the place, or *genius loci*, that is place bound and belongs to a specific racial and ethnic group. Hearn in his stories tries to free *genius loci* from such geographical confines and creates a sense of the past and nostalgia that can be shared by all people of foreign births and backgrounds. Using local stories and legends, he re-wrote them by framing them in a larger context of the globalizing world of his time and reviving them as modern allegories to be shared with multi-cultural and multi-racial readers. His achievement as a writer with a “global soul” is thus worthy of examination in our incessantly hybridizing world of today when it has become difficult to specify, along Hearn’s trajectory, the increasingly irrelevant notion of one’s “homeland.”

I first encountered Hearn’s ghost stories at the age of ten. The book I borrowed from my elementary school library was written by “Koizumi Yakumo.” Only later did I learn that this was actually Hearn’s Japanese name. Indeed, I thought I was reading Japanese stories written by a Japanese author. While I was not able to express it at the time, I somehow felt something in the stories to be not entirely Japanese. It was only when I was preparing my doctoral dissertation in American literature at Stanford University that I began to read Hearn in his original English. I thought that his transpacific ghost stories might be fruitfully compared to transatlantic ghost stories of his contemporaries such as Henry James and Edith Wharton. As I read more about the person Hearn, I learned that he had once considered sending his son to the US to study at Stanford University. In 1903, after 13 years in Japan, he resumed correspondence with his old friend, Elizabeth Bisland (Mrs. Wetmore) with whom Hearn had become acquainted in New Orleans and who later became an editor for the *Cosmopolitan*, and he asked her to look for places where he might lecture on Japan. I was then impressed when I found in the university archive a letter by the then Stanford President, David Starr Jordan’s, saying that he would welcome Hearn as a lecturer. This invitation, however, was never realized because of Hearn’s sudden death just a year later. Even so, I imagined Hearn wandering around the campus in the bright sunshine of Northern California and imagined what he would have done there. I understood through my reading Hearn that he was not “our” Japanese writer after all, but a life-long wanderer who happened to be in Japan and wrote about Japan in a global context. I wanted to redefine Hearn not only as a Japanologist who was sympathetic enough to understand Japan and its people, but also as a “global soul” who could transcend borders and social limitations. In my Stanford doctoral dissertation, “The Aesthetics of the Ghostly: Art and Life in the Works of Lafcadio Hearn” (2000), I therefore argued that his ghost stories were the fruits of his wandering life from his birthplace Lefkada, Greece, to Ireland, to the US, to Martinique, and finally to Japan, reflecting his ghostly spirit that belonged

neither to any place nor to any social strata. This monograph *The Spirit of No Place: Reportage, Translation and Storytelling in Lafcadio Hearn* is an attempt to elaborate on my dissertation by highlighting Hearn's view of the creolization and hybridization of language, race and culture which engages with crucial and controversial issues in modern history. Today, more people have been forced across national boundaries due to political or economic circumstances to rebuild their identities elsewhere. For Hearn, a social, political, or national identity meant little, since he envisioned a fluid, changeable identity in a future world where all boundaries, be they racial, linguistic, national, or cultural, would be constantly revised and redrawn. Hearn's writings testify to his attempt to write for those nomads possessing "a spirit of no place" then and in the current changing world.

A Wandering Life—A Brief Biography

From the Mediterranean westward to the Orient, Hearn led a wandering life. The first two years of his life were spent in the Ionian Islands; the next ten years in Dublin, onward to Catholic schooling in England, and later to France. His Greek mother was not able to adapt to the Irish climate and returned to Greece when Hearn was only three. His father then remarried his first love and left for India. Hearn was six at that time and never saw his father again. Once his guardian aunt went bankrupt, he was obliged to go to America at the age of nineteen. He aimed to seek his fortune in the New World just like other young men from the Old World did at the time. From New York, he went to Cincinnati where he found a job at a printing shop, became employed as a reporter, and became interested in journalism. His unlawful marriage to an African-American woman incited trouble, which perhaps explains why he left Cincinnati to sail south to New Orleans. Once there he found new topics to focus on: New Orleans' Creole culture and people of mixed blood fascinated him. He compiled a Creole cookbook and Creole dictionary, and even tried the restaurant business though that ended in disaster. By this time he had also translated many French stories by Gautier, Maupassant, Zola and Flaubert. Translation for him was a way of earning money, but he seems to have also absorbed a lot about style and subject matter as he was preparing himself to become a writer. His first fictional work *Chita* was published in the April 1888 issue of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. After this he went to Martinique to write about Creole culture. His two-year stay there resulted in a collection of essays, *Two Years in the French West Indies*. This collection is now esteemed for its

anthropological value in recording local Creole culture and folktales that was decimated by the eruption of Mt. Pelée in 1902. Hearn learned of the disaster while in Japan. He must have been conscious of the fact that he had helped to preserve fleeting cultural heritage and that it was only through literature that this could be accomplished. Thus, he continued to write about both old and new Japan and tried to avoid feelings of nostalgia in his stories and instead present the past in a meaningful modern context.

The making of Lafcadio Hearn as a writer, his twenty-six-year career as a reporter, as a journalist, as translator, and as a writer in America, including the two years he spent in the French West Indies combined with his fourteen-years as a teacher and writer in Japan is itself an interesting story. His American period as a journalist prepared him for his Japanese period where he gained more confidence as a writer. Hearn disciplined himself by honing both his journalistic skills and literary taste in order to express what he believed to be universal truths about human experience. Early in his career in Cincinnati, Hearn acquired a reputation as a sensationalist reporter of exposés, but he eventually became a writer with the spirit of a poet and a moralist concerned about the welfare of his family and society. Hearn developed the idea that the role of literature consists not only in its expression of beauty as an ideal but in its power to enhance the moral quality of the human mind. His goal as a writer was to bring the aesthetic and the ethical together in his narrative, which he saw at once to be journalistic and creative. Facts and fiction for him were not separate but interdependent elements. His imagination was fueled by the details of observed facts, which in turn provided concrete visual images for his narrative.

Hearn was a child of the British Imperialist era. Born of a Greek woman and an Irish surgeon who served the British Army stationed in Greece, he was destined to live a dual life. The peculiarity of his point of view was perhaps the product of his physically handicapped condition. When he was sixteen, he was blinded in his left eye by the knotted end of a rope in a game, and subsequently became quite near-sighted in his right eye.⁴ At the age of nineteen, he went to America where he experienced the melting pot culture of the 1870s. The exposure to America's idea of assimilation fostered his own belief that being an American was not exclusive to a white Protestant identity, but also those of differing racial and linguistic backgrounds as well as of varying economic means. At that time, Hearn stopped using his middle name, the Irish-sounding "Patrick," but maintained his British nationality and his peculiar given name "Lafcadio." In this way, he began to

⁴ Amenomori refers to Hearn's eyesight and says that he required "an eye-glass of grade No. 4 which was tied to a button of his vest by means of a long string"; see "Lafcadio Hearn, the Man" 254.

identify himself as a wanderer and perpetual outsider in society and took advantage of his alien perspective. When he started as a cub reporter in Cincinnati, his unique angle was to spotlight those commonly overlooked in everyday life: colored people, women, and criminals. Although he was nearly blind, he turned his physical disability into a source of strength. He excelled in minute, close-up descriptions and in the use of language that appealed to sense perceptions other than sight. As it was, he observed details with his near-sighted eye and felt the presence of the invisible through his blind eye. Both observation and imagination were two essentials for him, and with this “double vision”⁵ his narratives demonstrate clear-cut yet ghostly everyday experiences of life.

This double vision enabled Hearn to capture life's phenomena within the framework of a diachronic perspective, relating the visible and immediate experience to the invisible past memory of the human race. As a young reporter he had been enthralled by sensationalism, but he became interested in the nature and significance of intense emotional experiences, such as that of fear, and tried to understand the workings of the human mind. This shift of focus eventually led him to believe that an essential element in the formation of the human psyche was the memory of the original emotional experience of awe and wonder before the mystery and grandeur of nature. He theorized that such emotional experience was the basis of religious faith, and that an open mind would enable one to perceive beauty and goodness beyond human intellectual understanding. His Elysium, as he described it in one of his Japanese writings, “Horai,” was a place of art-loving and ethically-minded people. Hearn imagined that modern men, whom he called “civilized nomads,” would be able to gain a broader viewpoint from their travels and would revive and transform old religious faiths into a new set of ethics suitable for the future world.

⁵ For the title of his last book, *The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1991), Northrop Frye takes a phrase from a poem that William Blake incorporated in a letter to a friend (22 November, 1802): “For double the vision my eyes, do see, / And a double vision is always with me: / With my inward eye 'tis an old man grey; / With my outward a thistle across my way.” Frye's interpretation is insightful: the significance of the poem is not “seeing two objects instead of one, especially when one of the two is not there” but that a “conscious subject is not really perceiving until it recognizes itself as part of what it perceives. The whole world is humanized when such a perception takes place. There must be something human about the object, alien as it may at first seem, which the perceiver is relating to. The 'old man grey' is clearly an aspect of Blake himself, and stands for the fact that whatever we perceive is a part of us and forms an identity with us” (23, 24). Hearn's “double vision,” as I will discuss, concerns “two” things, one observable and the other imaginary, and is related to the spirituality of human existence to which Frye refers. Although he was not a vision-seer as Blake was, Hearn believed in the ability to see what was not there in the observed object. As for Blake, Hearn regarded him as a “mystic” in the sense that the poet was able to perceive a “divine inspiration” as Emanuel Swedenborg and Jacob Boehme were; see Hearn's lecture entitled “Blake—the First English Mystic,” *Interpretations of Literature* vol. 1, ed. John Erskine (New York : Dodd and Mead, 1920) 51-71.

Hearn's double vision simultaneously projected a lost sense of the “ghostly,” or spiritual nature of life, and the possibility of regaining it by virtue of a heightened moral sense. Increasingly convinced that modern technology and science were dispelling the spiritual aspects of life and turning humans into automatons unrelated to past human memory, Hearn probed the underlying primordial regions of the human psyche to reclaim their significance. He believed that literary narrative served as a means to revitalize the forgotten spirit of the past in the present as well as to critique nineteenth-century Western materialism and expanding colonialist power politics.

Hearn was probably first internationally acknowledged as a literary figure by Hugo von Hoffmansthal in his 1904 obituary essay on the writer. Hoffmansthal characterized Hearn's narratives as religious and philosophical anecdotes and saw a moral quality in them. He also credited Hearn as being a Western writer uniquely able to criticize Western civilization from his vantage point in the Far East. Hearn's friend and one-time colleague in New Orleans, Elizabeth Bisland Wetmore, edited his letters and wrote a brief biography in the introduction to *The Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn* (1906), presenting Hearn as a romantic writer of genius. Reacting to this portrayal, in *Concerning Lafcadio Hearn* (1908), George Gould characterized Hearn for his “abnormal” sexuality by disclosing his relationship with a mulatto woman in his Cincinnati days. To redress Gould's accusation and to denounce his muckraking attitude, Yone Noguchi,⁶ Hearn's friend and student, insisted on Hearn's morality and stated in *Lafcadio Hearn in Japan* (1910) that the real Hearn was a good teacher, husband, and father. While in those days Hearn was already appreciated as a Japanologist, he was forgotten as an ethnographer of the race in the US and is only remembered later in the twentieth century with the rise of folklore and ethnography studies.

In *Lafcadio Hearn* (1912), Nina Kennard, a friend of Hearn's Irish stepsister, emphasized his Western literary heritage by referring to his childhood education in Ireland and England and also insisting that Hearn inherited a predisposition to insanity from his Greek mother. A decade later in *The Literature of Ecstasy* (1921), Albert Mordell hailed Hearn's poetic and sensuous qualities, editing many of the journal articles that Hearn wrote for Cincinnati and New Orleans newspapers in *An American Miscellany* (1924) and *Occidental Gleanings* (1925). Hearn was almost overlooked during the ensuing economic

⁶ For recent scholarship exploring his life and art, see Madoka Hori, “Nijū Kokusek” *Shijin Noguchi Yonejirō* (2012), and Haruko Sueyoshi, *Queer Compulsions: Race, Nation, and Sexuality In the Affairs of Yone Noguchi* (2013).

recessions and the World Wars, but after World War II he was rediscovered. Orcutt W. Frost described Hearn's life in America in *Young Hearn* (1958) and Elizabeth Stevenson reconstructed his career as a writer of poetic imagination in *Lafcadio Hearn* (1961).⁷ Beongcheon Yu offered a profound reading of Hearn's achievements as a composite of art, religion, and philosophy in *An Ape of Gods: the Art and Thought of Lafcadio Hearn* (1964). In the 1970's and 1980's, Hearn was reevaluated both as an American and Southern writer.⁸

The early part of 1990's Hearn scholarship leaned heavily on post-structural and post-colonial literary theories, such as Edward Said's "Orientalism" or the post-structural reading of Japan as exemplified in Roland Barthes.⁹ Hearn's life as a traveler and writer was celebrated as an exemplary experience of an encounter with the Other. Biographies such as Jonathan Cott's *Wandering Ghost: the Odyssey of Lafcadio Hearn* (1991), Carl Dowson's *Lafcadio Hearn and the Vision of Japan* (1992), and Paul Murray's *A Fantastic Journey: the Life and Literature of Lafcadio Hearn* (1993) emphasized Hearn's identity as a wanderer in search of the exotic and tried to draw out Hearn's alleged post-modern mentality by drawing from unpublished letters and articles. The latter 1990's saw increasing attention to Hearn's childhood in Ireland. In *Lafcadio Hearn, W. B. Yeats, and Japan* (1998), Barbara Hayley related Hearn to his contemporary Yeats and found that they shared a congenial origin of imagination in the Irish literary tradition. The sources of Hearn's Japanese ghost stories, Hayley argued, were sought not only in old Japanese legends but also in the Irish folktales he had known as a small child.

Across Japanese scholarship, from Amenomori's obituary essay and Yone Noguchi's biography onward, Hearn has been treated as "one of us Japanese," "a sympathetic Japanologist, a translator of Japanese ghost stories, and a wonderful teacher to Japanese students." It was in *Rediscovering Lafcadio Hearn: Japanese Legends, Life & Culture* (1997) edited by Sukehiro Hirakawa that Hearn was first critically reevaluated as an interpreter of Japan. The rediscovered Hearn is presented as a literary ethnographer and Japanologist and also discussed in the context of British and Irish literary traditions. In these essays, however, the role of his American experience is little mentioned. Adding to the missing parts of Hearn's biography from a feminist perspective, Yoshimi Kudo

⁷ The biography was revised, retitled and republished as *The Grass Lark: A Study of Lafcadio Hearn* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, Macmillan, 1999).

⁸ For a detailed account of Hearn scholarship between the 1930's and 1970's, see Yoshinobu Hakutani, "Lafcadio Hearn," *American Literary Realism, 1870 - 1920*, Arlington, TX, 8 (1975): 271 - 74.

⁹ See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf. Distributed by Random House, 1993), and Roland Barthes, *Empire of Signs* (1970; New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).

reconstructed Hearn's relationships with women in his American period and his unfulfilled romance with Elizabeth Bisland in *Yume no tojo (In Pursuit of Dreams, 1997)*; she also uncovered the life of his Greek mother in *Seirei no shima (The Island of the Ghost, 1999)*.

The first ten years of this century then saw a great change in Hearn scholarship, remapping his experience and literary achievements. The publication of *Koizumi Yakumo Jiten [Koizumi Yakumo Encyclopedia]*, edited by Sukehiro Hirakawa in 2000, set a scholarly standard for Hearn studies. This volume positions him not only as “a poet, thinker, loving husband and father, and sincere friend,” as Amenomori notes in the above epigraph, but also as a multi-racial, -lingual, -national and -cultural writer. Throughout his career in the US, Martinique and Japan, he was a journalist, translator, and storyteller, who continued writing from the viewpoint of what we call today a folklorist, ethnologist, or anthropologist. In the fields of post-colonial and multi-cultural studies, Hearn's Irish background, as well as his experience with the Creoles in New Orleans and Martinique, provide ethnological topics not only for literary critics but also for cultural anthropologists. Representative spokespersons of Creole studies, Raphaël Confiant and Édouard Glissant, both acknowledged Hearn as one of the first Western writers who traveled and documented Creole culture in the West Indies.¹⁰ In Japan Sukehiro Hirakawa discusses the importance of the idea of Creolization in *Lafcadio Hearn—Koronaizeishon, kirisuto-kyoka, bunmei-kaika* (2004). American folklore studies also discovered Hearn. Simon J. Bronner's “‘Gombo’ Folkloristics: Lafcadio Hearn's Creolization and Hybridization in the Formative Period of Folklore Studies” (2005) resituates Hearn as one of the first folklorists of Louisiana. It is worth mentioning that Hearn coined the new term “creolization” to describe the transforming and varied practices of the hybrid culture. The OED quotes a passage from Hearn's *Youma: the Story of the West-Indian Slave* (1890) demonstrating the first usage of “creolization,” a term now widely in circulation. Hearn's insight into the undermined aspect of culture is also notable in his Japanese writing. *Minzoku-gakusha Koizumi Yakumo (Folklorist Koizumi Yakumo, 1995)* by Bon Koizumi, Hearn's great grand-son, shed lights on Hearn's interest in Japanese folklore. In Japan, *Koizumi Yakumo Jiten*, or Hirakawa's encyclopedia, was only a prelude to new studies. A series of Hearn conferences in Japan was held in 2004: “Lafcadio Hearn International Symposium Commemorating the 100th Year of his Death” was a traveling conference which met in Tokyo, Kobe, Matsue, and Kumamoto, where Hearn lived and taught, and selected papers were compiled in *Lafcadio Hearn in International Perspectives* (2007). This collection

¹⁰ Confiant wrote a forward to 1970 edition of *Two Years in the French West Indies*.

opened up Hearn scholarship to an international scholarly circle, and included Japanese scholars who were able to study Hearn from broader perspective. Following in its wake, *Koza Koizumi Yakumo [Essays on Koizumi Yakumo]*, published in two volumes in 2009, demonstrates the variety of critical approaches to Hearn studies in Japan.

Hearn's narrative, especially the way he translated and transformed old stories, has attracted many scholars. Although Hearn's ability to reproduce old Japanese stories was much appreciated in the past, the originality of his narrative has been the focus of recent studies. Yoko Makino's "Yanagida Kunio to Lafucadio Hahn" [*Yanagida Kunio and Lafucadio Hearn*] (*Kokubungaku*, 2004) and Eishi Otsuka's *Sutego-tachi no Minzoku-gaku: Yanagida Kunio to Koizumi Yakumo [Folklore of the Abandoned Children: Yanagida, Kunio and Koizumi, Yakumo, 2006]* juxtaposed Hearn with the pioneer of Japanese Folklore studies Kunio Yanagida, acknowledging Hearn as one of the first who documented bygone and disappearing folktales which by his time only survived on the outskirts of the Japanese countryside. These studies attest that Hearn, wherever he went, was an interested writer who knew the value of hidden and forgotten stories and customs that were being quickly swept away by the globalizing forces of modernization in his era. Now we recognize them as valuable sources to access cultural secrets of the past. Extant scholarship on Hearn, as shown above, reconstructed "Lafucadio Hearn, the man," into "Hearn, the storyteller" and his insight into the modern reality of creolization and hybridization.

When Hearn first went to Japan, books by Percival Lowell and Pierre Loti served as guides. After having lived in Japan, however, Hearn found them inadequate as they were limited to a Western point of view and conveyed a sense of cultural supremacy. He tried to juxtapose Japan and the Western world or relatively compare them in his stories so as to illustrate the whole world as mutually influential and equally powerful. Hearn felt that the West could still learn from Japan. His work is especially relevant in today's era of multi-culturalism; Hearn's readiness to feel and absorb a different culture as impartially as possible provides an insight into how people from utterly different ethnic and cultural backgrounds can access each other and live together in a globalizing world. What is significant above all is that he believes in the educational power of storytelling and literature. His view provides us with valuable guidance to resituate literature as a means to bring about an imaginary space for peoples of different cultures to share together—a space in which, while maintaining their differences, people still can share a kind of global ethics that they can all respect. In this respect, Hearn's American period provides important background to his literary and philosophical development in Japan.

In his excellent reading of Hearn as an artist and philosopher, Beongcheon Yu asserts that “Hearn's achievement” is that of “translator, a discoverer.”¹¹ I add that his writing depends upon his double-perspective as an outsider and insider; whether as a “yellow” journalist on the fringe of American literary circles or a literal expatriate in Japan, he was always interested and involved in the place where he happened to be at a given moment. Because of his self-conscious awareness as an outsider, he had to constantly “translate” the phenomena into his own language, and further, into his ideal of literary expression. His double vision, one to see the hard facts and the other to see the imaginary and ideal, enabled him to create a superimposed vision of here and there, of now and then, or what is and what should be. As he ventured into different cultures, his shifting point of view allowed him to see what passing tourists overlooked and to render a sense of life in motion. It is as if he knew the secret to becoming an insider who could tell stories of the past and the spirit of the place. Although the experience of such a vision might have felt precarious and uncertain, Hearn took advantage of it to portray his uncanny encounters with the unknown. Through journalism, Hearn learned the importance of close observation and became aware of his mission as a writer to instruct his readers ethically. Through translation and by collecting old stories, he developed his theory of literature as the mouthpiece of past glory and divine truth. With these ideas in mind, he pursued his dream of becoming a “prose poet” who could voice ethical truths which could fit in any circumstance. Whatever direction his writings took—gruesome, sensational, exotic, or religious—his goal throughout was to attain “beauty ideal” or “truth and beauty” of his youthful dreams.

Hearn's literary career as a cultural translator and theorist, I argue, grew out of his experience as a reporter, journalist, and translator in the US. His career in America served as the foundation for his later work in Japan. Hearn is rightly called a Japanologist; yet, his attitude toward his subject matter is cosmopolitan, or creole. He considered that the creolization and hybridization of race and culture, including religious orientation, were the logical outcome of the history of human evolution. By examining his American and Japanese works, I will show Lafcadio Hearn as a continually transforming writer in search

¹¹ Yu's expansive and profound book is still a classic on Hearn and his art. Most books on Hearn are more or less biographical, or are about his role as a Japanologist, and do not fully evaluate Hearn as an artist-philosopher. Yu's argument, therefore, is valuable in that he examines Hearn's art, criticism, and philosophy and presents how these disciplines are woven together in Hearn's work. I am indebted to Yu's achievements and, in this thesis, focus on Hearn's interdisciplinary way of thinking about literature as an essential element in life ethics.

of a new voice and a new ethics for the future globalizing world.

Chapter one, “Reportage into Story: Hearn’s America,” examines Hearn’s American writings. Section one therein, “Memory Speaks to A Ghostly Seafarer, “Civilized Nomad” introduces him as a wanderer and dreamer. The two essential concepts addressed are “Beauty Ideal,” as he called his dream vision, and “the civilized nomad,” as he called himself. With the sense of dislocation he felt as a stranger in the US, he thought that the modern era of advanced technology, transportation, and communication would continue to produce strangers, or modern nomads, like himself. As a self-acknowledged “civilized nomad,” Hearn expressed the aesthetics of a mobile lifestyle which would allow one to witness glimpses of lost moments of past memory in the midst of one's own swift movement in time. My argument focuses on the development of these aesthetics. Young Hearn was influenced by the aesthetics of Poe and Baudelaire and tried to acquire literary skills similar to theirs. His readings of esoteric stories from Asia and his study of modern science furthered his interest in old literature, which, he believed, was essential because it brought the past back into the present. It also recreated the original fear and wonder our ancestors felt when encountering Nature's mysteries. Hearn's central objective in his stories was to bring forth such original human experience, which he assumed remained latent in the human subconscious, to eventually enhance an ethical state of mind. Hearn's first American phase was spent in the North, in Cincinnati, from 1870 to 1874. In his early twenties, he was both a radical and a romantic journalist who had a reputation of being a “gruesome” writer. Feeling alienated and oppressed in America, his sympathy was drawn to exploited minorities, such as poor immigrants, “colored” people, and working-class women. His point of view was unlike that of most of his contemporaries; being half-Greek and half-Irish, he naturally felt himself different. With one injured eye and another other nearly blind, moreover, he deliberately made use of his abnormal eyesight to his advantage as a journalist. In an article entitled “Artistic Value of Myopia” (1887), he contended that “the possession of very good eyesight may be a hindrance to those feelings of sublimity that exalt the poetic imagination” and quoted an “amusing poem by the scholarly Andrew Lang” which ends with “But I have visions of my own / And not for worlds would I undo them!”¹² Hearn disciplined himself to cultivate a unique

¹² Lafcadio Hearn, “Artistic Value of Myopia,” 7 Feb. 1887, *The Times-Democrat, Editorials by Lafcadio Hearn*, ed. Charles Woodward Hutson (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1926) 344, 345. Hearn begins

point of view and uncover the self-complacency of Victorian America. His articles from this period demonstrate how he tried to record truths from evidence he had gathered from observation and first-hand sensory experience. He aimed at achieving a balance between the factual and the imaginary in order to render what he conceived of as a truthful emotional experience for his readers. The darkest depths of modern urban life—poverty, murder, frustration, and *ennui*—he depicted with a phantasmagorical touch designed to induce a readerly sense of pathos. In spite of his initial work as a reporter, his reportage could more readily be read as fiction especially because he wrote suggestively of what lay behind the scenes and revealed what tended to be overlooked or suppressed. Section two, “Let the Body Speak: Lafcadio Hearn’s Cincinnati Journalism,” is reprinted from *The Journal of American Literature Society of Japan*, 1 (2002), and discusses his journalism in Cincinnati and how he divulged facts in order to invite the reader’s sympathy. Hearn’s second phase in America, from 1874 to 1890, consists of his experience in the South, New Orleans, and also in the French West Indies. As an editor and reviewer for newspapers in New Orleans, his reading widened and he gained a broader view of the period’s major American literary scenes. Aware that large publishing companies in Boston and New York in the North ran the literary industry in America, he criticized the inferiority complex of Southern writers and encouraged them to contribute more to literature—not as local colorists but as cosmopolitans in world literature. He assumed that the essence of his beauty ideal could be found in the historic quarter of New Orleans. Section three, “Search for the *Genius Loci*: the Birth of a ‘Prose-Poet’” traverses his city in search of the spirit of the city, or his New Orleans’ muse. Hearn’s essay “At the Gate of the Tropics” (1877) is a good example of his city wandering and the final discovery of his nomadic spirit of place in the eye of the Greek seafarer, a life-long nomad that Hearn imagines is the muse of the seafarer’s life story. Hearn’s identification with the Greek sailor will lead him to see himself as the “civilized nomad,” which further led him to work on his early fiction as discussed in the next chapter.

Chapters two and three, “Oceanic Reconstruction (1) and (2)” deal with Hearn’s sense of crisis and how he renders his stories as modern allegories. Chapter two focuses on his oceanic survival story, *Chita: the Memory of Last Island* (1889) and Chapter three, his other oceanic survival story, “A Living God” (1896). The content in these two

the article with a reference to “Philip Gilbert Hamilton’s delightful book, ‘Landscape’” which inspired him to consider the “hindrance” of good eyesight.

chapters juxtapose his American and Japanese periods while highlighting his interests and themes in the oceanic survival stories. Chapter two “Facts into a Dream Vision” focus on his ideas of creolization and hybridization and examine how they are projected in his first novella, *Chita*. His view roguishly sheds lights on crucial issues of the race issue in America at that time. During this period, he also formulated lifelong principles out of Herbert Spencer's evolutionary theories. Hearn's purpose in writing grew clearer: to discover the ultimate law of the cosmos that underlies the universality of human nature. His dream of a “poetical” and “philosophical” narrative took shape in *Chita*. *Chita* emerged an experimental novel that expresses his philosophy of the Spencerian Unknown in poetic prose. By opposing the fragmented modern life of the city to the natural seascape, he presents the unifying power of Nature as symbolized by the sea. In the novella, the sea attracts humans through their sense of affinity with each other and through their shared memory of the past. The main characters in *Chita* represent a new race of “civilized nomads” born as a result of creolization and hybridization, who, either by force of circumstance or by their own will, are extricated from their native lands and wander in search of a place where they may belong.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the scientific and technological progress of Western civilization brought dramatic changes in everyday lifestyles, seeming to demystify life itself. Yet at the same time this process increased anxiety because it reinforced a sense of the unknown and unrecognized over the comprehensible and the customary. During his two-year stay in the Antilles, Hearn discovered not so much the beauty of primitive life, but rather the increasing sense of crisis and anxiety in the modern world. He noticed signs of Western civilization in the communal life of the locals and saw that both the prehistoric natural world of the jungle as well as local communities were increasingly subject to the West's growing influence. His double vision captured both the prehistoric landscape and the civilized present. His essays and narratives of Creole culture in New Orleans and the French West Indies convey an image of the invisible process of change caused by Western industrialization, superimposed upon an image of the mythic and primitive landscape. Seven years after *Chita*, he wrote another story of oceanic catastrophe, “A Living God,” in response to the news of a *tsunami* disaster. This story was later recognized for it being the first time the Japanese word *tsunami* appeared in English text. . Chapter three examines this story and Hearn's usage of the term *tsunami* and discusses it as one of his representative double-structured Japanese stories. On one level, for instance, he retells a Japanese legend, and on the other, he posits the story as an allegory for the contemporary world.

His story of a natural disaster, therefore, can be also read as an allegory of the drastic social and political changes brought about by nineteenth century imperialistic expansion. Hearn's attempt to identify an allegory fit for the globalizing age is also discussed.

Chapters four, "Trans-Pacific Songs," takes a comparative look at Hearn's writings in both his American and Japanese periods with a focus on his ethical standpoint in the context of the global age. In Japan, he seems to have found suitable material for expressing his double vision: he wrote about old Japan but did so in order to make it meaningful for his contemporary readers. The superimposed images of the past on the present portray history as a continuum—not as a linear progression but as concentric growth like the rings of a tree. His stories thus retell old stories and at the same time they project issues of the present world, both being interconnected and continuous. Hearn witnessed the early stages of Westernization in Japan, and the sense of crisis he perceived enhanced his double vision in that he saw both old Japan and new Japan. He sought to present the dynamics of historical changes and exchanges from the point of view of a local inside narrator. In this way, Hearn was able to avoid disseminating stereotypical contrasts between the East and the West. By closely looking at both Japanese and Western ways of thinking, he structured his narrative according to a dialectical method that enabled him to arrive at a synthesis. He constantly referred to Western ideas and self-reflectively examined their value in a Japanese setting. He considered such a process essential to the evolution of the human mind, believing that an awareness of different perspectives was the initial step in preparing one's self for a deeper understanding of the ghostliness of life. Section one of this chapter, "Whitman's 'My Song' and Hearn's 'Our Song'" examines Hearn's critique of American democracy and individualism as represented by Walt Whitman. Hearn's experience in Japan accelerated his demythologization of the American values. He criticized Whitman, the spokesperson for the American dream, as well as Percival Lowell, who wrote of a dichotomy between Western and Eastern characteristics by arguing that Occidentals had individuality while Orientals did not. Indeed, Whitman made Hearn question the significance of individuality and the validity of American democracy overall as the future unifying movement for the human race. Hearn also found Lowell's theories about individuality problematic. Hearn developed his own idea of individuality as he observed his Japanese students, friends, and family and the ways in which they behaved in different situations. His story can be read as an insightful observation of Japanese people, who had not been able to develop a Western sense of individuality living in a relatively closed, homogeneous society. Hearn proposes, however, to revise Lowell's conceptualization of

individuality in which he stated that the seeming lack of individuality among Japanese is a sign of their undeveloped state of mental development. Rather, Hearn posits in his stories that the absence of a Western individuality indicates the presence of an ability to respond to what Japanese inherit on the level of the “Unconscious,” or what is hidden beneath surface social phenomena. He imagined that individuality was not a categorical characteristic, but an emotional expression that was manifested in certain circumstances. Having dispelled American, or Western, values of individuality, Hearn then set out to reexamine the Japanese character as he saw it presented in old Japanese tales and in everyday cultural practices. Hearn also went back to pre-Christian traditions in ancient Greek mythology to locate earlier forms of spiritual experience that overlapped with Japanese customs. Hearn’s yearning to be one with ultimate beauty and truth that lived were beyond egoistic individualism and prevailing social norms is the central issue in both Section two, “Insect Music: Lafcadio Hearn’s Orphean Song,” reprinted from *Lafcadio Hearn in International Perspectives* (2007), and Section three, “Souls Song and Soul Dance: Hōichi, the Genius and Dancing Girl, the Medium.” These sections examine the role of the artist as a medium to tell stories of spiritual experiences in moments of life and death. Hearn revises old Japanese Shinto spirits in the context of his understanding of modern science, particularly the Spencerian theory of evolution. He sees the importance of a religious spirit that encourages people to revere the memory of the dead, wisdom he believed could work as a unifying force in a modern community made up of peoples of different racial, linguistic and religious orientations.

Chapter five, “Translation Re-translation, and Stories Twice-told,” deals with Hearn's literary style that he honed during his Japan period. Hearn’s retold stories are called *saiwa* in Japanese. They are, however, not simple re-tellings of translated stories, but are rewritten from his own perspective as a modern writer. Hearn transforms a simple and sentimental story for the Japanese reader into a more complicated, moral anecdote concerning the growth of the individual mind. Hearn's favorite Japanese folktale, “Urashima Taro,” reminiscent of the “Rip van Winkle” narrative, is about the experience of being transported to a supernatural realm in the sea. In Hearn's own narrative, he compares Urashima's experience in a fairyland under the sea with his own exiled state in Japan, thereby revealing the Japanese hero's lack of self-awareness and his own self-consciousness as a modern man. Unlike the Western hero who suffers for lack of self-awareness, the Japanese hero who, despite the fact that he is weak and loses everything, is still worshipped by posterity as a sacred figure and serves as a central force in attracting people with dreams of strange encounters and other worlds. Hearn in

this way retold such mythic encounters in Japanese tales through his own narratives, deliberately crafting his language. In doing so, he arguably made use of images and expressions which he had learned from translating French literature and other ghostly tales during his American days. In recent scholarship on Hearn's creativity in his retelling, Yoko Makino and Toru Tohda both discuss that "Yuki-Onna," a story that had long been believed to be a Japanese legend was in fact of Hearn's own making. Section one of the chapter, "Lafcadio Hearn's 'Ghostly' Narrative: Translation and Re-telling in 'Yuki-Onna'" also addresses Hearn's originality in this story, exploring how he used images from other literary sources so as to make a hybrid, transnational narrative that could be accessed by multinational readers. Section two, "Re-told Stories of Homeless Ghosts: 'Ingwa Banashi' and 'Oshidori'" examines the double layered structure of Hearn's re-told tales from religious and political contexts. The source stories for both "Ingwa Banashi" and "Oshidori" are Buddhist parables on the teachings of *karma*, or predetermined fate, but Hearn frees the stories from fixed readings of *karma* and allows the characters, especially the women, to act on their own free will, changing their fate for the future. Hearn's treatment of Japanese female figures, however, does not mean that they become like Western women who adventurously pave their own path. Rather, he lets them unconsciously act on what their inner voices instruct them to do. In "Ingwa-Banashi," Hearn overlays ancient Shinto tradition over Buddhist parables of *karma* and assigns a victimized woman the role of a muse and sacred medium which, Hearn assumed, was traditionally inherited matrilineally since mythological times. As "Oshidori" was written during the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), Hearn's journalistic and political voice critiquing Japan's imperialistic move abroad is strongly resonant. Rendered through a female bird to a hunter who has killed her male companion, the bird's voice might strike a Japanese reader as too Westernized for a Japanese woman, but she speaks from an ethical point of view and questions the validity of unthinking slaughter. These revisions that Hearn makes in his narrative, therefore, free the stories from their specific Buddhist interpretations and make them ethical allegories with a modern perspective.

In the Conclusion, "The Spirit of No Place," I review Hearn's literary adventures discussed in this monograph and consider the significance of the Muse that he sought throughout his writing career from his days in Cincinnati, New Orleans, Martinique and finally Japan. As a popular reporter and yellow journalist of his day, his sensational articles tended to be labeled "gruesome" and "ghastly," but his move to the American South and farther afoot to Japan altered his writing, infusing it with more spiritual characteristics

based on old Japanese ghost stories and pantheistic religious practices. Although Hearn was a firm believer in Herbert Spencer's evolutionary theory and of science in general, his ultimate goal was to find a common ground between science and literature and write what he termed a "philosophic romance." In his Japanese ghost stories, especially those with women ghosts, he explored the hidden recesses of the Japanese psyche that echo its originary form in ancient Japan. Finding similarities between Japanese religious practices and those of ancient Greece described in Fustel de Coulanges' *Ancient City* (1877) Hearn was reassured not only of the authenticity of the literary material he was dealing with in Japan but also of the shared origins of European and Japanese civilizations. Writing about ancient Japan and the Japanese psyche, therefore, could for Hearn serve as writing comparatively, though implicitly, about the lost world of European civilization. Although Walter Benjamin declared in 1936 that the notion of the storyteller was obsolete, Hearn in the late nineteenth century could still believe in the role of the storyteller as a medium to access ancient wisdom.¹³ He believed that old stories if not already forgotten were disappearing, but also that they could to be re-discovered and re-told by a modern storyteller in a new context, and thus shared by a larger audience of new world citizens who were rootless wanderers and hybrids, as he was.

¹³ See Walter Benjamin, "The Story-teller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," *Illuminations: Walter Benjamin Essays and Reflections*, ed. with introd. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968) 83-110.

ONE

Reportage into Story: Hearn's America

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.

Lafcadio Hearn, "A Ghost," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, July 1889 (116-117)

1. Memory Speaks to a Ghostly Seafarer, the "Civilized Nomad"

A lifelong traveler, Lafcadio Hearn found himself dislocated wherever he went, regardless of the intensity of his fascination and attachment to the place. In his short essay "A Ghost," the writer refers to himself as a "civilized nomad," one who feels out-of-place wherever he goes. He, most likely Hearn's persona/alter ego, believed that his wanderlust and longing to be elsewhere was inscribed in his body and mind, already determined by nature and nurture both. Yet Hearn's life was not like that of, for example, Central Asian nomads: it was "civilized" because he was the product of European civilization, or to be precise, of Britain's imperialistic expansion then at its peak. If his father had not served as a surgeon-major in the British Army stationed in the Ionian Islands and had not fallen in love with a local Greek woman, Patrick Lafcadio Hearn would not have been born. His father's career meant that he was in his mother's native land only for the first two years of his life.

He then lived in Ireland, his father's homeland for about the next ten years, and was subsequently sent to Catholic schools in England and France. His mother, not being able to adjust to the northern climate in Dublin, suffered a nervous breakdown and went back to Greece, leaving her little boy behind. Hearn was thus initiated into a life as an orphan-exile at an early age.

Whether his lifestyle as a “civilized nomad” was forced upon him, acquired or organic, it served to cultivate his aesthetic sensitivity and create a mobile, shifting perspective. The sense of dislocation, which was second nature to him, provided him with an outsider's point of view. Hearn had a tendency to regard himself as a strange element in any social setting in which he found himself. And yet, it was exactly because of his self-acknowledged position as an outsider that he could sense the peculiarity and difference in what appeared ordinary to others. Especially during the 1870's and 1880's, the decades Hearn spent in America, Americans were ruled by the vicissitudes of the economic market and were intent on their own survival. Hearn's gaze was directed towards those who, like himself, were not able to reach the first rung on the social ladder—poor immigrants, African Americans and women. He, however, believed that the most neglected and outcast could respond to ideal beauty. He searched for moments of such beauty in the passage of time and in the midst of the rapidly changing phenomena of everyday life. He, as a “civilized nomad,” had to move on, but because of his mobile viewpoint, he was the one who could capture a moment of ideal beauty in a flash. Hearn belongs to a tribe of others he named “civilized nomads.”

Hearn and his “Beauty Ideal”

Hearn's sense of beauty could be found in his childhood memories. As is often the case with a lonely child, Hearn escaped into his fantasies through the world of books and formed his ideal images from picture books on Greek mythology found in his great aunt's library. When he was caught reading, “the beautiful books” were “unmercifully revised” and “dryads, naiads, graces and muses” were rendered “breastless” (8: 26).¹ He experienced a similar interdict at St. Cuthbert College at Ushaw, where he did not understand why he was prohibited from admiring the beauty of mythic figures. Hearn believed that his intuitive childhood attraction to sensuous beauty in the world of

¹ Quotations from Hearn's writings are from *The Writings of Lafcadio Hearn*, 16 vols., and are indicated by volume number and pagination in parentheses.

mythology was natural and innate. His childhood experiences became the basis for his yearning to become a prose poet who could celebrate such beauty. Almost fifty years later in Japan as a father of three children, he would write an invocation: “Ah, Psyché, from the regions which/ Are Holy Land!”² contending that a consciousness of beauty is rooted in humanity’s primordial memory:

The first perception of beauty ideal is never a cognition, but a recognition. No mathematical or geometrical theory of æsthetics will ever interpret the delicious shock that follows upon the boy's first vision of beauty supreme. (. . .) But he who receives in one sudden vision the revelation of the antique beauty, —he who knows the thrill divine that follows after, —the unutterable mingling of delight and sadness, —he remembers! Somewhere, at some time, in the ages of a finer humanity, he must have lived with beauty. Three thousand —four thousand years ago: it matters not; what thrills him now is the shadowing of what has been, the phantom of rapture forgotten. Without inherited sense of the meaning of beauty as power, of the worth of it to life and love, never could the ghost in him perceive, however dimly, the presence of the gods. (13: 25-26).³

For Hearn, “Beauty” is everlasting and continuous. It may escape one's inattentive eye, but it is always present in the ordinary matters of life. In “Beauty is Memory” included in *Exotics and Retrospectives* (1898), Hearn elaborates that “beauty represents (. . .) countless fragments of prenatal remembrance crystallized into one composite image within organic memory, where like the viewless image on a photographic plate awaiting development, it remains awhile in darkness absolute.” “Beauty” is, for Hearn, a composite of “countless” race-memories. The human mind strives for the ultimate “beauty ideal” which is yet to be realized. When one glimpses “beauty,” it is a “recollection” of the “antique beauty” one must have experienced in the distant past. It is also the reflection of “antique beauty” in the form of a shadow in the present (9:149). The fortunate thus know the effect of the “power” of the original “beauty ideal.” The part of a man's mind that remembers the past manifests itself as “the ghost in him.” Hearn's “ghost” is the unacknowledged part of one's mind, which might be called a *geist* or spirit, and carries the ancient emotional experience of the human race. Catching a glimpse of “beauty ideal” in the passing moment means more than a momentary sensational experience; it is also an encounter with the long lost past of

² An admirer of Edgar Allan Poe, Hearn must have had in mind Poe's line from “To Helen”: “Ah, Psyché, from the regions which / Are Holy-Land!”

³ To differentiate from Hearn's use of ellipses, my omission is identified by ellipses in parentheses.

human memory, which records human history from time immemorial.

As a journalist in New Orleans from 1877 to 1887, Hearn worked away on his articles and was called a “pen of fire” (13: 99); however, “the gilded slavery of newspaper work” exhausted him and he dreamt of writing for himself (To Watkin; *Letters from the Raven* 52). During his apprenticeship in journalism, he learned written expressions and styles by translating contemporary French literature.⁴ Although it was difficult for him to find a publisher, never finding one for his translation of Gustav Flaubert's *Tentation de Saint-Antoine* (the first in English), he learned of the poetic qualities in words from so-called “Art-for-Art's sake” poets and writers of the French circle. His first book, *Out of Cleopatra's Nights, and Other Fantastic Romances* (1882), was a translation of stories by Thophile Gautier.⁵ In his preface, Hearn discusses beauty in poetry:

It is the artist who must judge of Gautier's creations. To the lovers of the loveliness of the antique world, to the lovers of physical beauty and artistic truth, –of the charm of youthful dreams and young passion in its blossoming, –of poetic ambitions and the sweet pantheism that finds all Nature vitalized by the Spirit of the Beautiful, –to such the first English version of these graceful phantasies is offered in the hope that it may not be found wholly unworthy of the original. (Qtd. in Bisland's “Introduction”; 13:56).

Hearn felt that a carefully crafted work, “an engraved gem-work of words,” would evoke the sensuous warmth and color of antique Greek beauty. Working on French translations of Oriental stories originally composed in Arabic, Jewish and Chinese, he further attempted free, not word-for-word, translations. This allowed him to render the essence of translation which, he felt, lay in the transmission of the original emotional qualities. Hearn believed

⁴ On his plans for translation, Hearn wrote to Krehbiel in a letter from New Orleans dated February 1886: “I have a project on foot –to issue a series of translations of archæological and artistic French romances—Flaubert's ‘Tentation de Saint-Antoine;’ De Nerval's ‘Voyage en Orient;’ Gautier's ‘Avatar;’ Loti's most extraordinary African and Polynesian novels; and Baudelaire's ‘Petits Poèmes en Prose’ (*Life and Letters*, 1. 362).

⁵ Hearn writes about the condition of translation work in America and the difficulties of gaining valid appreciation of contemporary French literature. See “For the Sum of \$25”: “No wonder that the works of French writers are murdered –no wonder that the translators of real ability can find no employment (...). A most laborious cautious, ingenious, delicate, supple work –a work demanding perhaps even a greater knowledge of one's own tongue than of the French tongue (...) A work requiring intense application, wearisome research, and varied linguistic powers (...) The sense, forms, force, sonority, color of every word must be studied; the shape of every phrase chiseled out; the beauty of every naked sentence polished like statuary marble (...) it is such a work as this (...) –a work of blood and tears –a work in whose every line quivers the vitality of the creator– that some vulgar scribbler sits down to translate at a bar-room table under a contract to complete the task in one week, for the sum of \$25!” (24 Sept. 1882; *Editorials* 183-186).

that these French stories embodied the ideal of Greek beauty, “pantheism” and “the Spirit of the Beautiful,” which he valued so highly in literature because they were transmitted through the poet’s language from the ancient Greeks to the contemporary French. In 1880 he wrote to his friend and musicologist Henry Krehbiel that “passion was the inspiring breath of Greek art and the mother of language; and its gratification is the act of a creator, and the divinest rite of Nature’s temple.” Hearn was concerned about how a sense of that original “passion” could be expressed in language, and translations served as good training for him to craft words and become conscious of their potential power.

Albert Mordell, the compiler of many of Hearn’s editorials, asserts in *The Literature of Ecstasy* (1921) that “[i]f the prime motive of an unrhythmical prose work, in whole or part, is the communication of an emotion or the ecstatic treatment of an idea, that production is emphatically a poem.” Referring to Goethe and Hearn, he concludes that composition in verse is “poetry” if its translation in “the prose of another language” reveals “poetic emotions.” In Mordell’s context, therefore, the “poetry” of the original, or “emotion or ecstatic treatment of an idea,” will not be lost in the process of translation (*The Literature of Ecstasy* 46). Mordell regarded Hearn as a poet and found in his prose rhythmical cadences that qualified his work as “prose poetry.” Inspired by Baudelaire’s “*Petites Poèmes en Prose*,” Hearn in fact dreamt of writing “prose poetry” or “poetical prose.” He wrote to Krehbiel about “the realization of a dream of poetical prose, –the evolution of the Gnosticism of the New Art!” He further exclaims, “Then, wouldn’t I have lots to say about The Musician, –my musician, –and the Song of Songs that is to be!” In another letter, Hearn again speaks to Krehbiel of his dream: “you remember my ancient dream of a poetical prose, –compositions to satisfy an old Greek ear, –like chants wrought in a huge measure, wider than the widest line of a Sanskrit composition, and just a little irregular, like Ocean-rhythm. I really think I will be able to realize it at last” (October 1886; 13: 375-376). Hearn seems always to have looked for an ideal form for his expression free from traditional poetic meters and dictions. Here, he happily adopted the idea of “poetical prose” with enthusiasm, following the ideas of Baudelaire. Hearn had a good ear and the elements of music and rhythm in poetry was important to him. As Mordell points out, Hearn is able to measure the music of his language and writes his prose in his own rhythmical cadence in order that it can be read as free verse.⁶

⁶ Mordell arranges a passage from *Exotics and Retrospectives* in a free verse form as an example of Hearn’s poetic cadence and rhythm:

Ancient her beauty/
As the heart of man, /

In 1883, being asked what studies are necessary to become a writer, Hearn answered, “When the soil of fancy is really well enriched with innumerable fallen leaves, the flowers of language grow spontaneously.” After naming “mythology, history, romance, poetry” as four important “leaves,” he added, “one more absolutely essential study in the formation of a strong style –science. No romance equals it. If one can store up in his brain the most extraordinary facts of astronomy, geology, ethnology, etc. They furnish him with a wonderful and startling variety of images, symbols, and illustrations” (To Rev. Wayland D. Ball, 1883; 13: 256). The metaphor of a literary work as a plant suggests Hearn's view of literature as organic and developmental. Thus knowledge of science contributes a factually grounding to the idea in the writer's mind. Hearn's adaptability to new discoveries in both science and literature was his strength as he was able to develop his potential for new projects with the intellectual tools available in his environment.

“Philosophical Romance”

In 1881, at the age of thirty-one, Hearn was still seeking his own writing style. He had been engaged in journalism, reviewed both literary and scientific writings, and was well aware that fancy alone was not enough and ineffective in literary markets that appreciated the factually grounded, descriptive language of science as the language of truth. He wrote to Krehbiel about his insecurity:

To what could I now devote myself? To nothing! . . . I also know that I could not write one little story of antique life really worthy of the subject without such hard study as I am no longer able to undertake, and a purchase of many costly works above my means. The world of Imagination is alone left open to me. It allows of a vagueness of expression which hides the absence of real knowledge and dispenses with the necessity of technical precision of detail. (1881; 13:216)

Yet ever waxing fairer, /
Forever remaining young. /
Mortals wither in time /
As leaves in the frost of autumn;/
But time only brightens the glow /
And the bloom of her endless youth. /
All men have loved her /
But none shall touch with his lips
Even the hem of her garment. See Mordell, *The Literature of Ecstasy* 115.

For Hearn, “the world of Imagination” is real, but he was aware of his deficiency in any “real knowledge,” which made him feel weak and helpless. He had been searching for a universal and everlasting law to explain the riddles of his life since childhood. Therefore, Hearn's discovery of Herbert Spencer was a kind of enlightenment. Spencer offered “principles” for Hearn's thoughts. Hearn wrote to a friend that Spencer “has completely converted me away from all ‘isms, or sympathies with ‘isms: at the same time he has filled me with the vague but omnipotent consolation of the Great Doubt” (To W. D. O’Connor, 1886; 13:361). One could argue that for a lone and abandoned young man, who could only find truth in beauty and who despaired before the spectacle of human_folly in the materialistic and money-centered American city Spencer was a savior and moral guide. Hearn wrote to Krehbiel, “I also discovered, for the first time, how to apply the little general knowledge I possessed. I also found unspeakable comfort in the sudden and, for me, eternal reopening of the Great Doubt, which renders pessimism ridiculous, and teaches a new reverence for all forms of faith. In short, from the day when I finished the ‘First Principles,’ –a totally new intellectual life opened for me . . .” (1886; 13: 371). Hearn felt “comfort” and gained confidence because Spencer's theories legitimized his own sense of ghostliness, which he recognized as Spencer’s “the Great Doubt.” “First Principles” unveiled for him the mechanisms of inheritance, memory, and evolution in a concrete and descriptive language.

Spencer’s synthetic panorama of the universe, encompassing both physical and metaphysical realms under the principles of “the Unknowable,” struck Hearn with “the greatest conception of Divinity I could yet to expand to receive” (To George M. Gould, 1888; *Life and Letters* 1 430-1). In short, his “beauty ideal” was not enough and he wanted to combine both “romantic “ fancy and “philosophical” truth in his fiction. Along with his ideal of “poetical prose,” Hearn now regarded writing a “philosophical story” as his literary goal. He wrote to Krehbiel in 1885 about his new task:

I really think I have stored away in me somewhere powers larger than any I have yet been able to use (...) I believe I have some power to reach the public emotionally if conditions allow. (...) a single short, powerful philosophical story, of the most emotional and romantic sort. I feel within me . . . the sense of such a story –vaguely, like the sense of a perfume or the smell of a spring wind which you cannot define. (Qtd. Ferri Greenslet, “Preface,” *Leaves from the Diary of an Impressionist* 26).

He felt the need to write such a story all the more because of the anxiety and desperation he

felt in his frenetic urban life. In one of his editorials, Hearn pointed out, “With the vast widening of human knowledge, and the ever growing necessity for specialization, it becomes more and more evident that the dream of a universally intelligent humanity is not likely ever to be realized.” Hearn ironically called attention to the unease and insecurity caused by diversifying technological knowledge which had produced an industry of “modern superstition” such as “astrology,” “fortune-telling,” and “divination,” and had made the modern world a complex maze (“Modern Superstition,” *The Times-Democrat*, 1884; *Occidental Gleanings* 89). Hearn's discovery of Spencer dispelled his fragmented sense of “specialization,” since the law of evolution held all these phenomena—science, pseudo-science, religion, and literature—in one dynamic evolutionary movement under the universal law of the Unknown. His literary work would be justly termed “philosophical” if it could mirror that universal law. From this time on, as Ferris Greenslet maintains, “there was a new seriousness in his life and a new gravity in his work” (15).

Hearn became devoted to Spencerian evolutionary theories because he was able to tailor them to his own use. When he found similar concepts in Eastern philosophy, which he believed voiced the same Spencerian universal law, he readily incorporated the new terms into his language. Arthur E. Kunst aptly describes how Hearn was able to adapt new expressions and use them freely in his narrative:

In 1885 Hearn underwent what he believed to be a conversion; but in actuality it changed nothing. Hearn came to Herbert Spencer with four ideas--pantheism, racial mentality, inherited memory and individual subservience; and he left Spencer with four ideas. But he now calls his concepts the Unknowable, racial psychology, organic memory, and evolutionary duty. In Japan, he encountered Buddhism and then started to use new terms for the same things; Nirvana, the national soul, Karma, and bushido. . . . They were his defense against the world--a mockery of respectability by which he survived the world's jealousy and his own insecurity. (63)

These four ideas, as Kunst points out, are rephrased by Hearn's new discoveries. It is, however, significant to point out that the rephrasing and reshaping of his ideas occurred at different points in his wandering career. The first four ideas represent Hearn's original notion of “ideal beauty” nurtured during his apprenticeship period in Cincinnati. It was in New Orleans that he learned the Spencerian terms, and although already familiar with Eastern religions and philosophies, he later picked up Buddhist and Japanese terms while in Japan. He might be criticized for lack of discipline in his thinking and in snapping up useful

new ideas and terms, but such adaptability was his strength. He lived in the age of flux and he always was moved to find a new language to describe the ever changing world or a different cultural and linguistic setting where he happened to find himself.

Hearn also recognized that using unfamiliar terms is an effective way to attract readers' attention; this strategy might further open up a new perspective for them to look at their world. As a translator he must have been well aware that certain emotional qualities expressed in one language could not be literally replaced with corresponding words in a different language. In such cases, he used the original terms and let them carry a feeling of their original meanings. Foreign words might appear strange, but that strangeness was the point for Hearn. His major purpose in using unfamiliar terms was to challenge his readers' preconceived standards and tastes. He was aware that if he provided views that would only comfortably please his readers and would not ask them to struggle to understand, the passing and changing quality of life's experience would not be rendered.

What Kunst refers to as Hearn's "defense against the world" regarding his use of accepted set terms is, in a way, true. From the point of view of evolutionary theory, Hearn categorized himself as one of the unfit and weak, since he was of Greek and Irish mixed blood. For the evolutionalists of that time, the notion prevailed that mixed blood was the cause of racial degeneration. In his "Appendix" to *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*, Hearn comments that Spencer did not support intermarriage among different races as it would eventually produce "a constitution" inadequate for any "mode of life" (12: 459-464).⁷ Recovering from typhoid fever in Martinique in 1888, Hearn wrote to Dr. Gould, a Philadelphia ophthalmologist: "The faultiness is not with the world, but with myself. I inherit certain susceptibilities, weaknesses, sensitiveness, which render it impossible to adapt myself to the ordinary milieu; I have to make one of my own, wherever I go, and never mingle with that already made" (1888: 14: 56). Spencerian philosophy helped him to understand his sense of the ghostly in the framework of "the Great Doubt"; on the other hand, by accepting Spencer, he also had to accept his biologically and hereditarily determined "constitution." In times of mental depression, Hearn tended to degrade himself.

⁷ See "Herbert Spencer's Advice to Japan," "Appendix," *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*: ". . . respecting the intermarriage of foreigners and Japanese . . . , [i]t should be forbidden. It is not at root a question of social philosophy. It is not at root a question of biology. There is abundant proof, alike furnished by the intermarriages of human races by the interbreeding of animals, that when the varieties mingled diverge beyond a certain slight degree the result is inevitably a bad one in the long run. . . . The consequence is that, if you mix the constitution of two widely divergent modes of life, you get a constitution which is adapted to the mode of life of neither—a constitution which will not work properly, because it is not fitted for any set of conditions whatever" (483; 12:461).

While holding a high teaching position in Japan, for example, he wrote to Ellwood Hendrick in 1893: “Now I am not respectable. . . Small and mean as I am, I am spotted. Don't imagine this is vanity! It doesn't require any greatness to be spotted” (14: 214). Hearn was never free from his inferiority complex, but he maintained his pride and confidence in his writing and from his unique point of view. Though “small” and “spotted” with only one extremely near-sighted eye, he was able to perceive and illuminate the almost invisible and inaudible matters of life. In *Fantastic Journey: the Life and Literature of Lafcadio Hearn* (1997), Paul Murray calls his life a “fantastic journey” and portrays Hearn almost as a deformed elf with an extraordinary power of literary imagination: “His appearance was forbidding, if not actually repulsive. Only about five feet tall, with one eye totally blind and the other so disabled that he had to hold papers within an inch in order to decipher them, always ill-dressed, unkempt, slovenly; with the face of a weasel and the manners of an oaf; he was nevertheless one of the most brilliant and picturesque writers of his day. . .” (Murray 307). Mixed-blood, handicapped, multi-lingual Hearn would never rise to the standard set by Spencer’s conceptualization of survival of the fittest, nor to the ideal American male whose masculine strength would bring him success in life.

Memory Speaks

As discussed above, Hearn read and interpreted Spencer in his own ways, and the notion of Social Darwinism and “survival of the fittest” popularized in postbellum America was not a crucial element in his reading of Spencer.⁸ Hearn was more focused on the law of heredity, organic memory, and the question of the individual soul. In his

⁸ On his visit to the US, Herbert Spencer was invited to dinner by successful businessmen at Delmonico's on 9 November 1882. Spencer was alarmed to discover the frequency of suicide and nervous breakdowns among American businessmen. “Everywhere I have been struck with the number of faces which told in strong lines of the burdens that had to be borne ... Americans did not know how to relax; they were bored out of harness, driven within it ...”; see, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformations of American Culture, 1880 - 1920* (1981) 52. In *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (1944), Richard Hofstadter argues that the Spencerian *laissez-faire* evolutionary theory was well received by American businessmen and conservative politicians because it supported the idea that social and economic success was a necessity of history. Social Darwinism was popularized because “[t]he utilization of evolutionary concepts to explain social development was of particular interest to thoughtful Americans living in an age of rapid change. See also, Chapter Three, “An Evolutionary View of Society” in Paul F. Boller, *American Thought in Transition: The Impact of Evolutionary Naturalism, 1865-1900* (1969). Another argument lay out that the American success story at the turn of the nineteenth century did not necessarily need Spencerian theory and that ambitious businessmen took Christian humanism and natural laws to heart; Edward Kirkland in *Dream and Thought in the Business Community, 1860-1900* (1964) points out that although American businessmen knew Spencer by name, most of them did not read his books.

lengthy letters written in Japan in 1895 to a Japanologist and professor at Tokyo Imperial University Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850-1935) who Hearn thought did not understand Spencer, Hearn refutes the possibility of the individual in evolutionary theory: “psychological evolution” means “[t]he race is visibly modified in the course of centuries—not the individual, whether by education, environment or anything else,” and “[e]volution includes not merely the shaping and modification of existing matter, but the development of visible matter itself out of the invisible.” Hearn emphasized the visible and invisible as continuously interrelated phenomenon because he believed that what is visible must originate in the invisible. Hearn also wrote to Chamberlain, “The sensations of that new experience in your own life were millions of years old! Far from simple is the commonest of our pleasures but a layer, infinitely multiple, of myriads of millions of ancestral impressions” (1895; 14: 342).⁹ Hearn believed that each human mind taps into universal human memory, each imprinted with the memory of ancestors' past. In postbellum America, during an unprecedented advancement in technology and science, the supposedly autonomous individual being seemed to have become a part of the enormous machine powering industrialized and commercialized society. Hearn felt the unrest and individualism that identified with selfish egoism were the consequences of modern civilization. He, however, assumed that the movement of evolution would eventually dissolve the ego and that, as a result, an altruistic and sympathetic society would emerge. What must be restored for Hearn was not the individual self, but the collective memory of the human race.

Hearn, therefore, attempted to trace signs of universal memory in one's personal emotional experiences and dreams. He turned to folktales and ballads because he believed that they were the poetry that transmitted ancient emotions of the human race to the present that in turn could reinvoke ancient memories—that is, awakening one's “ghost” or primordial spirit. The individual body and mind, Hearn conceived, served as host to one's “ghost,” which was at once part and whole of universal memory, or the sea of the unconscious. As Hearn's “ghost” never developed as a conscious individual self or soul, his belief in Spencerian thought differed from popularized notions of Spencer in America. Hearn conceived of his ideal narrator to be as little an egoist as possible,

⁹ In a letter sent from Kobe, April 1895, Hearn also wrote: “Education and other influences only develop or stimulate the preexisting. There is an unfolding (possibly also a very slight increment of neural structure), but the unfolding is of that formed before birth. There are no changes such as seriously affect character. The evolution of the race is perceptible, —not that of the individual, except as the individual life is that of the race in epitome.” I will discuss Hearn's idea of individuality in relation to Walt Whitman and Percival Lowell in the next section.

one who could acknowledge and sing the poetry of ancient memory. A small chirping insect, a grass lark, could become his epitome of the ideal poet because he thought that its song echoed old songs of love and pain. Such a poet then is no eolian harp nor music box; it renders long lost memories and speaks directly to one's senses. Hearn considered suffering and struggling as necessary for the artist because the moderns were all distanced from direct communication with the "ghostly." Only with incessant efforts of rewriting and reworking of his material, Hearn believed that he might have a "glimpse" of the "beauty ideal" in his work.

Hearn admired ancient Greek art and was fascinated by Fustel de Coulanges's *The Ancient City* (1861), which traces the development of Greek and Roman social systems based on religion and family organization. For Hearn, Greek culture was the model of all cultures, and his ideal storyteller might be compared to a consecrated medium maiden or sibyl in ancient Greek-Roman society. Such a medium would voice past wisdom and channel the minds of the dead; memory would speak through this figure.

Hearn arrived in Japan in 1890 and was amazed to discover a country that still retained an old social system like those he had encountered in Coulanges' book on ancient Greece. Japanese society was based upon ancestor worship and a patriarchal family system. It was a place where the dead were believed to reappear in order to maintain relationships with the living and support them. Japan seemed to offer proof for his theories of memory and the voices of the dead. The more Hearn collected old Japanese stories and songs, the more he was assured of the universality of "ghostly" presence and the workings of memory. The stories and songs carried the voices of the dead and thereby generated communal solidarity of the nation.

Hearn's distrust of Western modernization made him all the more attached to traditional Japanese culture. He was aware of the impact of Westernization in Japan and thought that he was witnessing the dying moment of an ancient culture. Therefore, he adopted the role of a medium of old stories and songs, in order to allow memory, or that of ordinary human experience of the long lost past, speak to the moderns. Japan remained "ghostly" and unknown to him, and he did not think he could interpret or analyze it. Through his writing, however, he was able to translate and transmit shadows of old Japan.

As a vast, silent realm of oblivion and remembrance, memory catalyzes the past and the present moments. The link formed between past and present serves as the foundation for future renewal. For Hearn, memory was the reservoir of past wisdom, and he found bliss in letting himself succumb to the world of the dead. Storyteller as he was, he knew that memory was a crucial foundation for his literary production. As a topos of the literary

imagination, the “ghostly” reveals the unknown dimensions of one's own mind, which is also part of a forgotten ancestral emotional experience. For Hearn, writing stories was a way to establish a dialogue with the vast life force emanating from the memory field and to legitimate his life in the present moment.

The following two essays in this chapter trace Hearn's development as a writer in America. He transformed himself from a sensational reporter of yellow journalism in Cincinnati to a literary editor, ethnographic storyteller, and translator in New Orleans. It is important to examine his journalist years in America since they laid the foundation for him to develop his unique double vision—capturing both surface phenomena and invisible reality. His American days demonstrate his search for his own voice—that of “the civilized nomad.”

2. Let the Body Speak:

Lafcadio Hearn's Cincinnati Journalism¹

Lafcadio Hearn (1850 - 1904) began his writing career as a reporter in Cincinnati. He wrote about 300 articles for the *Enquirer* where he was employed from 1872 to 1875 and about 140 for the *Cincinnati Commercial* from 1875 to 1877. A young man in his early twenties during the post Civil War reconstruction period, Hearn was an energetic yellow journalist who made a reputation “as a realistic and sensational reporter,” covering “murders in the greatest details” and such “grisly subjects as slaughterhouses, paupers' graves, lunatic asylums, poor houses and executions” (Whelan 20). His ophthalmologist George Gould thought that Hearn's myopia was the cause of his freakish propensity for the “gruesome “; yet, apart from the question of credibility in his pathological observation, the term does explain Hearn's taste in his Cincinnati journalism. He in fact took it as his specialty and presented himself in his *Enquirer* article of 1874 as “the Ghoul” who was “a fervent admirer” of “the Revoltingly Horrible or the Excruciatingly Beautiful” (*An American Miscellany* I 15). Juxtaposing the notions of the “Horrible” and the “Beautiful,” he suggested that they were equally intense and sensuous aesthetic experiences, and declared that he would recreate such moments in his reportage. His Cincinnati journalism is thus unique in that it explores aesthetic value through yellow journalism. Dreaming of becoming a literary writer someday, he made the most out of his career as a reporter, experimenting with emotional effects in his language. Though more remembered as an exotic Japanologist who sailed to Japan in 1890 and died there a naturalized citizen, Hearn needs to be acknowledged for his Cincinnati period when, as a notable journalist, he endeavored to portray the reality of modern America's underworld by utilizing both discursive and narrative techniques in his reporting.

In *A History of American Literary Journalism*, John C. Hartsock calls attention to Hearn's Cincinnati journalism and gives him credit for his pioneering attempts which “anticipated the narrative literary journalism of the 1890s” exemplified by Stephen

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Crane (26). Hartsock places Hearn as one of the first American writers to combine factual journalistic reporting with the art of fictional narration. Hearn in fact was a contemporary of Mark Twain and was reacting to the same phenomena of American culture. Twain's career, needless to say, ranged over both journalism and literature. In 1873, Twain coauthored with Charles Dudley Warner *The Gilded Age: a Tale of Today* in which money-driven culture was ironically portrayed. Later, towards the end of the nineteenth century, his renowned humor was transformed into sarcastic black humor as the capitalistic excess spread throughout the nation. Modern "sivilization," to use Huckleberry Finn's term, proved that progress was the product of man's greedy acquisition of material wealth and exploitation of the weak in society. Hearn shared Twain's criticism of the materialist American enterprise. He witnessed social injustice towards poverty-stricken African Americans and immigrants, and wrote about them in his crafted language in the spirit of truth-seeking journalism.

The following discussion will focus on several articles that Hearn wrote in 1874. It was a pivotal year for his career. In this year, having gained confidence as a reporter, he attempted to start a literary journal and made his debut as a literary writer. He published two of his first fanciful sketches, but the journal was short-lived, and he was obliged to return to journalism. A chronological examination of his 1874 articles, including experimental sketches he wrote for his literary journal, will show the increasing importance of incorporating a literary quality into his work as a vehicle to address hidden stories of the socially neglected in his journalism. The human body as material evidence especially serves as a symbolic nexus between Hearn's literary fancy and factual observation. His reports dealing with issues such as abortion, dissection, and murder demonstrate how he tries to let the human body speak its untold stories. What is ironic is that the body is but a corpse and his efforts to read whatever is inscribed on its surface always end in vain. The idea of the body laid bare for examination first initiates his vulgar interest, but, seeing it as a hideous corpse gives him such discomfort that he feels obligated to investigate the cause of its death. Making use of his protean reporter-detective-narrator, Hearn entertains the readers with vivid descriptions of the crime scenes, bombarding them with images that induce actual shivers, a sense of repellent smells or nauseating tastes, and titillates their voyeuristic curiosity. His phantasmagoric illustration, however, suddenly comes to an end, leaving his readers with a sense of an eerie moment of suspension. Hearn's positivistic observations of materialist society and his insight into its underside together turn his tabloid reportage into a severe critique of modern America.

What Does the Dead Body Speak?

Many of Hearn's sensational *exposé* writings deal with the dead body, and his close observation and analysis of it uncover social injustice enacted upon the weak and the poor. "The Century's Crime" (14 February 1874) and "The Dance of Death" (3 May 1874), one about abortion and the other about dissection, both give a close examination of the dead bodies. In these articles, Hearn's reporter-narrator focuses on the exploitation of the woman's body, and asks if advancement in medical and scientific technologies has necessitated such sacrifice. Hearn is always in search of a beautiful woman and her romance, regarding it as the source of his literary inspiration, but in reality his reportage must betray disillusionment in his ghastly encounter with the dead body.

"The Century's Crime" is about an illegally performed abortion. A doctor from Indiana checks into a hotel in Cincinnati with a woman. On the following day, he has the burial for "a foetus" arranged, claiming that the woman has had a miscarriage. It is immediately discerned that the doctor has performed an abortion on the woman. The article is a report of the scandalous case, and its narrative is constructed as a detective story told by "an ENQUIRER reporter "who goes to the crime scene with "Dr. Maley," a Cincinnati doctor, to witness the truth with his own eyes. While he uses both oral and written testimonies to give the article authenticity, he also uses sensational phrases. He subtitles his article with arresting phrases: "A Bloody Operation at the Heyl House. A Country Doctor Tries His Hand at Abortion in Cincinnati. The Victim a Beautiful Young Lady of Indiana. He Carries in His Pocket Damning Evidence of His Guilt" (43). To excite the reader's curiosity further, he scatters in the text dire words and images such as "a foetus," "a bedroom vessel half filled with a dark, bloody liquid, in which rested the body of an almost developed child," and "a well-formed child of healthy growth" (43-44).

A letter he quotes shows that the abortion has been planned and commissioned by a "John Durbin." Naming an individual could finalize the existence of an agency and provides a sense of reality, but the whole account reads like a fanciful detective narrative. The article ends with a few more facts, but instead of concluding the case, they add more mystery to it: "Last night he [the doctor] sent off two telegrams –one to 'John Durbin' to come on at once, as 'his wife' was dangerously ill; and another

addressed to a party in St. Louis” (46). What has happened in the hotel room is abortion, possibly an illegal act and a criminal case. Yet, the reporter ends his article without closure, reiterating that the identity of the people involved and the motive and author of the act still remain unknown. The telegram sent to St. Louis may well indicate another appointment for the doctor, and the act of abortion, after all, is overlooked. The article makes it clear that abortion has become technically easy through the advancement of medical science and practically purchasable on the black market. The doctor then is engaged in a business transaction in which none can intervene. Hearn's subtitle suggests the lucrative aspect of such business: “He Carries in His Pocket Damning Evidence of His Guilt.” “Guilt,” no doubt, refers to the money the doctor earns for his censurable act. The use of the word, “Guilt,” also effectively addresses the ethical side of the issue. The fact that “He Carries in His Pocket” the “Guilt” insinuates that money (“Guilt”) circulates with the movement of the traveling doctor, and so does his culpa (“Guilt”). Hearn mocks the underside of the abortion business, and implies that even human life is commodified in the market. The open-endedness of the article is unsettling, leaving the ethical question untouched. In “The Century's Crime,” the weight of the hard fact, the remaining dumped “foetus” scavenged from the woman's body, is heavy and its voice hollow.

The scientific and technological achievements in the nineteenth century fostered skepticism in religious faith and exorcised the mystery of human life as knowable yet unknown. In “The Century's Crime,” Hearn depicts the commodified human body, or the foetus, during the act of abortion and expresses his discomfort that the doctor is let go and the scandal is not treated as a murder case. In “The Dance of Death,” the materialistic aspect of the human body is again addressed. When a Joe Saubohnz from the medical college informs the reporters of the *Enquirer* of the “first-class, thrilling sensation” provided by a particular cadaver, one reporter, Hearn's persona, immediately responds that it must be “a prodigious nigger with abnormally developed muscles.” His comment tickles the medical student who amusedly corrects him: “A girl about nineteen or twenty years old, Blonde, with fine hair. Splendid physique. Limbs as round as if they had been turned in a lathe. Seemed a great pity to cut her up” (56). The image of the “Blonde” is enough to provoke the curiosity of the reporters, and they accompany Joe to the medical college. None, including the reporter-narrator, feels any prick of conscience about making a spectacle out of the dissection of a “nigger” or the “Blonde,” and this opening scene becomes the prelude to a story of sadistic exploitation of the human body.

In the dissecting room, the reporter-narrator finds that it is filled with unbearable smells, chunks of meat and piles of boiled bones. He has anticipated finding a romantic and sensuous image of a young woman's body, but, at the sight of the "Blonde," his narrative suddenly takes up a meditative tone.

It [the body] lay extended upon a table in the middle of the apartment—that ghastly, headless thing. It had once loved and been loved—that frightful mass of bleeding flesh and blackened bone. It had once had a name. It had been animated by all the passions and feelings possessed by those who had mangled and torn it limb from limb with jests and laughter. (59)

In the dissecting room, the initial voyeuristic curiosity of the reporter-narrator disappears. He becomes aware of his own discomfort at the sight of the "ghastly, headless thing." "The medical students make fun of the lifeless body "with jests and laughter, "but the reporter-narrator is much offended as he cannot but feel the desecration of what was once a beautiful human body" (60). The disturbingly nauseating smell especially affects him. The subtitle to the article, "A very ancient and fish-like smell, supplements the reporter-narrator's experience" (56). The phrase itself is taken from *The Tempest*, a line by Trinculo, and is preceded by his queries on finding a strange creature: "What we have here? A man or a fish? Dead or alive?" (II.ii.25-26). The reporter-narrator also asks himself whether the chunk of flesh in the dissecting room is "Dead or alive?" The chunk of flesh, however, can never be fish, just because it smells like it; it is still a human body, though now dead, static, and stinking. He tries to imagine "some romance" of the "Blonde," as he cannot but think that her heart must have "fluttered in life time" with womanly emotions. He challenges Joe with the following questions:

"Wonder if she was a naughty girl, Joe?"

"Suppose she was, what difference would it make?"

"Why, I'd like to find That Fellow, that infernal scoundrel, and bring him in here an make him look at her."

"Pooh!" said Joe. (60)

The reporter-narrator presumes a piteous life for the "Blonde" who, since her body is in the dissecting room, must have been maltreated by some "Fellow" to death. Joe dismisses his questions as ridiculous and moves on to look at the next cadaver, this time, the body of a "nigger." The unanswered questions, nevertheless, were unsatisfactory for

the reporter-narrator, since he wants to find out the identity of the “Blonde” and her hidden “romance.” He has explained earlier in the article that bodies used for dissection are those of criminals, lunatics, “negroes,” or fallen women (56). They are the society's outcasts. And the reporter-narrator cannot dismiss them as such and wants to know and value their life stories. For the medical students, undoubtedly white middle class American males, such matters of life concerning these bodies are irrelevant, since what they see is nothing but material samples for dissection. The reporter-narrator discovers that the “Blonde,” which has first titillated his fancy, holds no importance in a world where scientific and material truth is prized. The “Blonde” is dead and Hearn's story must end unsatisfactorily with the woman's “romance” untold.

Romantic Dream Martyred

Hearn was frustrated with the grim reality of Cincinnati and with the “gruesome” articles he had to produce. In order to give his own voice a freer literary expression, he ambitiously started a journal, *Ye Giggampz*, in the summer of 1874 with the illustrator Henry F. Farny. It was announced as “A Weekly Illustrated Journal Devoted to Art, Literature and Satire.” But times were hard after the 1873 financial panic and it was difficult to secure subscribers. Farny, in desperation, published a scoop on a disastrous fire on a boat in the eighth issue, but his scheme backfired, and was seen as making fun of the catastrophe. The journal ended with its ninth issue on 16 August.

Hearn mockingly wrote about the birth and death of the journal in his *Enquirer* article, “Giggampz” (Oct. 4, 1874), seeing the whole project as an example of the “vanity of human hopes, the folly of human ambition, and the general perversity of human nature” (*An American Miscellany* I 13). Besides the financial problems, the journal was a disappointment for Hearn because Farny considered Hearn's literary taste unfit for the journal and started to censor his articles. Hearn expected that he would have freedom as editor of the journal. In fact, the name of the journal refers to Hearn's thick “spectacles,” such as those that “sat upon the intellectual nose of the myopic editor who furnished the newborn paper with literary fodder” (15). He took it for granted that his taste would represent the journal and started to “spring French sensation upon the public, “and “produced a series of translation from Charivari, and a succession of elaborately florid fantasies . . .” (21). Hearn's French *esprit* did not please Farny who had advised Hearn to study *Punch* for ideas. Hearn in all wrote two “fantasies,” or

imaginative short sketches, for *Ye Giglampz*. One, “The Smell of a Woman,” is about a lingering scent on a fan which, like opium, takes the narrator to an imaginary world of ancient beauties. Possibly repelled by the sensuous title, Farny told Hearn that he would correct it, and Hearn responded with a note of resignation because “he could not stand his English mangled.” It was published after all with one line corrected by Farny and under the title, “Fantasy of a Fan.” The other, “The Tale a Picture Tells,” appeared “uninjured” (26). Hearn might not have been able to fully develop his idea of fantasy within his nine-week involvement with *Ye Giglampz*, but these stories anticipate his future literary writing, that is, an allegory of modern times, fantastic and real at the same time.

“The Tale a Picture Tells: Butchered to make a Roman Holiday” (No. 7, 2 August 1874) is, as the title suggests, based on a painting, one by Gabriel Max, “The Last Farewell. “ This work, listed by the title, “The Last Token: A Christian Martyr,” “in the Metropolitan Museum catalogue, shows a dark-haired woman with a searching upward look, a crouching beast on either side of her, and a rose cast at her foot (Fig. 1). Hearn begins his fantasy with a description of the painting: “A beautiful Roman girl is exposed in the Flavian amphitheater, to be devoured by wild beasts, “and the impact of the painting lies in that “the art of harmoniously blending the horrible with the pathetic . . . reflects the living shadows of a dead age with the weird truthfulness of a wizard’s mirror” (No. 7, 3). What follows in this sketch is the product of Hearn’s pure imagination. He complements the visual representation with his description of the reverberating roars in the amphitheater and the conversation of the spectators. The sketch can be read as an allegory. The Roman scene reflected on a “wizard’s mirror” serves as a displacement of a modern scene in Hearn’s America where “the horrible” and “the pathetic” serve as overtones for the orchestrated exploitation of the weak.



Fig. 1 "The Last Token: A Christian Martyr" by Gabriel Max (Austrian, 1840-1915).
Oil on canvas; 67 1/2 X 47 in. (171.5X119.4 cm). Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY.

Hearn has been criticized for employing sensationalism, as he describes the Roman girl's death that is not part of the original painting: "A crash—a fierce growl—a faint, helpless cry—a spray of warm, bright blood" (No. 7, 3). His description of a young woman "Butchered" like a chunk of meat is but another Hearnean story of an unfortunate woman. The Colosseum setting is fitting for such spectacular and sacrificial drama. There the wealthy Romans are the bloodthirsty exploiters and the victim is a young girl. Hearn as a newspaper reporter has to control his fancy in order to base his account on facts, but in this story as a fiction writer he can be freely creative. In "The Tale a Picture Tells," he imagines a fortuitous but memorable romance for the girl. He adds a Goth gladiator as a sympathizer and witness, and lets him throw "a fresh, bright-red rose" at the girl, and the girl is not only the object of the male gaze but has a will of her own.

She . . . looks up into the mighty sea of pitiless visages--looks up with her sweet, childish, cherry-lipped face, and those great, dark, softly sad Roman eyes--to thank him [who threw the rose] by a last look of love. . . . She only sees a seemingly endless row of cruel and sensual faces, the faces of the wild beast populace of Rome . . . (No. 7, 3)

The Roman girl's "last look" is met by the "terrible yet friendly" and "keen and coldly-blue" eyes of the Goth gladiator. The dumb show enacted between the girl and the Goth at the bottom of the arena is a romantic drama of mutual communication that Hearn has not been able to write in his reportage. Here the Roman spectators are also the objects of the girl's gaze; she perceives "cruel and sensual faces" of "the wild beast populace." And her observation proves right when the narrator introduces the two Romans entertainingly betting on which of the beasts, the tiger or the panther, will first get the girl. A Greek merchant, another voice heard among the spectators, regrets the sacrificial waste because the girl would fetch a high price at a slave market. In either case, the girl is seen as an expendable commodity, an object, and the girl in turn knows the ferocious nature of the spectators.

The insensitivity of the hard-headed, cold-hearted, and money-minded Roman spectators is thus juxtaposed with the tenderness and compassion of the victims. The rose lying between the Goth and the girl links the two by symbolizing their passion, the loving and suffering heart that they share. The Goth's tears speak for his love and pity for the girl. Witnessing the scene, however, one Roman makes fun of the Goth, saying, "See! the fool's wiping his eyes now. These Goths can fight like Hercules, but they

whine like sick women when a girl is hurt” (No. 7, 3). For the Romans, the womanly –apparently meaning inferior –quality in the Goth lowers his value, despite his Herculean physique. Looking down on the girl, the Goth and the beasts together at the bottom of the arena, the Roman spectators as rational and civilized humans reinstate their mastery over feminine weakness and animal savagery. The tale can be read as Hearn's crude yet pointed critique of American culture. If American democracy is modeled after the Roman republic and Roman law, the Romans in his tale may well represent the citizens of the American republic, especially those capitalists who speculate in the economic market and who, as advocates of the theory of the survival of the fittest, regard it natural to abandon the weak and the unfit for the sake of their own interests.

In “The Tale a Picture Tells,” the Goth is the only one who is horrified by the situation and pities the Roman girl, but he is powerless, unable to save her from her fate. Hearn may have been projecting his own dilemma in society on the Goth. Just before he started the *Ye Giplampz*, Hearn married a mulatto, Mattie Foley. However, the marriage was void because an Ohio law, valid from 1861 to 1877, prohibited interracial marriage (Frost 182, Murray 42, Stevenson 52). George Gould regarded it as a deviant act, and Edwin Henderson, the editor of *The Commercial*, told Gould that Hearn was discharged from *The Enquirer* “on an ethical point of policy,” indicating his disapproval of miscegenation (Gould 30). In 1894 Hearn wrote to a Japanese friend, reflecting on his desperate state of mind during this period as follows:

When I was a young man in my twenties . . . I resolved to take the part of some people who were much disliked in the place where I lived. I thought that those who disliked them were morally wrong, —so I argued boldly for them and went over to their side. Then all the rest of the people stopped speaking to me, and I hated them for it. But I was too young then to understand. There were other moral questions, much larger than those I had been arguing about, which really caused the trouble. “(8: 59)

Hearn courageously and idealistically stood on the side of the mistreated, but his heroism shuttered as he was threatened with expulsion from his social circle. The code of society did not justify his impulse, his fascination with an exotic beauty, and he had to face the “moral questions” that society imposed upon him. He chose to side with his fellow white men because his crossing over the “color line” only manifested as a radically subversive act. Henry Watkin, a father figure who helped Hearn to settle down

in Cincinnati and knew his lonely nature, wrote to the editor of the Cincinnati *Tribune* in 1895 and defended him by saying that his “unfortunate marriage” was not of “contempt for existing notions” (Frost 123). Hearn's sincere act of flower-offering cost him more psychological burdens than he had ever imagined.

The year 1874 was for Hearn one of ordeal. Nevertheless, in the midst of that year, he could mockingly fictionalize the end of *Ye Giglampz*: “And The Giglampz died of inanition and the bad taste of the great American people, at the age of nine weeks on the 16th day of August, 1874” (*An American Miscellany* I 28). Deaths or stillbirths are Hearn's favored metaphor when his reportage points to injustice and sadistic cruelty in society. His failure in both his marriage and his literary journal then did not kill his passion for journalism, nor dim his insights into social inequity. He began writing again with energy and conviction, seeking hidden stories of the underworld in urban America.

The Skeleton in the Closet

Hearn indeed gained a reputation as a first-class journalist with the series of articles he wrote on the Tan-Yard Murder Case, “Violent Cremation” (9 November 1874), “Killed and Cremated” (10 November 1874) and “It Is Out!” (11 November 1874). “The Violent Cremation” was a scoop as Hearn went to inspect the scene before any other reporters made it there (Fig. 2). He updated the scoop in his next article on the following day and promoted the case as an exciting live show which none should miss. He informed the readers that “thousands of extra copies went off day and evening” and that people visited the murder scene with “ENQUIRERS in their hands, comparing, with a universally satisfactory result, the picture with the reality” (*Period of the Gruesome* 114). The article, in addition to Hearn's verbal “vivid re-enactment of the terrible crime,” enhanced the impact with illustrations of the tannery where the murder took place (Murray 31). Hearn tactfully maneuvered and directed the excitement. People sought thrills, and the newspaper fanned their curiosity. The readers were provided with both illustrations and narrative which served as guides to visit the scene of the murder.

Hearn titillated the readers' tabloid curiosity with his detailed descriptions of the shocking sight of the burnt corpse. The second article follows up with the coroner's

investigation and interviews with the suspects. The third article consists of verbally collected testimonies and behind-the-scene stories, and ends with an “OFFICIAL REPORT OF THE CONFESSION.” Arthur E. Kunst, though an unsparing critic of Hearn's style, concedes that the language Hearn uses in these articles matches the event and that the rhythm of his language indicates “the careful measuring of narrative time to a proportionate sequence of phrases, sentences, and construction” (16). The use of uppercase letters and the arrangement of the paragraph on the page effectively produce a sense of extreme shock associated with the murder. There is undeniably a perverse appeal in the detailed description of the burnt corpse. The reporter witnesses the scene with the coroner. The article runs:

An ENQUIRER reporter visited the establishment some hours later, accompanied by Dr. Maley, and examined all so far of Herman Schilling's charred corpse.

THE HIDEOUS MASS OF REEKING CINDERS,

Despite all the efforts of the brutal murderers to hide their ghastly crime, remain sufficiently intact to bear frightful witness against them. (105)

Hearn is also careful with the arrangement of the typeset on the page in order to create the best visual effects. The phrase printed in uppercase letters in the above quotation stands out in the middle of the line, creating a breath-taking moment. As Kunst points out, Hearn controls the rhythm and speed of the language to increase the impact. His language becomes powerful and manipulative so as to appeal to the readers with vivid images of sense experience:

. . . The

SKULL HAD BURST LIKE A SHELL

In the fierce furnace-heat: The brain had all boiled away, save a small wasted lump at the base of the skull about the size of a lemon. It was crisped and still warm to the touch. On pushing the finger through the crisp, the interior felt about the consistency of banana fruit, and the yellow fibers seemed to writhe like worms in the Coroner's hands. . . .

. . . The liver was simply roasted and the kidneys fairly fried. There is a horrible probability that the wretched victim was

FORCED INTO THE FURNACE ALIVE,

And suffered all the agonies of the bitterest death which man can die, while wedged in the flaming fire. (105-106)

The body is described in culinary metaphors, which produce a strange mixture of dry and grim humor and, to use Paul Murray's phrase, "the juxtaposition of the innocuous and the horrible" (29). The reference to food, such as "the size of a lemon" and "bananafruit," or to cooking, "crisped," "roasted" and "fried" stimulates the most primitive of senses, those of an offensive smell and a slimy touch on the tongue. The culinary metaphors produce an oddly luxurious effect in devouring juicy tropical fruit and tasty meat, although the gluttonous appetite is only accompanied with a sickening aftertaste of "worms." In such combination of the grotesque and the sense of luxury lies Hearn's "gruesome" aestheticism. Hearn was able to render an unpleasant subject matter in colors so powerful that the scene could arrest the readers' attention for the sake of sensuous pleasure, momentarily suspending their moral judgment. His articles, however, have more than impressionistic effects; they ask the readers to reflect on the significance of the newswipe, especially when the sensuous excitement is concluded by a sobering feeling.

The three-part account of the Tan-Yard Murder ends as the court closes the case by acknowledging the written testimony signed by sixteen-year-old Frederick Egner who confessed that his father Andreas Egner, George Rufer, and himself were guilty of murdering Herman Schilling. With all the linguistic manipulations to enhance the reader's sensational excitement, Hearn's articles speak for the fact that the socially acceptable truths can be constructed only by legally acknowledged evidence along with the testimony stated and written in the English language. In other words, the lack of a proper language to testify one's position is fatal in American society. The suspects, who are working class Germans, do not get a chance to defend themselves because of their lack of literacy in English, and the truth as they see it is never revealed. Frederick, the youngest of the three suspects, signs the testimony at the court, which suggests that he is the only one who can speak and write English, or, perhaps, sign his name. It is reported that he was much frightened at the court, and it might have been easy to make him confess under police interrogation. The narrator-reporter describes how other accomplices, his father Andreas Egner and Rufer, expressed their anger in German but were not able to speak in public in their own defence. The "ENQUIRER reporters" cornered Rufer for an hour, for example, and witnessed that "The truth evidently trembled on his lips, but clinging to delusive hope, he still incoherently asserts innocence" (136). Frederick's signed testimony passed as a true account of the case; yet, testimony, as it is hinted, does not reveal the whole truth, still less the motivations of the people involved. A series of testimonials in Hearn's articles adds to the sense of

mystery but not truth.

The truth and the motive for the murder, in fact, may not be the concern of readers who are seeking scandalous and entertaining diversions. In "Violent Cremation," Hearn speaks of the public and how easily they are excited by sensational news and how quickly news spreads. But his point is how soon reality turns into a scandalous story which provides a common medium as a passing entertainment:

The news of the terrible affair spread with great celerity, and though its horrible features seemed too awful for belief, for once a story passed through dozens of lips without gathering any thing by the transition,

REALITY FOR ONCE DISTANCING

The most fervid imagination. (107)

The story of the crime, as it is reproduced in newspaper accounts, illustrations, and town-talks, constructs a reality which eventually becomes the accepted truth. The words of the witness are given a fresh turn whenever they are repeated in the process of circulation. "Once" a story is established as "reality," that "reality" takes over one's "imagination" and the original fear is repressed and transformed into a sensational thrill. People want to have the story repeated to reexperience the thrill. Deprived of their "most fervid imagination," or the ultimate fear of death, they can visit the murder scene with their sensitivities numbed and with their curious eyes wide open. "Reality" is but the visual sight at the Tan-Yard, and viewing the site makes them feel that the truth lies there in the open for display. Because it is an established story, "earnest listeners" will not discover anything more than they already know. The story serves as a sensational modern fairy tale which recreates familiar thrills when repeated.

The reporter-narrator assumes that the accepted truth is partial and gathers other testimonies on his own in order to look at the case from different points of view. In the course of his investigations, he becomes interested in Andreas Egner's daughter Julia who, in the tumult of the murder case, is hardly mentioned. In fact, she is three months dead when the murder takes place. The reporter-narrator discovers that Julia died in the hospital from "cancer of the vulva" and was "seven months advanced in pregnancy" (102). It was said that Julia was seduced by Herman Schilling and that Andreas Egner took revenge on him. In the meantime, the reporter-narrator learns of the father's "cruelty" to the child: he "made use of her beauty to decoy customers" for his saloon and the girl was "exposed by her own father to every possible temptation" (130). The reporter-narrator supposes that Schilling had not been the only lover Julia had, or had to

have. He ends Julia's "story" as follows: "the fatal disease is said to have been caused by the / FATHER'S BRUTAL KICKS" (131). Julia was abused as much by her father as by other men. Her death from "cancer of the vulva" speaks for the fact that her sexuality was exploited and expended for the benefit of male desire. In digging up material for the suspects' profiles, the reporter uncovers Julia's story and brings back the image of her violated and torn body.

As can be seen in "The Dance of Death," the silence of the dead bodies of the women weighs heavily in Hearn's *exposés*. He discovers that the unfortunate women at the bottom of the social strata are turned into commodities, to be used, cut up and sold at the will of their male dominators. His reporter-narrator tries to speak for them by reconstructing their life-stories, but he can only see the structure of people's sadistic exploitation of the weak and the unfit in society. The "murder" in the Tan-Yard Murder Case is the tip of the iceberg, and Hearn's articles make it clear that other equally scandalous and serious cases of exploitative violence exist unexamined. When the court closes the Tan-Yard Murder Case, it means that the mystery of the crime is solved and civil order restored. The reporter-narrator cannot pursue the matter any further, and thus leaves Julia's story incomplete. The question of sexual and economic exploitation of the weak in society will remain unsolved because it does not manifest as a criminal case.

Hearn's interest in the Tan-Yard Murder Case did not end there. As a complementary piece to the three-part reportage, about four months after the case, Hearn published "A Goblin Tale" (10 April 1875), subtitled "The Scene of the Tan-Yard Horror Haunted." This is an amusing, ironic sketch, dealing with the insecure and cowardly psychology of the masses that is easily manipulated by a shrewd mind. The reporter-narrator hears "a horrible story" of a "frightful black skeleton" "circulating" in the district of the Tan-Yard. The "bold butchers and sinewy coopers" boasted that they would "interview" the "black skeleton" but nobody really dared to do so. A drover who had just sold his cattle for "\$2,500" wagered with these men and went out to the tannery, but he mysteriously disappeared and was said to have been "gobbled" by the "Goblin" (180).

Money made the drover boastful and over-confident and the idea of winning the wager made him even more daring. Money indeed carries great power, seductively promising security and future success. In a printed text, the use of Arabic numbers to indicate a large amount of money in cash creates a tremendous impact on readers. Money in a sense is real, but, when the sum surpasses the experience of ordinary people, it becomes mysterious and unreal. In the Tan-Yard Murder Case, Schilling was said to

have saved about “\$2,000” from his eight-years of work at the tannery but the money disappeared at the time of his murder, though whether there is any connection between Schilling's money and his death is not certain (131). In “A Goblin Tale,” it is reported in the final paragraph that “*The drover has not since been heard of.* He had all his money, between \$2,500 and \$3,000, on him . . . ” (180). Hearn, who was nicknamed “Old Semicolon” because of the particularity of his punctuation, was unlikely to have overlooked the effect of numbers and typefaces on the page (Frost 74). The Arabic numbers in good round sum strike the readers as some fictitious treasure in a creepy “Goblin tale.” The favored logo, “\$,” on the printed page may well help the readers to visualize the image of a bony “black skeleton.” “A Goblin Tale,” a follow-up to the Tan-Yard Murder articles, points to the prime-mover of capitalistic society as “a Goblin, “a. k. a. money. In fact, Hearn’s articles evince that where there is talk of money, there is murder, crime, and disappearance.

Hearn's use of “Goblin” needs to be differentiated from that of “ghost,” as the latter is etymologically associated with *geist*, or spirit, with invisible and sacred dimensions but the former with a monstrous materiality. In the world of Hearn's “Goblin,” or capitalist American society, there is no “ghost,” because spirituality is driven away, religious faith is lost, and not only things but people are viewed from the point of view of usability and commodity values. As “A Goblin Tale” exemplifies, the “Goblin” externalizes people's desire for money. The “Goblin” cannot be seen but is always in the minds of people who take capitalistic social values for granted and dream of material success. It is the skeleton in society's closet.

Departure

The insightful and artfully crafted Tan-Yard articles might not have been produced, had it not been for the failure of both *Ye Giglampz* and his unconventional marriage. Hearn had ventured into tabooed realms, risked his career but gained an insight like Orpheus into the shadowy underworld of society. Having survived, he had to sing what he had witnessed. In Cincinnati, Hearn successfully produced sensational articles as a yellow journalist, but he felt his literary imagination withering away. If he wanted to stay close to the facts of journalism, he had to describe harsh realities which in turn would undermine the expression of idealistic and romantic aspects of life in his writing. His literary narrative germinated in his journalism but required a different soil and

brighter light for its growth. Edwin Henderson observed in 1877, "As Hearn advanced in his power to write, his sense of the discomforts of his situation in Cincinnati grew upon him. His body and mind longed for the congeniality of southern air and scenes." And Hearn told him: "I have lost my loyalty to this paper, and change was inevitable. Perhaps it isn't so much the lack of opportunity here or a lack of appreciation of associations as this beastly climate. . . I shall feel better in the South and I believe I shall do better." (Gould 30, 31). So he sailed down the Mississippi to New Orleans. There, he worked vigorously and successfully as a journalist, literary editor, and translator, although, in ten years' time, he was again destined to move on to Martinique and then to Japan, forever seeking a better climate for his literary inspiration.

During his Cincinnati period, Hearn tried to cultivate literary value within yellow journalism, but he felt desperate about his work. Yellow journalism would never transcend from the level of sensational entertainment to that of intellectually engaging literature. Ironically, the power of his hybrid narrative-discursive language may have been best challenged in yellow journalism, as he could skillfully recreate the immediacy of an emotional and sensational experience, while maintaining the positivistic presentation of truth based on factual evidence. However, he knew that his readers wanted thrills and horrors as long as their lives were not in danger, or as long as scandalous stories did not unsettle their familiar social norms. In other words, his deliberately composed *exposés* were only received as passing pleasures to be consumed and forgotten. Hearn craved socially conscious and literary minded readers who might appreciate literary value and ethical insight in his writing. His Cincinnati period, nonetheless, is significant as the first phase of his career. He witnessed the underside of urban life in America, experienced the dilemma of managing literary journals, and, most importantly, gained confidence in the power of his language. To start a new phase in his career and to launch his literary adventure, Hearn had to break with Cincinnati and with yellow journalism.

3. In Search of a *Genius Loci* and the Birth of a “Prose-Poet”

Light! —no one dwelling in the cities of the North ever imagines the possibilities of light and of color in the equatorial world. And he who has once known them must continue forever enchanted, --must feel, after departure from them, like an exile from Paradise. The poetry of the tropics is born of such regret. Romance and song are essentially imaginative; and that which surpasses and satiates imagination does not directly stimulate their production: it is only as an exile that the creole becomes a poet, when he remembers the charm of his country without the pains of its daily life.

“The Creole Women,” From *The Diary of an Impressionist* (111)

It was in New Orleans that Hearn, shedding his reporter-identity from his days in Cincinnati yellow journalism, disciplined himself more as a literary writer, cultural critic, and translator. He first worked for local newspapers, *The Item* (1877-1881) and *The Times-Democrat* (1881-1887), as a literary editor. Hearn was especially fascinated by the hybridity of Creole culture and language; he compiled a dictionary of Creole proverbs, and wrote about Creole cuisine and New Orleans history. He once planned to open an inexpensive Creole restaurant. At the same time, he continued working on his translations of contemporary French stories and fantastic stories of the Orient-based French versions of them.¹ It was around 1885, as I discussed earlier in this chapter, when he discovered the works of Herbert Spencer whose evolutionary theories provided him with a scientific framework for his literary pursuits.

Trained as a journalist, the balance between fact and fiction for Hearn was an important issue. In the South, he became more conscious of a sense of history and past. His newly discovered preoccupation, therefore, was how to incorporate the past, or

¹ During his New Orleans period, Hearn published *Out of Cleopatra's Nights, and Other Fantastic Romances* in 1882, a collection of stories translated from Théophile Gautier; *Stray Leaves from Strange Literature and Other Stories* in 1884, translations of Arabic, Chinese and Jewish stories; “*Gombo Zhébes*”: *Little Dictionary of Creole Proverbs, La Cuisine Creole and Historical Sketch Book and Guide to New Orleans and Environs* in 1885; and *Some Chinese Ghosts and Other Stories* in 1887. He also translated Gustav Flaubert's *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, but was not able to find a publisher during his lifetime. In the first five years of his work at the *Times-Democrat*, he completed and published “no fewer than two hundred translations of French stories and striking chapters or passages from the French books.” See Ferris Greenslet, “Introduction,” *Leaves from the Diary of an Impressionist* 11.

history, into his narrative. His muse, or the “beauty ideal” once again possessed him, and he imagined that it could be found in some historic place. The narrators in his New Orleans stories wander around the city, and with their mobile viewpoint, scrutinize phenomenon from different angles in order to render a sense of both temporal and spatial depth. They seem to be saying that the “beauty ideal” for which they search can be only glimpsed, if they are lucky, in a transitory moment and thus they must be always on the go. Hearn also elaborated on his “beauty ideal” by incorporating the notion of Spencer’s “organic memory” in order to instill it as a prototype of human experience. He assumed that all humans, regardless of race, language and national identity, universally share the same origin, which is at once beautiful and ideal. In historical New Orleans, he searched for this “beauty ideal,” or the *genius loci*, in local legends for literary inspiration. His sketches of the city, which will be discussed later, thus project both historical accounts of New Orleans as well as imaginative fiction of a visionary New Orleans.

Hearn, a small Irish-Greek man with an injured eye, looked different, and his poor eyesight enabled him to view the world differently. Some people even believed that he wrote sensationalist pieces because he was handicapped and thus interested in marginalized and aberrant issues. In *Concerning Lafcadio Hearn* (1906), for example, George Gould, an ophthalmologist, viewed Hearn as a case study to whom Maxime du Camp's theory of literary myopia could be applied (Murray 311). Believing that “intellect and especially æsthetics are almost wholly the product of vision,” Gould tries to find correspondences between Hearn's disabled eyesight and his lack of moral sense, or “the morbidities of vision” (xi). He judges that Hearn “had no mind, or character, to be possessed of loyalty or disloyalty,” and “created and invented nothing; his stories were always told him by others; at first they were gruesome tales even to horror and disgust” (xiii). Gould has little respect for Hearn's intellect, because he believes that Hearn's weak-eyesight is the cause of his abnormal state of mind, and observes that Hearn is only interested in “the lurid, the monstrous, the enormous, only hot crime, and sexual passion.” Hearn's lack of education, Gould comments, is clear as there is no hint of any familiarity with great literature such as “the Greek dramatists, Dante, Goethe, Shakespeare” (70). Gould, a Harvard graduate and medical doctor, was typical of the puritanical American intellectual of his time. The only originality in Hearn, Gould argues, is his ability to “color” the images he captures, and so Hearn is a “chameleon” and “that impossible thing, a chromatic voice, a multicoloured echo” (xiii). Gould refers to Hearn's coloring as if it were a simple act that did not require intellectual

ability or originality.

Paul Murray points out that what Gould refers to as Hearn's "echoing" is "pathetically . . . an echo of Hearn himself," and quotes an 1890 letter written by Hearn. Hearn talks about the good reviews he has received for his essays on the French West Indies: "What they admired, I do not know, for I have no originality. I am but an echo of other people's stories and experiences, but if I can color this echo with the iridescence of the soap bubble. . . I shall be satisfied." (Qtd. Murray 313).² Hearn has a tendency to sound overly modest with friends he admired, but he also seems to be assured and confident in his power of being a colorist. A sense of color adds an emotional quality as well as evocative and inspirational quality to his words. He in fact talks about color as an important aspect of words in a letter to Basil Hall Chamberlain: "words have colour, form, character: they have faces, ports, manners, gesticulations; they have moods, humours, eccentricities; —they have tints, tones personalities" (June 1893; 15: 430). Charles Baudelaire's remark about color amplifies Hearn's idea:

Some colours cast back their reflections upon one another, and by modifying their own qualities with a *glaze* of transparent, borrowed qualities, they combine and recombine in an infinite series of melodious marriages which are thus made more easy for them. . . . This great symphony of today, which is an eternal variation of the symphony of yesterday, this succession of melodies whose variety ever issues from the infinite, this complex hymn is called *colour*.
(260)

When layered in different tints and in gradations, colors project the vibrations of the air and create a "symphony" of continuous music in an "infinite" passage of time. While "pure draughtsmen are philosophers and dialecticians," Baudelaire adds, "Colourists are epic poets" (262). In Baudelaire's notion, "colourists" or "epic poets" possess a sense of time, history and change, and are able to capture the exact moment of the "beauty ideal" in the passage of time. They are, in short, Hearn's ideal artists, he himself being one of them.

Hearn's move to the South stimulated a taste for history, which in time gave him

² See also Hearn's letter dated December 1890 from Matsue in *Letters of Pagan* (1933) 88. Early in the same year *Two Years in the French West Indies* received positive reviews. *The New York Times* reported, "There was no other writer who could have immersed himself 'in this rigorous Creole life and tell so well about it. Trollope and Froude give you the hard, gritty facts and Lafcadio Hearn the sentiment and poetry of this beautiful island" (9 Jan. 1890; qtd. in Gould 170).

colors, shades and tones. The landscape he discovered on the way to New Orleans was not untrodden wilderness but ruins of plantations where he glimpsed signs of past glory. As he sailed down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, he encountered the funeral of General Forrest in Memphis (1 November 1887). The coincidence made him aware of the presence of history in America.³ One of the first articles he wrote from the South for the Cincinnati *Commercial*, “A Glimpse of the Mississippi Down Below” (November 14 1877), demonstrates his immediate response to history and the bright colors both of which he sensed from the air.

It [the sun] rose with a splendor that recalled the manner of its setting at Memphis, but of another color; —an auroral flush of pale gold and pale green bloomed over the long fringe of cottonwood and cypress trees, and broadened and lengthened half way round the brightening world. The glow seemed tropical, with the deep green of the trees sharply cutting against it; and one naturally looked for the feathery crests of cocoa nut palms. (. . .) I thought our Northern sky narrow and cramped as a vaulted church-roof beside that sky, —a sky so softly beautiful, so purely clear in its immensity, that it made one dream of the tenderness of a woman's eyes made infinite. (. . .) Yet the horizon never became wholly blue. The green-golden glow lived there all through the day; and it was brightest in the south. It was so tropical, that glow; —it seemed of the Pacific, a glow that forms a background to the sight of lagoons and coral reefs and “lands where it is always afternoon.” (. . .)

—“But it does not look now as it used to in the old slave days, “ said the pilot as he turned the great wheel. (. . .)

I saw, indeed, signs of sad ruin on the face of the great plantations; there were splendid houses crumbling to decay, and whole towns of tenantless cabins; estates of immense extent were lying almost untilled, or with only a few acres under cultivation; and the vigorous cottonwood trees had shot up in whole forests over fields once made fertile by the labor of ten thousand slaves. The scene was not without its melancholy; it seemed tinged by the reflection of a glory passed away —the glory of wealth, and the magnificence of wealth; of riches, and the luxury of riches. (*Occidental Gleanings* 1 160-161)

³ See “Notes on Forrest's Funeral” (6 Nov. 1877), the Cincinnati *Commercial*, *Occidental Gleanings*, vol. 1, 144-155.

As Hearn, or the narrator, moves southward, being swayed by the boat on the Mississippi, he sees the landscape changing color in the passing daylight. The infinity and vastness of the clear sky makes him fall in love with that light; the brightness and warmth of light also remind him of “the tenderness of a woman's eyes.” It is as if, from a northern industrial city without nature’s blessing, he were moving into the realms of the “beauty ideal” where Mother Nature reigns. Hearn’s double vision of images and reality, however, will not let him be transported and become immersed in a “beauty ideal.” The pilot's voice brings him back to reality. His sight is immediately lead to an up-front view of the shores. There he sees the “sad ruin on the face of the great plantations,” clumps of cottonwood trees and the shadows of past glory. The pilot also steers the wandering mind of the narrator back on the right track, close to life's reality. The landscape along the shore is not the eternal “beauty ideal” of “the tenderness of a woman’s eyes”; reality speaks to him through the materiality of truth—dilapidated houses and signs of slavery in the South. In the passing landscape, the traveling narrator, himself in motion on top of the waves, captures a double vision of here and there and past and present. Traveling south on the Mississippi River, Hearn grows in tune with the very heart of American history. There is a spirit of the place, what D. H. Lawrence calls the *genius loci*,⁴ with whom the narrator communes.

A Pilgrimage to the *Genius Loci*

Hearn’s piece “At the Gate of the Tropics” (1877), written as an introductory guide to New Orleans for Cincinnati’s *Commercial* subscribers, is constructed as a narrator's journey in quest of the spirit of the city, the *genius loci*. For Hearn, New Orleans is dense with materiality and layered voices of the past. Always interested, he rambles through back streets and small alleys and notes whatever he sees. His realism unfolds like a series of photographic snapshots, and his camera eye catches the façade of buildings as well as the views from their backsides. His ears pick up on the vigorous cries of people in backyards and at markets. His pilgrimage around the city leads to him beautiful gardens, a lively market, its past glory, and upheavals in industry. Only after mapping the city thus, the narrator finally gains what he was after—intangible cultural assets, or old stories, in which the *genius loci* quietly resides.

⁴ See D. H. Lawrence, “The Spirit of Place,” *Studies in Classic American Literature* [1924], The Phoenix Edition of D. H. Lawrence (1964) 1-8.

At first, the narrator is impressed with the appearance of New Orleans, which is “especially a city of verandas, piazzas, porches and balconies.” He “find[s] much to gratify an artist's eye in this quaint, curious, crooked French Quarter, with its narrow streets and its houses painted in light tints of yellow, green, and sometimes even blue.” However, he sees the “tints” fading, as “there are a great many buildings that can not have been painted for years, and which look neglected and dilapidated as well as antiquated.” The peeling painted surface reveals the erosion caused by the passage of time. The scene might appear picturesque, but the narrator's tone is hardly sentimental, and sees it instead in a “neglected and dilapidated” state as merely the husk of a historic core, with buildings that “suggest many memories of old France” (*Occidental Gleanings* 1 167). When the paint on the buildings fails to resonate with meaning, nor reveal any stories, he moves on into the back streets to discover beautiful homes and gardens:

But, after all, the glory of the city is in her Southern homes and gardens. I can not do justice to their beauty. The streets broaden there; the side-paths are bordered with verdant sod as soft and thick as velvet, and overshadowed with magnolias; the houses, mostly built in Renaissance style, are embowered in fruit-bearing trees and evergreen gardens, where statues and fountains gleam through thick shrubbery, cunningly trimmed into fantastic forms. Orange and fig trees; bananas and palms; magnolias and myrtles; cypresses and cedars; broad leaved, monstrous-flowering plants in antique urns; herbs with leaves shaped like ancient Greek sword-blades, and edged with yellow; shrubs exotically luxuriant, bearing blossoms of curious form and equatorial brilliancy of color; and flows so rich of hue, so sweet, so fragrant, that they vary the varied green with a thousand tints, and make the tepid air odorous with drowsy perfume. (168)

In a “Renaissance style” inner court, he finds “fruit-bearing trees and evergreen gardens” and writes about their colors and smells. The rhythm of his language flows mellifluously and he invites his readers to take in the fragrance of the air. The life of the land might be found here in the “equatorial” vegetation. Its colors, unlike the paint on the buildings, vibrate with “a thousand tints” which will never fade. The narrator, however, does not stop in this miniature garden of Eden because he does not find the spirit of place he has been looking for; there is no sign of human life in this impressionistic garden. He then moves on to the market:

Color and light and bright contrasts, –those warmly picturesque effects which artists seek to study in tropical climes may be studied in perfection at the French Market. (. . .) Oh, the contrasts of color, the seductiveness of the succulent fruits; the brilliancy of the brightly dyed stuffs in the hosiery and notion booths; the truly French taste exhibited in the arrangements of vegetables, and fowls and fruits and fish; the costumes of the quadron girls; the Indian squaws selling droll trinkets; the blue jackets from the ships of all Nations; the red-shirted fishermen from the luggers; the Spaniards, Mexicans, Italians, Englishmen, Portuguese Greeks Frenchmen, Acadians, Creoles! (168)

The narrator excitedly records whatever comes into his line of vision in a Whitmanesque manner. The sense of “a glory passed away” runs throughout the narrative. The walk in the city, however, has excited his senses of vision and smell. The smells certainly add to a sense of life in motion, while picturesque façades, though pleasing to the eye, can simply be dead as they fail to emit any life-giving energy. At the “French Market,” all of his senses are piqued, and the narrator encounters human cries and varieties of viands to suit “French taste.” “You never smell an unpleasant odor in the French Market: there is nothing to offend the nostrils, nothing to displease the eye,” the narrator adds (168).

The colorful market is also enriched by the colors of its people. The narrator finds beauty in the symphony of races, colors, voices, and smells. His ear overhears people crying at the market, “bananas ‘five for a picayune’” (170). The “Market” in a tropical city is by no means a primitive kind of barter market. It is a modern machine: the narrator witnesses the “Marketing” industry and the behind-the-scenes strategies. He observes that the secret of the market is not to be found there: “But one can not see, much less describe, all the sights of the French Market in a month. It is a perpetual exhibition of industry—a museum of the Curiosities of Marketing” (171). The “French Market” scene is in fact followed by an actual example of “Marketing” at “the huge press at the Cotton Landing” (173). The exotic tropical brightness of the city and the Market conceal the huge “Marketing” machinery of the cotton industry, being the life-supporter of the actual “Market” in New Orleans. The narrator's pilgrimage to the “French Market” via garden houses illustrates a changing historical fact of life in the South: the French legacy and the wealth of slave-owning plantations is being replaced by the machines of modern capitalism. The spirit of the place he has been looking for is not to be found in the city.

“At the Gate of the Tropics” is an interestingly constructed travelogue in that it is a self-awakening journey. The narrator is first possessed with the idea of the spirit of the place as a goddess shrined in an old monument. He does not find anything of this sort, however, and his search appears fruitless. This changes as he gradually enters into the depths of the city's old residential areas and moves, as it were, from the outside to the inside. After the Market scene, he happens to hear a legend entitled *Père Antoine's Date-Palm*,” written by a Thomas Bailey Aldrich. He begins to look for the site of the old story to prove its authenticity. The story recounts that *Père Antoine's* daughter died and was buried near his home in New Orleans. One day, “above the little mound there suddenly came a gleam of green; and mysteriously, slowly, beautifully, there grew up towering in tropical grace above the grave, a princely palm. And the old priest knew that it had grown from the heart of the dead child” (175). The narrator discovers the palm, but he also discovers that there is no proof that the palm grew out of the mound of *Père Antoine's* daughter, nor that they lived there. The palm might have existed even before the first arrival of the French troops in 1679.

The narrator's desire to meet the spirit of the daughter, the incarnation of old New Orleans in the palm tree, fades away. He ends his essay regretfully: “So that I departed, mourning for my dead faith in a romance which was beautiful” (178). His fancy may have been excessive as he sought proof for an ungrounded story about a palm, but his search for the spirit of the place, or *genius loci*, may not have been a failure in that he demonstrated to himself the secret of myth-making through his own story. In this sense, the palm as a tree of life serves as a source of inspiration for him to piece together his own story. The anecdote of *Père Antoine* demonstrates that the palm tree is a source of inspiration that bears fruit in other stories. The palm tree, the narrator finds, may have existed even before the birth of the story in question. If so, the tree must have generated various stories at different historical moments by different people who happened to be there. The tree, nonetheless, still would deserve the name of the spirit of the place, the symbol of life and creation.⁵

What is significant in the story then is not the legend itself but the way the narrator approaches the site of the legend where the palm tree stands. His rambling around the city activate his sensory perceptions, which allow him to see the varieties of colors and

⁵ Hearn's fascination with the tree in relation to life and women, culminates in his Japanese stories. See Yoko Makino, “Seinaru Kigi (Sacred Trees),” *“Toki” o tsunagu Kotoba (Words that Connect “Time”)* (2011), 202-242.

lifestyles. In time, he becomes ready to interpret the legend of indeterminate origin. Yet, his sensory experience prepares him to seek out the emotional experience of people in the past. In Hearn's view, this sensory experience is an immediate surface-level sensation, but the emotional experience further allows one to transcend personal memory and contemplate the realms of the past memory of the human race.

In a lecture he gave in Japan in the late 1890's, "On Composition," Hearn differentiates "the emotion" from "the sensation." He attests that "the sensation" is "the first impression received from the senses, or the renewal in memory of such an impression"; on the other hand, "the emotion" is "the feeling, very complex, that follows the sensation or impression." The subject of literature for Hearn, therefore, is "the emotion" and not "the sensation," as the latter, "like a photograph," simply reproduces an exact "visual impression," while the former projects a primordial form of human experience. "The sensation" is an immediate and simple sensory reaction to stimulants from the external world and may result in "tears, sorrow, and regret." Preceded by "the sensation," however, "the emotion" surges up from somewhere deep within as "a peculiar feeling of some kind." "The emotion" mediates one's present experience and the experience of ancestors in the past. For Hearn, a phenomenon such as *déjà-vu* would be interpreted as the recollection of one's memory transmitted from ancient times through "emotion" (*Talks to Writers* 47). "At the Gate of the Tropics" is an initiation story that invites readers to enter "the Gate" into the picturesque and sensuous of Southern life. Many voices and stories there attest to the fact that there is no centralizing myth governing the whole of New Orleans. The daughter of a French missionary is neither the spirit of the place, nor a guardian angel. The only truth that remains is the palm tree itself. Its beauty and magnificence have quickened human imagination to bear fruit in various stories. The spirit of the place has thus been created at certain moments over the continuum of history. The palm as a tree of life generates life and stories. It is in a way a mobile spirit that travels through time. The narrator, a ghostly seafarer, "the civilized nomad," is the one whose deep emotional experience gives birth to a new story that is fit for his age—the age of modern migration, of Creoles and Hybrids.

Ghostly New Orleans

"New Orleans in Wet Weather" is an example of Hearn's attempt to delve deep

into the heart, or the dark past, of the tropical city. The article begins this way: “The dampness of New Orleans upon a wet day impresses one as something phenomenal” (*Occidental Gleanings* 1 208). A stranger from the North is overwhelmed by the humid weather that assails a room with damp air and “a moldy, musty smell.” It is impossible to shut out the wet weather that envelops the city. It encroaches everywhere, like a ghost. The figure’s wandering around the city then becomes like an adventure into an underworld that is wet and motionless. Naturally, the narrator wanders into the graveyard: “—The subject of dampness seems to me inseparably connected in New Orleans with the ghastlier subject of graveyards “ (211). He sees the elaborate vaulted tombs and wonders if some “old pagan faith of the elder civilizations” has left a trace in the modern era, though he concludes that building tombs atop these earlier ones must have erased any evidence. His venture on a wet day, when light and shadow mingle to blur their difference, makes him think about the dead. The wet weather creeps in to create an eerie feeling.

The narrator also finds a hollowness to the elaborate ironworks around the city: the railings “do not look well from within, as they are cast hollow . . .” and the artificial colorings of the fruit and vines of the ironwork do not incorporate the “differing tints” of their natural originals (214). The skillful decorations are but husks of an inner nature shed of their inherent colors and motion. The whole city then appears as a graveyard. Although the walk around the city leads him into secluded corners of old residences and gives him a “charming surprise” of being in a courtyard with a fountain and bronze and marble mythic figures, they only remind him of “fragmentary dreams of antique arts, these fancies of that older world which is yet ever young with the youth of immortality, —thus hidden like treasures in the city’s bosom.” Even amusing small mythic figures representing “the youth of immortality” are juxtaposed with two large statues of well known American political figures, Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson, in the plazas.⁶ The “blacked” inscription of the former is almost unreadable but “the phrase ‘deepest skin’ is wonderfully distinct, and the word ‘SLAVERY’ as black as the changeless skin of the Ethiopian” (215). The inscription of the latter equestrian statue reads, “THE UNION MUST AND SHALL BE PRESERVED.” These pro-Unionist statesmen must have been political rivals, but their statues stand there triumphantly in a

⁶ Henry Clay (1777-1852) was a slave-holding abolitionist and is said to have believed in “the Indians’ disappearance from the human family.” Andrew Jackson (1767-1845) was a winning general in the Battle of New Orleans and defeated the British troops, becoming the seventh president of the US who advocated for the Indian Removal Act. He also owned, at one time, as many as 150 slaves.

Southern city, “chiseling the monuments of a conquered people.” When the narrator inquires of a local about the meaning of the inscription, he receives from him a sense of “inflicting petty annoyance,” and the question seems to have irritated the “acid blisters of the sorest spots of Southern character” (216). The narrator's gaze moves on and peers through the veneer of the “delightful” surface of the ornamented city, uncovering its beguiling duplicity.

The question raised here is the significance of human efforts to refine artistic skills and create elaborate and lasting objects which please only a few—the “conquered people.” What the narrator discovers in the graveyard, in the plazas, in the small alleys of the “poverty-stricken city” are the tokens of the city's past glory and do not create any organic relationship with the locals (217). Skillfully designed as they are, these city ornaments offer no spirit of place or a vibrating and sparkling source of life. Unfortunately they only serve as a reminder of a traumatic past implanted in the deepest corners of the local collective mind.

The narrator, however, is revived by the vigorous cries of the venders at the French Market. A fruit vendor's “unusual” face” attracts him and he spots “a shadow of the beauty of the antique world” reflected in it. He is one of many venders who come from the Mediterranean coast, such as “Sicily and Cyprus, Corsica and Malta, the Ionian Archipelago.” The narrator, a wanderer himself, immediately feels an affinity with the venders: “They are wanderers, who have wandered all over the face of the earth, to find rest at last in this City of the South . . . [they] seek rest from the storm here, in a clime akin to their own and under a sky as divinely blue, and at a port not far-distance from their beloved sea” (219). The “wanderers,” or the seafarers, have traveled, directed by an unexplainable urge rising up from deep within, and they come to New Orleans whose “clime” is attuned to their nature. They are wild children of the sea, never to be molded by a civilized city life. The narrator ends with a dreamy meditation on such a wandering spirit, identifying himself with a Greek seafarer who dreams of the “shadowy sea” and “phantom winds,” feeling their echoes “eternal yet new.” The narrator's sense of displacement and disappointment from his stroll through the city disappears at the sight of the Levantine vendor's “black eyes” that “sparkle with the sparkle of the sea,” and at hearing the “voices” that “own the tones of ocean winds” (221). Those “black eyes” are nature's art, “the wizard's mirror” that reflect “a shadow” of the distant past. There is nothing traumatic, only dreamy and inspiring. The narrator invites the “reader” to share in his enchantment:

If you, O reader, chance to be a child of the sea; —if, in earliest childhood, you listened each morning and evening to that most ancient and mystic hymn-chant of the waves, which none can hear without awe, and which no musician can learn (. . .); —then, perhaps, you know only too well why these sailors of the Levant can not seek homes within the heart of the land. Twenty years may have passed since your ears last caught the thunder of that mighty ode of hexameters which the sea has always sung and will sing forever, —since you breathed the breath of the ocean, and felt its clear ozone living in your veins like an elixir. (. . .) Is not the spell of the sea strong upon you still? (219-220)

The narrator accosts “the reader” and also the newly discovered wanderer within himself. He finds a life’s spark in the eye of the sailor. He then envisions the sailor’s dreams. He hears the winds at the sea and attunes himself to the sleeping rhythm of the sailor that rocks between dreams and half-awakeness: “the Greek sailor, awaking from the vision of winds and waves, may join three fingers of his right hand, after the manner of the Eastern Church, and cross himself, and sleep again in peace” (222). The sailor’s fingers move unconsciously in his dream. Perhaps they are moved by his ancestors, intimate as they were with the sea and the fear of its shifting. The narrator is inspired and synchronized with the Greek sailor whose dreams serve as revelations.⁷ He discovers the source of his inspiration in the sailor’s dreams—it is a wandering spirit of the new commercial age. His *genius loci* is no more attached to one place, but is spontaneously created in the place where he makes his stops—which I call “the spirit of no place.”

The significance of “New Orleans in Wet Weather” turns out to be a search for the narrator’s, or Hearn’s, own *genius loci*—his own “ghost” within. He felt sympathy for the Greek sailor whose wandering spirit was his own. In the “mighty ode of hexameters”

⁷ Hearn believed that past memory manifests itself in dreams, and yet it is only recollected as fear. In an essay “Nightmare-Touch,” *Shadowings* (1900), he writes about his childhood experience of fear in a dream. It is a feeling that cannot be replaced by any concrete images as it is “peculiar,” “intense,” and yet “vague.” He can only explain the phenomenon by assuming that its source lies in distant human experience: “Feelings thus voluminous and dim are super-individual mostly, —feelings inherited, —feelings made within us by the experience of the dead” (235); he imagines that a sense of fear cannot be erased even if one is incarnated into some other creature. “Three Dreams” (12 April 1855), *The Times-Democrat*, includes a Kafkaesque fable about a man who, “haunted by the old Assyrian text,” falls asleep and wakes up to find himself metamorphosed as “some timid, many-limbed, articulated creature with antennæ.” He remembers his former life “as the Arhat remembers preexistences,” and, more importantly, “—fear of shadows and of shapes, —fear of lights and darkness unexplored, —fear of sounds, —fear of vibrations (. . .)”; it is interesting that the “old Assyrian text” links the narrator to dream experience; see *An American Miscellany*, 1, 66.

in the voice of the sea that the Greek sailor still remembers after twenty years might echo the long lost memory of the narrator's early childhood. The first two years of Hearn's life were spent on the island of Leucadia and he must have heard the voices of the wind and sea of the Ionian and the Mediterranean as a background to his Greek mother's lullabies. In his wandering around the city, Hearn saw the magnificent father figures of American political history, Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson. For him, they were voiceless monuments with which he felt no affinity. They make a clear contrast with the Greek sailor he saw at the market. In his "dark eyes" Hearn did find echoes of his ancestors mingled with those of his mother's lullabies. The inspiration of the voices of the sea certainly evoked the long-lost memory of his mother, *la mer*.

"New Orleans in Wet Weather" thus exposes old remnants of the city's past glory—aristocratic affluence and powerful male figures of the North represented by the statues of political figures, though the narrator Hearn regards himself an outsider of such history. He turns away from them, and when he comes to the open port, he is delighted to find a Greek sailor whose open spirit is what he has been looking for. Perhaps, finding a father or his ancestor figure in the Greek sailor, Hearn expunges his biological father in a military uniform. His lost mother then speaks to him through the voices of the sea, and the dreamlike image of the sea, *la mer*, allures him with its "terrible beauty." The sea allures him with its iridescent beauty but it also terrifies him with its mighty power.⁸ In New Orleans, Hearn thus identifies himself with a Greek sailor who dreams of old and survives sea changes. In these dreams, he locates his *genius loci*, or the spirit of his long lost birthplace. They tell stories of old which are

⁸ The phrase "terrible beauty" appears in a letter to Dr. Rudolph Matas (qtd. in Gould 7) in the Second Paper of *The Midsummer Trip to West Indies* (August 1888), *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, in "Of the Eternal Feminine," *Out of East* (1895), and in "The Gothic Horror," *Shadowings*, 1900. Paul Murray comments, "Hearn's anticipation of Yeats' famous phrase seems to have escaped notice up to now" (237). In "Of the Eternal Feminine" Hearn discusses the Western tradition of differentiating certain qualities as opposites, such as masculine and feminine, and how the latter becomes an object of desire for the former; he also surmises that the differentiation does not exist in the Orient, where all is treated as neutral. Hearn shares with many nineteenth-century thinkers the idea of the feminine as an encompassing power of both life and death. Jules Michelet's *Loiseau, La mer* [1861] (Paris E. Flammarion, 1894) is full of various voices, or sounds, of the sea and Michelet speaks of man as a helpless creature on the shore gazing at a magnificent storm. As to women's role in the family and in religious rituals in the ancient patriarchal system, Fustel de Coulanges's *Le Cité de Antique* [*The Ancient City: a Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome*, foreword A. Momigliano and S. C. Humphreys], [1861] (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980) was important for Hearn. The power of the feminine and the notion of the mother was also explored in the late nineteenth century by a Swiss anthropologist, Johann Jakob Bachofen in his *Das Mutterrecht* (1897); see *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right: Selected Writings of J. J. Bachofen*, trans. Ralph Manheim, pre. George Boas and introd. Joseph Campbell (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1967). Hearn's idea of the feminine will be discussed in detail in relation to his Japanese writings in Chapter Five.

about the destiny of the “civilized nomad” in the modern world. Hearn was ready to write his first piece of fiction as a projection of the sailor’s dreams. Yet, trained as a journalist, he was not interested in mere fancy. He was determined to write “a philosophical story,” being both romantic and scientific. Such an attempt by Hearn is the focus of the next chapter.

TWO

Oceanic Reconstruction (1):

Facts into a Dream Vision

Any one who has ever paid a visit to New Orleans probably knows something about those various culinary preparations whose generic name is “Gombo”—compounded of many odds and ends, with the okra-plant, or true gombo for a basis, but also comprising occasionally “lose, zepinard, laitie,” and the other vegetables sold in bunches in the French market. At all events any person who has remained in the city for a season must have become familiar with the nature of “gombo file,” “gombo févi,” and “gombo aux herbes,” or as our colored cook calls it, “gombo zhébes—for she belongs to the older generation of Creole *cuisinières*, and speaks the patois in its primitive purity, without using a single “r.”

Lafcadio Hearn, “Introduction,” *Gombo Zhebes* (1).

1. The Birth of a Story about Creolization

As he sailed down the Mississippi from Cincinnati, Hearn was fascinated by the changing landscape. He felt that the motion of the waves constantly swayed his own point of view, past memories of the place digging into and mixing with his immediate perceptions. By the time he reached New Orleans, he seems to have thought himself equipped with a mobile point of view that allowed him to see things from multiple angles in different shades. Not surprisingly, New Orleans lured him with its cosmopolitan milieu where Creole culture was for him a new discovery. If Hearn’s Cincinnati journalism were to be compared to a black-and-white print, his New Orleans writings would be multicolored with various gradations suggesting multifaceted hybrid Creole culture. New Orleans was an open port that welcomed wanderers from outside as well as foreign products. What is more, its cultural scene was always in flux as peoples and things were constantly coming and going, ever transforming the

surrounding culture and language. Hearn found the port of New Orleans a magnetic and enchanting place with its varieties of skin colors, languages, ethnic groups, and merchandise such as tropical fruit. The vigorous cries of the venders at the French Market were signs of life. The open port and the sea beyond gave Hearn a sense of freedom to write more imaginatively, coloring the unique features of the city with his own vision.

Trained journalist as he was, Hearn was well aware of America's racial, ethnic and linguistic realities. As he was trying to shift his focus from journalism to fiction in order to realize his youthful dream of becoming a prose-poet, Hearn, while in New Orleans, tried to polish his linguistic skills by writing articles and book reviews, and translating French stories and articles. In so doing, he ended up accumulating what we now would refer to as first-hand ethnographic material, especially those writings concerning Creole culture in New Orleans and Louisiana. Old legends, folklore, songs, proverbs, and voodoo superstitions, moreover, provided him with literary inspiration.

The late nineteenth century abounded with "local color" journalists and writers. *Literary New Orleans* (1999), an anthology of writers inspired by New Orleans, included Hearn along with Mark Twain, George Washington Cable, Kate Chopin, and Bret Hart. What makes Hearn unique among these writers is that he was an outsider in the true sense of the word. He was a child of an Irish father and Greek mother, and he held a British passport. It probably did not matter for Hearn that he was not American; rather, his alien status allowed him to identify with other marginalized people in society. He was by no means obsessed with the idea of American identity. In his writings, his narrators themselves identify with fellow New Orleansians as "us": "The season has come at last when strangers may visit us without fear, and experience with unalloyed pleasure the first picturesque old city in North America" (89). Hearn's perspective captures more than the map of the US: he does not demarcate New Orleans in the American South, but squarely in "North America." He in this way addresses his cosmopolitan readers and asks them to place New Orleans in a larger world context. Although other writers in the collection are similarly fascinated by New Orleans' exotic cosmopolitanism, they are more or less occupied with questions of American identity, local color, race, and gender. Hearn's detachment also comes from his anthropological and ethnographical perspective, or, as he himself asserted, a more scientific viewpoint. He consciously collected curious and particular phenomena of local people's daily lives so as to use someday in his fiction.

In the introduction to *Inventing New Orleans* (2001), a collection of Hearn's New

Orleans writings, Frederic Starr regards Hearn as one of the severest judges of the US, and labels him “an outsider’s outsider” (xviii). Hearn was critical of self-complaisant and materialistic white “America,” and his point of view as a non-American made him look at other groups that were repressed in American society—African Americans, Creoles, and European and Asian immigrants. What he was interested in was their rich traditional culture that was different and various. Starr points out: “The late nineteenth century was the age *par excellence* of archaeology and anthropology. It was the time when Heinrich Schliemann could stun the world with his discoveries at Troy, and a painter like Gauguin could introduce his public to remote and primitive peoples. Hearn was fully part of this pan-European movement in the social sciences and arts” (xix). In America, however, such anthropological spirit had not yet impressed many, and Hearn’s curiosity was considered freaky and grotesque. In *Concerning Lafcadio Hearn* (1906), George Gould, an ophthalmologist and Hearn’s one-time friend, made a case study of Hearn’s myopic vision, applying Maxime du Camp’s theory of literary myopia (Murray 311). Hypothesizing that “intellect and especially æsthetics are almost wholly the product of vision,” Gould assumes correspondences between Hearn’s disabled eyesight¹ and his lack of moral sense, or “the morbidities of vision,” and asserts that Hearn “had no mind, or character, to be possessed of loyalty or disloyalty,” and so “created and invented nothing; his stories were always told him by others; at first they were gruesome tales even to horror and disgust” (xi-xiii). Gould indeed had little respect for Hearn’s intellect, because he assumed that Hearn’s weak eyesight was the cause of his abnormality, and thus his tendency to look at “the lurid, the monstrous, the enormous, only hot crime, and sexual passion.” Hearn’s lack of education, according to Gould, is apparent as Hearn hints of no familiarity with great literature such as “the Greek dramatists, Dante, Goethe, Shakespeare” (70).² A Harvard graduate and medical doctor, Gould was exemplary of white American intellectuals of the North with a rigid puritanical morality. The only originality in Hearn, he adds, is his ability to “color” the echoes he captures, and rightly calls him a “chameleon” of “a chromatic voice, a multicoloured echo” (13). Ironically, a “chameleon,” is an apt name for Hearn who ambitiously dreamed of becoming a

¹ Hearn had his left eye badly injured in a game called Giant’s Stride. See Elizabeth Stevenson, *The Grass Lark* (23-25).

² Ironically, Hearn taught these writers in lectures he gave at Tokyo Imperial University. His topics, however, were not limited to classic “great” masters, but included a variety of literature such as *The Kalevala*, folktales, and insect poems going back to the Greek period. See Joan Blythe, “The Enduring Value of Lafcadio Hearn’s Tokyo Lectures” in *Lafcadio Hearn in International Perspectives*.

writer of “all trades” and to write everything in his philosophical prose-poetry.

Hearn was not only interested in Creole culture but also in keeping a record of it, as he feared that some traditional ways were disappearing. Before the founding of the American Folklore Society or any like organization, Hearn worked alone and compiled a Creole dictionary of proverbs and songs published as *Gombo Zhébes*. In the introduction, he expresses his wish that his book would inspire a “society of folklorists” to organize in order to pursue systematically the problems he presented (5). Taking this as a pioneering act in the development of folklore studies, Simon Bronner states that Hearn’s “ethnographic style,” or the mode of his narrative, directs readers’ attention to “both linguistic creolization and cultural hybridization,” and most significantly, points out that “folklore in its essence represents hybridization, and that this process mounts to a racial and cultural development or improvement” (144). An “ethnographic style” then was the most appropriate style for Hearn in order to write a hybrid “multicolored” cultural reality in the changing modern world he witnessed.

In 1890, having finished his first novella *Chita* (1889), Hearn sailed to Martinique and stayed there for two years. This experience culminated in a travelogue, *Two Years in the French West Indies* (1890).³ It received good reviews, but Hearn self-effacingly wrote in a letter: “What they admired, I do not know, for I have no originality. I am but an echo of other people’s stories and experiences, but if I can color this echo with the iridescence of the soap bubble . . . I shall be satisfied” (Qtd. in Murray 313).⁴ Although his response sounds modest, here he seems to refer to his own ability to express in words “the iridescence of the soap bubble.” He ambitiously used Creole languages and local dialects, often without translations, in his text in order to represent the varieties of culture he witnessed. This usage further rendered a sense of untranslatability of foreign culture that could not be assimilated into English. He colorfully described Creole women and their coiffures, observed different religious or supernatural practices, and also subtly made reference to historical upheavals of the past. Although he was interested in science and technology, and believed in their

³ His account of the local culture and Creole language is a precious record of old island life since the 1902 eruption of Mt. Pelée completely destroyed the city of St. Pierre, causing more than 30,000 deaths. Hearn heard the news while in Tokyo.

⁴ The letter is dated “Matsue, Dec. 1890”; see *Letters of Pagan* (Detroit: Robert Bruna Powers, 1933) 88. Earlier in the same year, *Two Years in the French West Indies* received positive reviews. *The New York Times* wrote, “There was no other writer who could have immersed himself in this rigorous Creole life and tell so well about it. Trollope and Froude give you the hard, gritty facts and Lafcadio Hearn the sentiment and poetry of this beautiful island” (9 Jan. 1890; qtd. in Gould 170).

future advancement, he did not share the overconfidence of European and American scholars in human intellect and ability. In short, regardless of the advancement of human civilization, he revered nature, and his experience in Martinique especially amplified his belief that nature was beyond human understanding. Human civilization, he deduced from his experience, was nothing before the mighty power of nature. Fascinated by the constantly shifting surface of the sea, it served as an appropriate metaphor for Hearn to write a story of a Creole life which also manifested an ever changing—destroying and recreating—process of miscegenation and hybridization.

What follows is a discussion of Hearn's two sea stories, *Chita* and "A Living God." In *Chita* he attempts to write a modern story, or a story of creolization and hybridization, and envisions a future ideal through a young girl who grows up by the sea on an island of mixed ethnicity and language. The story was based on the real life event of a great hurricane of 1856 that wiped away coastal islands of Louisiana. Only a baby girl survived in the disaster, and Hearn wrote a story of this young survivor. Hearn regards "creolization," or linguistic, racial and cultural hybridization inevitable in the evolutionary process and envisions in *Chita* an ideal hybrid social community by the sea. Six years later in Japan, he read a news report about a *tsunami* catastrophe that caused more than 20,000 deaths in northern Japan in 1896 and wrote a story based on the catastrophe, "A Living God" (1897). In this story he uses the Japanese word "*tsunami*"⁵ and expresses the unimaginable power of the sea. In his survival story, however, he references the *tsunami* disaster that had happened in 1854. *Chita* and "A Living God" are structured as legends, while still reflective of the contemporary period in which Hearn lived. On both sides of the Pacific, metaphorically speaking, the 1850s were times of seismic change: the US was embroiled in the Civil War while Japan was absorbed with reinstating an imperial government. Although these historical facts are not directly mentioned in Hearn's text, his stories may well serve as modern folkloric allegories and dramatize historical moments that move civilization towards global Creolization in the age of modernity.

In the summer 1884, Hearn, weary of city life, took his first vacation and visited Grande Isle. Grande Isle was then an emerging bathing resort for wealthy New

⁵ The *Oxford English Dictionary* notes a passage from "A Living God" as the first known use of the word.

Orleansians. Nevertheless, it still attracted Hearn as a “romantic” place with islanders whose ancestors were said to have been pirates of Barataria. Life on the island was in contrast to that of New Orleans, which was fast becoming a prosaic modern city. Hearn was inspired and started taking notes, talking to the islanders who soon grew to like him. He visited Grande Isle a few more times, and in the spring of 1886, he decided what to do with the material he gathered on the island. He remembered a story he had heard from George Washington Cable on the evening of 1883 three years prior.⁶ It was a story of a small girl who was discovered alive in her mother’s dead arms after the seismic coastal tide that hit Last Island on 10 August 1856. Elizabeth Stevenson tells Cable’s story as follows:

[Cable] fell to talking of the hurricanes which regularly ravaged the Louisiana coast. He told them of the disaster of 1856 and the horror which seized New Orleans when news came that Ile Dernière, the favorite vacation place of the day, had been swept clean by a storm. Out of a group of summer visitors assembled late and recklessly to dance in the hall of a wooden hotel near the beach, ignoring the accelerating storm, hoping it would pass them by, only one human soul survived. The storm had smashed the hotel and washed the dancers out to sea. The survivor was a child, a little girl. She was found by a fisherman and brought home to his wife. The two lonely, childless people kept her as their own. It was only years later that a Creole hunter recognized the girl from some trinket she was wearing. She was brought back to her proper place in New Orleans society, but she did not love the civilization that had reclaimed her. She rebelled, returned to the coast, married a fisherman and, as far as Hearn knew, lived there still. (*The Glass Lark* 151)⁷

The sea and the airy atmosphere of the story inspired and excited Hearn to the point that he felt that he could write something original. He wrote to a friend in New Orleans: “So I wait for the poet’s pentecost, —the inspiration of nature, the descent of the Tongues of Fire. And I think they will come, when the wild skies brighten, and the sun of the Mexican gulf reappears for his worshippers, —with hymns of wind and sea, and the

⁶ Hearn heard a story about the hurricane from George Washington Cable: the 1856 hurricane completely destroyed Last Island in southern Louisiana. The news was also reported in *The New York Times*; see the article, “1856 Hurricane Completely Destroyed Last Island, Louisiana” (August 22, 1856). 1856 happened to be a presidential election year and slavery was one of the major controversies. Interestingly, it was also the year when the newly elected President Buchanan sent the first consul, Townsend Harris, to Japan.

⁷ See also *Young Hearn* by O. W. Frost, 208.

prayers of birds” (*Newly Discovered Letters* 87).⁸ Although Hearn’s novella is titled after the name of the child, the only survivor of the catastrophe, she does not emerge as the sole heroine for he also perceives leading actors to be what he calls “hymns of the wind and the sea” and “the prayers of birds.” They constantly act on the lives of people regardless of their race and occupation, causing humans to come together or to part, depending on weather changes and even epidemics.⁹ In the actual episode, the child’s identity was discovered because of a trinket, of hers was returned to New Orleans society of which she was formerly a part. In Hearn’s story, she never knows her former life in the city, although toward the end of the story she unsuspectingly meets her biological father who is making his doctor’s rounds on the island. He is dying of yellow fever, still believing that his wife and daughter had died there. The girl grows up ignorant of her biological parents and is named Chita by her foster parents. She naturally assimilates into life in a fishing village of multi-lingual Creoles. The story does not presuppose that a more modern city is a better and safer world than a fishing village; rather, the new environment allows the girl to grow up as a fit multi-lingual and multi-cultural hybrid. Hearn thus ventures to describe the transformation of human civilization by the hand of the great power nature that he sees as something mythical and divine. When he finished writing *Chita*, which had taken him more than a year, he wrote to his friend and musicologist Henry E. Krehbiel (1854-1923)¹⁰:

I have sent on my completed novelette, —an attempt at treatment of modern Southern life in the same spirit of philosophic romance as the “Ghosts” attempted to exemplify, —an effort to reach that something in the reader which they call Soul, God, or the Unknowable, according as the thought harmonizes with Christian, Pantheistic or Spenserian ideas, without conflicting with any. (1887; 14: 28-29)

Hearn called his “novelette” a “philosophic romance” because he wanted to write poetic prose that expressed life’s universal laws. For him, the basis of scientific law was

⁸ The quotation is from a letter to Matas, 8 July 1886; the passage is also quoted in Stevenson, *The Grass Lark*, 152.

⁹ Hearn arrived in New Orleans in January 1878, and in the following spring experienced “the last of the city’s major yellow-fever epidemics” that made him feel as if he were “in a medieval city in plague time” (*The Grass Lark* 83).

¹⁰ Hearn while in Cincinnati became friends with Henry Edward Krehbiel who was a musical critic for *Cincinnati Gazette* from 1874 to 1880.

the evolutionary theory of Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). In New Orleans, he had read Spencer with fascination, and convinced that life's mysteries were sensibly explained by the Spencerean idea of the Unknown, Hearn replaced his faith in the Christian God with scientific reasoning. In his "philosophical romance," therefore, he wanted to render a sense of the unpredictable and unknown as a real life experience, which became the theme for *Chita*. Chita, the name given to the orphaned girl by her foster parents, grows up by the sea. But her story does not result in a family reunion in the manner of a Shakespearean romance such as *Tempest* in which the changing sea brings about the discovery of a lost child, recognition and reconciliation, and subsequently, the restoration of order in society. In Hearn's case, the separated family members will not reunite again; they are left to live on their own in a given environment, although in the text they are mysteriously brought together like ghosts in the deranged mind of the dying father. Instead, the great hurricane in *Chita* destroys a whole region and the old order is not restored. Something new is created—something that is represented by the survival of the girl, Chita. Nature, as Hearn interprets Spencer, is indifferent, but the catastrophe it causes does not result in disastrous annihilation but always effects generations of new life and order.

The sea, Hearn finds, is fearful and ghostly, but at the same time iridescent and beautiful. He wanted to include Spencerian truths about life, but he also wanted to render nature's beauty. *Chita* was criticized for lack of structural coherence in both its characterization and plot development. One favorable review of the time barely pointed out his poetic language and slighted his descriptions of Creole life: "Half descriptive essay half short story . . . a work remarkable for the beauty of the poetical prose, a work only superficially a study of Creole life" (Frost 210). It was only after the rise of post-colonial criticism and Caribbean studies in the 1980's that the novel was remembered, appreciated and reprinted.

In the preface to the 2003 edition of *Chita*, Delia LaBarre calls readers' attention to Hearn's "insights of regeneration, represented by the blending of languages and culture in South Louisiana—the 'creolization' that Hearn experienced himself during his Louisiana decade." She also refers to Hearn's 1878 article, "*Los Criollos*,"¹¹ as "the most reliable place to begin," as it defines the word "Creole" always as a "relative"

¹¹ "Los Criollos" is one of the letters Hearn wrote during his first months in New Orleans as a correspondent to the Cincinnati Commercial, under the nom de plume Ozias Midwinter. It was reprinted in *Inventing New Orleans: Writings of Lafcadio Hearn*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (UP Mississippi, 2001).

term. *Chita*, she finds, reflects “Hearn’s further views on the meaning of this mysterious word that shifts and changes shape in language according to internal and external forces,” and declares:

Chita is the culmination of all Hearn’s studies and writings while in Louisiana and is indeed the quintessential Creole novel, even in its demi-novel form, like the Crescent City shaping itself around a curve of the Mississippi, or a tiny barrier island that bears the brunt of the sea’s wrath, with a stunning tale to relate—if it survives.” (X)

If Hearn’s use of the word “Creole” varies in definition every time it appears, as in *Chita*, the novel then certainly lacks coherence. However, what he aims to create is a new “philosophical romance” in which the transient quality of human life is projected and is best represented by the Creole. A “Creole life” is characterized by constant transformations caused by miscegenation and hybridization of race, language and culture, which Hearn calls “creolization.”¹² Such transformations then serve as a crucial force in the evolutionary process of modern civilization.

Creolization, “Orientalism,” and Evolutionary Theory

Although he witnessed miscegenation between blacks and whites in Cincinnati,¹³ Hearn recognized that this racial intermixing was deeply embedded in Creole culture in New Orleans. Moreover, this culture not only grew out of racial mixing, but also from the mixing of language and various aspects of culture, such as music, stories, and food. Hearn’s interest in Creole culture made him curious about its origins. He wanted to know the very cause of all the diverse phenomena he was witnessing. About a year after his arrival in New Orleans in 1887, in a letter to Henry E. Krehbiel, music editor of the New York *Tribune* whom he had befriended in Cincinnati, Hearn referred to “a charming writer,” George Washington Cable (1844-1925), and wrote that he was

¹² According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the first usage listed is from Hearn’s *Youma*, printed in *Harper’s Magazine* in 1890: “Those extraordinary influences of climate and environment which produce the phenomena of creolization.” See also *Youma, The Writings of Lafcadio Hearn, IV*, 341.

¹³ Hearn attempted to marry a mulatto woman, Matti Alethea Foley (1854-1913). She was a cook at his boarding house and Hearn had an African American priest conduct the ceremony. The marriage caused Hearn to lose his job and eventually made him flee down the Mississippi to New Orleans. As marriage between whites and blacks was illegal in Ohio between 1861 and 1877, Hearn’s marriage was officially unrecognized; see “Matti” in *Koizumi Yamumo Jiten [Koizumu Yakumo Encyclopedica]* 2000).

helping him collect Creole songs for his book (1878; 13: 164). With Cable, Hearn shared the same interest in Creole dialects, songs, and stories. In his pioneering study of American dialect literature, *Strange Talk: the Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age America* (1999), Gavin Jones points out the power of black language inherent in Creole language and culture: “Black language was a powerfully disruptive force because its relation to white English was both generative and undermining. Mixed with white language, black language had produced a distinctive, hybrid southern accent yet had still retained the power of resistance in its ambiguous rhetorical rituals that lay partially beyond white comprehension” (108). Cable’s first novel *The Grandissimes* (1880), a story of an early nineteenth century aristocratic French Creole family, depicts white characters who mix New Orleans black Creole language into their speech, which, Jones argues, despite the novel’s idyllic and “local color” setting, turns out to be particularly unsettling for white Creoles who believed in racial purity. Jones states that some words and pronunciation a white Creole uses are transcribed in Cable’s novel exactly the same way as those of a black Creole, such as in the phrases, “pilgrim fathers of the Mississippi Delta” took “wives and moot-wives from the ill specimens of three races” or “a Creole is a person of mixed blood” (Qtd. in Jones 122-3). In this way Cable makes allusions in his novel to the reality of linguistic as well as racial intermixing with African blood in white Louisiana culture.

Hearn had already pointed out in “Los Criollos” (1877), whose publication preceded Cable’s “Creoles of Louisiana” (1883), that New Orleansians call themselves “Creoles,” whether their ancestors were French, Spanish or African. In other words the term Creole is always fraught with double meaning, suggesting that blacks and whites share the same genesis from Africa (*Occidental Gleanings* 195). The boundary between the white Creole and the black Creole is thus ambiguous. The same can be said of language, or to be more precise, that the language in fact denotes their racial hybridity. As Jones points out, in the above mentioned essay, Cable observes that the white Creole, despite the fact that he believes in his racial and linguistic purity, is “probably seldom aware that his English sparkles with the same pretty corruptions” as the “African-Creole dialect” of French (124). In “Creole Patois” (1885), Hearn terms such a phenomenon “linguistic miscegenation” (*An American Miscellany* 146). The languages Creoles speak, be they English, French, Spanish or African, have mutually influenced one another and have been irreversibly transformed. The African pitch or spirit, as both Hearn and Cable assert, is already internalized in the white Creole language. These writers considered that the African influence was not a contaminating

element but one of creative power, which could be directly felt in orally transmitted literature such as in folktales and songs. Hearn, in fact, researched and collected Creole songs for Cable. However, he was disappointed when he came to know that most songs he collected ultimately were not included in his book. He wrote to Krehbiel:

I was a little disappointed, although I as also much delighted, with parts of Cable's "Grandissimes." He did not follow out his first plan, —as he told me he was going to do, —viz., to scatter about fifty Creole songs through the work, with the music in the shape of notes at the end. There are only a few ditties published; and as the Creole music deals in fractions of tones, Mr. Cable failed to write it properly. He is not enough of a musician, I fancy, for that. (13:220)

Beyond Hearn's assessment, Cable used African-Creole songs without explanation or translation, signifying them as part of an alien culture. He was also keenly aware that these songs could refer to or insinuate the rebellious desire of the ex-slave African-Creoles. A native of Louisiana, who fought the Civil War on the Confederate side, Cable knew the mentality of the white Creole. He was, therefore, "forced to avoid explicit reference to the threat of black insurrection that had dominated Louisiana society since colonial times—a censorship that continued throughout his career" (Jones 129). So while Hearn was upset that Cable did not make use of the songs he had collected for him, this might have been because he was a stranger in the South who did not share Cable's reservation and anxiety. Hearn was fascinated with the power and beauty of the sounds of African origin for what they were.

Although he suffered from an extreme myopia with one nearly one blind eye, Hearn had a keen ear for sounds, especially for foreign phonetic sounds.¹⁴ While in Cincinnati, he was introduced into the realm of world music by a fellow journalist and musicologist Krehbiel. Hearn wrote not only about African American music, but also of Chinese, or Oriental, music. As Cable called him, he was a skillful "French translator and natural adept in research." (Turner 228) He was fascinated by foreign languages and tended to use the original language in his translations and articles in order to create an exotic and alien atmosphere. In *Some Chinese Ghosts* (1887), a translation of Chinese stories from several French sources, he used romanized Chinese words so that he could create not only a sense of foreignness but also impart a musical quality to his

¹⁴ As to Hearn's acoustic perception, see Narihiko Nishi's insightful discussion in *Rafukadio Hahn no Mimi [Lafcadio Hearn's Ears]* 1998.

stories. His publisher, however, did not welcome such creative devices, and Hearn had to fight over the inclusion of Chinese, or non-European, words in the text. In a burst of indignation, Hearn wrote to Krehbiel:

In Promethean agony I write. Roberts Brothers, Boston, have written me that they want to publish “Chinese Ghosts”; but want me to cut out a multitude of Japanese, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Buddhist terms.

Thereupon unto them I dispatched a colossal document of supplication and prayer, —citing Southey, Moore, Flaubert, Edwin Arnold, Gautier, “Hiawatha,” and multitudinous singers and multitudinous songs, and the right of prose poetry, and the supremacy of Form . . . (...)

How shall I sacrifice Orientalism, seeing that this my work was inspired by (fragment of a Greek work) by the Holy Spirit, by the Vast . . . (Probably Blue Soul) of the Universe . . . (1886; 13: 78).¹⁵

In his Chinese stories, phonetically spelled Chinese words added musical overtones to the narrative. Krehbiel, a musicologist and authority on folk music, once took Hearn to listen to Chinese musicians, and Hearn was deeply moved by their strange and melancholic tunes. Although he did not understand their language, the emotion expressed in music, he fully believed, was eloquent enough for him.¹⁶ Foreign words in Hearn's text, therefore, are important elements to his art and are used to contribute to the aesthetic and musical effects of his “prose poetry.” They add lyrical qualities to the text, stimulate the sensory experience of seeing and listening in the act of reading, and remind one of something long lost—which Hearn calls “Orientalism.”

Hearn's usage of “Orientalism,” as it was said in his time, refers to the world beyond Western Europe, including Greece, Egypt, “Small Asia” as well as the Far East, China and Japan. He followed the mid-nineteenth century fad for “Oriental studies” and read Egyptian, Islamic, and Talmudic stories in French translation. Fascinated by these stories, he re-translated them into English and published a small book, *Stray Leaves from Strange Literature* (1884), in which he included stories gathered from “the anvari-soheili, Baitál pachísf, mahabharata, pantchatantra, Gulistan, Talmud, and *Kalevala*.” In other words, works from areas surrounding Western Europe in all directions are included in his collection of “strange” exotic stories, serving as his

¹⁵ *Chinese Ghosts* was dedicated to Krehbiel who had introduced Hearn to Chinese music.

¹⁶ Hearn records his experience in an article for the *Cincinnati Commercial*, “A Romantic Incident at the Musical Club,” (1 Oct. 1877; *An American Miscellany* 1 206).

examples of “Orientalism.” Hearn believed that there could be a common denominator among them, or some essential factor that had originally influenced Western civilization. Moreover, his belief in the original source, or the first cause in literature parallels his understanding of Spencer. These “strange” stories for Hearn were not merely “fantastic metaphysics” originating in the Orient, but they were the means to substantiate what Spencerian evolutionary theory calls the ultimate “eternal reopening of the Great Doubt” (To Krehbiel, 1886; 13:371).

“Orientalism” is a purely aesthetic and sensuous concept for Hearn. While the term the present day readers is associated with an oppressive, colonialist image of the Orient in the sense of Edward Said’s late 20th century theorizing, for Hearn it etymologically refers to a place of origins, of the rising sun. It is an image full of light and tropical air. He wrote to Gould from Martinique in 1888: “When you think of tropical Nature as cruel and splendid, like a leopard, I fancy the Orient, which is tropical largely, dominates the idea.” Hearn’s “tropics” is not devoid of the dark powers of “the mysterious Nature” but is “rich in death as in life” (October 1888; 14:62). The Orient, therefore, lies where the life-source, or the power of “Nature” is both “cruel and splendid.” Hearn thus overlays his concept of “Orient-tropics” with the image of a primordial wholeness of nature, which is constantly in flux, ever creating and recreating different patterns of colors and shapes. In New Orleans, he came to believe that the Creole culture followed the natural transformative pattern of nature, which could be also termed an evolutionary process after Spencer’s conceptualization. As Hearn witnessed the varieties of Creole culture, racially mixed colors of people’s skins, their languages, and their lifestyles, and simultaneously reading Spenser’s philosophy at the same time, he came to believe that creolization, or the miscegenation and hybridization of race and language, would be an inevitable cause and effect of the process of human evolution. Both Cable and Hearn saw that African traits, which white purists had rejected as a sign of contamination, were in fact the essential source of creative power in Creole culture.

Chita, the story that Cable told Hearn, foregrounds the lives of Creoles who live on the island close to nature. Through them, Hearn portrays a story of evolutionary transformations that is heavily symbolized by the ever-changing modes of the sea. In the above mentioned letter to Gould, Hearn also comments on how Western civilization advanced by drawing “a sharp distinction between moral and physical sensibilities” and by “placing mind and reason over body and feelings.” Such a civilization, Hearn believed, would prove to counter development as it undermined inborn instinct and

sensitivity toward the power of nature that is both terrifying and beautiful. An admirer of the physical beauty represented in Greek art, Hearn considered that sensation (sensory experience) preceded emotion (spiritual experience) and that sentimental education was necessary in the early stage of human growth. Similarly, he assumed that the perfect evolution of “physical sensitiveness” would lead to “moral feelings,” or “the sensitiveness of perception of suffering in others.” He imagined, in the future, that “egotism,” would turn into “altruism,” that is “a sort of double reflex action of egotism,” through experiences of pain and suffering. Spencerian evolutionary theory, as Hearn interprets it, is ultimately directed towards such a selfless state of civilization. As this plays out in *Chita*, the hurricane deprives a white Creole girl of her city-bred parents and her future education as a Southern Belle, but it led her to experience growing up in a rural, unaffected world. Her education began instead with direct exposure to nature, providing her with exposure to both sensibility and physicality—the very elements necessary for survival and future growth.

2. *Chita* (1890) —an Oceanic Human Comedy

Chita: A Memory of Last Island has three sections: “The Legend of L’Ile Dernière,” “Out of the Sea’s Strength,” and “The Shadow of the Tide.” The first section begins with the narrator traveling by boat to Grand Isle and hearing a story related to another island called L’Ile Dernière. As the section titles of this text suggest, “the legend,” commonly understood as a story of heroic people worth remembering, is contextualized within a larger and more abstract frame of “the Sea.” These heroic legends, thereby, merely read as chance incidents in the vagaries of the sea, or nature. The subjectivity of the anonymous narrator is minimized in order to let the panoramic vision of the seascape foreground the narrative. In fact, the whole narrative unfolds as if it were taking place in the narrator’s visionary mind, half asleep, half awake, rocked by the sailor’s story as well as the waves of the sea. The novella eventually tells of the sole survivor, a child, of a hurricane.

The first section “The Legend of L’Ile Dernière” begins with the narrator’s voyage southward by boat to an island off the coast of New Orleans. The trip is depicted as if he were crossing the Acheron to the other side of the world, to Hades. When the civilized New Orleansians’ “bathing resort,” Grande Isle, comes into view, the narrator thinks of another island, Last Island, which used to be “the most fashionable watering-place of the aristocratic South” (8).¹⁷ Last Island is now deserted and the narrator contemplates such transformations of the land over time: “Forever the yellow Mississippi strives to build; forever the sea struggles to destroy; —and amid their eternal strife all the islands and the promontories change shape, more slowly, but not less fantastically, than clouds of heaven” (10). In the middle of the journey, the narrator’s companion starts to tell a story as if prompted by meteorological changes to the air with “the coming of the storm,” or as if possessed by the voice of the sea that echoes in the mind of the storyteller. This story recounts the great tidal wave that consumed Last Island on 10 August 1856, and the narrator is immediately taken in by the magical quality of the sailor’s voice:

(. . .) there flashed back to me recollection of a singular Breton fancy: that the Voice of the Sea is never one voice, but a tumult of many voices—voices of

¹⁷ *Chita* was first published in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* in 1888. All quotations derive from *Chita* (2003) edited by Delia LaBarre.

drowned men, —the muttering of multitudinous dead, —the moaning of innumerable ghosts, all rising, to rage against the living, at the great Witch-call of storms (12).¹⁸

His thoughts rolls on:

There is a something unutterable in this bright Gulf-air that compels awe, —something vital, something holy, something pantheistic: and reverentially the mind asks itself if what the eye beholds is not the *Πνευμα*¹⁹ indeed, the Infinite Breath, the Divine Ghost, the great Blue Soul of The Unknown. (. . .) Then slowly, caressingly, irresistibly, the witchery of the Infinite grows upon you: out of Time and Space you begin to dream with open eyes, --to drift into delicious oblivion of facts, —to forget the past, the present, the substantial, —to comprehend nothing but the existence of that infinite Blue Ghost as something into which you would wish to melt utterly away forever . . . (12-13).

The “bright Gulf-air” is the breath of the spirit, and the Greek word *pneuma*, rendered in Greek letters, adds to the hieroglyphic-like mystery of the word as well as a sense of a voyage back toward Greece where Western civilization is said to have originated. The “mind” and the “eye” of the narrator, as if having gained their own agency, proceed with the narrative overtaking “the narrator” who started the novelette. The “mind” and “eye” mediate and translate the voice of *pneuma*, or “the Infinite Breath, the Divine Ghost, the great Blue Soul of The Unknown,” which speaks of the past memory of both the dead and the living. Hearn so contrives a stream of narrative that resembles the sea in which the great reservoir of human memory ebbs and flows.

The second section, “Out of the Sea's Strength,” unfolds as a story about an infant girl who survives the great wave, protected by the arms of her dead mother. She is rescued and adopted by two islanders, Feliu Viosca, a brave Spanish fisherman, and Carmen, his pious Catalan wife from Barcelona. The voice of the “*pneuma*” further carries on its story and projects Carmen's dream. It is as if the storm has stirred up the buried memories and unfulfilled wishes in Carmen's unconscious mind. On the night of the storm, Carmen, who has lost her only child Chita, dreams of a magnificent Virgin placing a child in her arms. For Carmen, therefore, the arrival of the child is not a

¹⁸ All ellipses are Hearn's. My omissions hereafter are indicated by parentheses.

¹⁹ The word was originally spelled in Greek, but it was translated as “Pneuma” in the 2003 edition. I changed the word back in the text quoted here to demonstrate Hearn's intention to convey a sense of something foreign, ancient, and sacred.

chance occurrence but a gift from the Virgin, and she devotedly takes care of the child whom she names Chita after her lost daughter. Although the little white Creole girl from New Orleans first does not comprehend any of the languages Feliu, Carmen, or any other islanders speak, she soon learns their languages. At first she only responds to a man, Laroussel, who speaks New Orleans Creole patois, familiar to the girl as a language from her nursery world. The recognizable language makes her heart melt: “Her eyes, too, seemed to be all for him —to return his scrutiny with a sort of vague pleasure, a half-savage confidence. . . . Was it the first embryonic feeling of race-affinity quickening in the little brain? —some intuitive, inexplicable sense of kindred?” Laroussel speaks to her in Gumbo, a Louisiana Creole dialect, and she tells him that her name is Lili, her mother Adèle and her father Julien (54), but she eventually forgets her name and grows up as Chita, a daughter of her foster parents.

As if cued by the mention of the girl’s father’s name Julien, the narrative jumps to Julien’s inner thoughts. In this novelette the characters’ thoughts and remembrances are what link the narration, and so the naming of the child’s father foregrounds his thoughts in the next section. These passages mimic the sea that appears to change suddenly, but is in fact responding to metrological or seismic motion of the planet. In Hearn’s stream of consciousness method, associations occur within the collective mind of the human race. The narrative projects dreamy thoughts that haunt Julien, and in his brooding it is revealed how the disastrous tide deprived him of his beloved wife and child. Then, to the readers’ surprise, his memory sheds light on Laroussel, his old friend and rival. The affinity the child felt for Laroussel is then explained by the realization of his already being extant in her father’s memory. Julien and Laroussel were comrades both in their romantic love and on the battlefield. At the end of the narrative in Julien’s deranged dying mind, Laroussel appears again: Julien remembers, in his half-conscious mind, his chance meeting with Laroussel at Chancellorsville during the Civil War and Laroussel’s unfinished story about the Creole girl who was saved after the great tide. Thus Julien never knew that his own child was the girl his friend had met. In fact, he even saw her on his chance visit to Last Island eleven years after the disastrous tide but never imagines that she might be his daughter. The girl resembles his dead wife and has a birthmark in the same spot as his daughter Lili, but Julien, even as a trained scientist and physician, overlooks it as an identifying mark.

Julien ponders: “After all, what a mistake he might have made! Were not Nature’s coincidences more wonderful than fiction?” (103). He maintains his position as a scientist who believes in “Nature’s coincidences” rather than interpreting them as signs

of unknown connections, which he calls “fiction.” Nonetheless, the narrative unites his thoughts with his related family members, including Chita’s foster mother. Julien in his delirium calls out for his dead wife, “*Chéri*,” but his cry is lost in Carmen’s own voice and the sound of the sea:

All the dwelling quivered with the mighty whisper.

Outside, the great oaks were trembling to their roots; —all the shore shook and blanched before the calling of the sea.

And Carmen, kneeling at the feet of the dead cried out, alone in the night:
—“*¡O Jesus misericordioso!—¡tened compasión de èl!*” (60)²⁰

The voices of the dead and the living resonate together with those of the air, the land, and the sea, creating a cacophony. A human voice, regardless of the language it may speak, is part of nature’s voices in Hearn’s scheme. The dying thoughts of the white Creole male and the prayer of the brown female Catalan Creole merge into the surrounding vibrations of nature.

All voices, therefore, resound together in the world of *Chita* in a polyphonic manner and are not assimilated into one all-knowing voice like that of an omniscient narrator. At the outset of the novelette, as mentioned above, when the narrator’s voyage is midway, the sailor suddenly begins a story as if “inspired” by the atmospheric sea change. His voice is polyphonic, representing the idea of many voices:

And as I listened to him, listening also to the clamoring of the coast, there flashed back to me recollection of a singular Breton fancy: that the Voice of the Sea is never one voice, but a tumult of many voices—voices of drowned men,—the muttering of multitudinous dead,—the moaning of innumerable ghosts, all rising, to rage against the living, at the great Witchcall of storms. . . . (83)

The Greek term “Pneuma” embraces “a singular Breton fancy,” as they share the same source of narrative—that is the story of the sea in which past memories of life and death mingle together. Ever since Greek times, the human race has launched into the sea of life, and thus creolization, or miscegenation and hybridization of race, language and culture, began. The sailor’s voice and his story reveal such truths to the narrator. It is easy enough to conclude that the voices of the past mingle as one polyphonic voice, but as in Hearn’s story, if it also includes the voices of the black and colored races, it could

²⁰ “Oh merciful Jesus!—you had compassion for him!” (Chita Ed. LaBarre 60).

be a different story. As discussed in the previous section, both Hearn and Cable believed in the reality of creolization and hybridization, and further more, they believed that it is the very creolization and power of black language that gave their native English its source of creative power. Cable, however, did not pursue this theme as Hearn did. An editor at the *Times-Democrat* wrote to Cable: “You can form no idea of how bitter the feeling is against you, as bitter as it used to be against Garrison & men of his way of thinking in antebellum times.” Moreover, the editor of *Picayune* told him that he feared intermarriage and believed the Negro incapable of civilized government, although he added that the Negro should have better treatment and that public status should not be on the basis of color (Turner 198). Cable in fact left Louisiana to try writing in the North.²¹ Hearn’s *Chita* might have narrowly escaped such criticism because of the absence of African slaves on the island, although Hearn was well aware that there existed independent island countries of ex-African slaves in the Caribbean.²² A condition that is free from the color line and racial prejudice was crucial for the white Creole girl to begin a liberated education in order to embrace the power of nature and its creative power.

In *Chita*, therefore, the point of view of the narrative shifts frequently, and while the story seems to lack coherent logic, this narrative device allows for unexpected and uninviting outcomes from life and how abruptly meetings and partings take place in life. *Chita* will never remember that she was once called Lili, nor that the kind white doctor was her biological father. The only truth is that she is growing up as a beloved child of creolization and hybridization generated by mother nature, “*la mer*.” Hearn’s narrative then reads as if it is a record of various verbatim accounts of the history of the hurricane, but their experiences are shared in the memory of the human race.

The Voice of the Infinite Blue

Chita ends with the death of Julien who contracts malaria during his visit to Last

²¹ It was originally Cable who was offered an opportunity to go to Martinique to write about Creole culture, but he passed it on to Hearn. Cable was ready at this point to separate from what he viewed as parochial Southern literary culture.

²² The Republic of Haiti won its independence from France in 1804 and Dominican Republic from Haiti in 1844. In *Youma*, Hearn lets one of the characters mention about a free island country for black Creoles as an ultimate place to escape.

Island. In his dying, delirious mind, fragments of past memory surge up one after another. He sees his wife Adèle, daughter Lili, and a dear friend and rival Laroussel. They seem to float among the waves that had once swallowed the whole resort town on Last Island. Although a family reunion is never realized in the novelette, all his dear ones are together in his dying unconscious mind:

Weirdly the past became confounded with the present: impressions of sight and of sound interlinked in fantastic affinity, —the face of Chita Viosca, and the murmur of the rising storm. Then flickers of spectral lightning passed through his eyes, through his brain, with every throb of the burning arteries; then utter darkness came, —a darkness that surged and moaned, as the circumfluence of a shadowed sea. And through and over the moaning pealed one multitudinous human cry, one hideous interblending of shoutings and shriekings. . . . A woman's hand was locked in his own “Tighter,” he muttered, “tighter still, darling! hold as long as you can!” It was the tenth night of August, eighteen hundred and fifty-six. . . . (. . .) Out of the darkness into—such a light! An azure haze! Ah! —the delicious frost! . . . All the streets were filled with the sweet blue mist. . . . Voiceless the City and white; —crooked and weed-grown its narrow ways! . . . (108)

The ending of the novelette corresponds to the beginning where the narrator hears the “Voices” of the sea: “the Voice of the Sea is never one voice, but a tumult of many voices—voices of drowned men, —the muttering of multitudinous dead, —the moaning of innumerable ghosts, all rising, to rage against the living, at the great Witch call of storms. . . .” (12). The Sea holds on to the cries and memories of the dead. On his deathbed, Julien hears those “Voices” and death calls out so clearly even though he himself had not been with his family in the 1856 tidal calamity. The sea is the reservoir of the memories of the dead, and one’s mind, when freed of the fetters of social restrictions, can commune with these ghostly voices. Julien's delirious mind projects a vision of the “infinite Blue Ghost,” the “azure haze” and “the sweet blue mist,” and the narrative suggests that his voice is merging into the blueness of the sea in which all the voices of the dead echo. He “moaned, sobbed, cried like a child, —talked wildly at intervals in French, in English, in Spanish,” revealing at once his Creole identity in his unconscious (106). *Chita* then ends with Carmen's prayer in Spanish for the dying man whom she hardly knows. Her prayer becomes one with the “*pneuma*,” the voice of the sea, into which all human voices, living or dead, merge.

Not every dying man, however, would hear the voices of the sea as Julien does. Hearn deliberately depicts Julien as an ideal humanist of the modern day who has both studied science and read poetry. He is a man who has experienced pain in the Civil War and grief from losing both his wife and child in an unexpected natural disaster. He then has humbly devoted his life to his calling as a doctor. Such a life, Hearn suggests, has purged Julien's selfish ego and diverted his attention from materialistic pursuit in the city. Eleven years of meditative reading of poetry seems to have prepared him for his final journey to Last Island. On the boat, he responds to the "passion, "power," and "truth" in an unknown ballad sung by an Italian fisherman, and sympathizes with the rhythms of the "Infinite Breath" of the sea and air. The simple meal on the boat of "delicious yellow macaroni, flavored with goats' cheese (. . .) and rich black coffee" filled Julien with "Oriental fragrance and thickness." It was like a voyage through the Mediterranean heading back to the origin, the Orient. He feels fresh and different:

Then the vast sweetness of that violet night entered into his blood, —filled him with that awful joy, so near akin to sadness, which the sense of the Infinite brings, —when one feels the poetry of the Most Ancient and Most Excellent of Poets, and then is smitten at once with the contrast-thought of the sickliness and selfishness of man, —of the blindness and brutality of cities, where into the divine blue light never purely comes, wherefrom the gates of heaven are walled away, and the sanctification of the Silences is forever unknown. . . . (97)

Aided by his poetic imagination, which he had cultivated by reading "the Most Ancient and Most Excellent of Poets," Julien feels affinity with the mythic, old "Oriental" world rather than with the modern materialistic world of mammonism. He approaches the "sense of the Infinite" in the "divine blue light." He is a knowledgeable doctor with a spirit of self-sacrifice. The loss of his wife and daughter has made him feel the mystery of life that lies beyond rational understanding. The sense of reverence he feels toward the spirit of nature grants him access to the ghostly vision of the world of the dead. Julien's thoughts become part of the ocean's vast "divine blue light" of the Unknown.

In contrast to Julien's self-disciplined, moral education, Chita grows up by the sea as nature's child. She is free from the limitations of a girl's education in the city, and learns what it means to live in nature. Nature instead provides her with a kind of sentimental education: "Unknowingly she came to know the immemorial sympathy of the mind with the Soul of the World" and "—even without knowing it, the weight of the Silences" (82). The process, however, is not easy since she already has memories of

her nursery world with her black nurse, white Creole parents, and her family doctor. For example, Chita remembers “old Doctor de Coulanges” because his “bearded gray face” resembled a portrayal of God illustrated in the book she had. This “idea of God” that is anthropomorphized in the image of the kind doctor is significantly transformed. However, the image of the bearded face does not fade from her thoughts due to a phenomenon that “fantastically blended with the larger and vaguer notion of something that filled the world and reached to the stars, —something diaphanous and incomprehensible like the invisible air, omnipresent and everlasting like the high blue of heaven. . . .” (77).

Chita’s invocation of the name “de Coulanges” should not be overlooked. As an admirer of *La Cité antique* (1864) by Fustel De Coulanges, Hearn must have deliberately used this otherwise more uncommon name. After reading Coulanges’ book, he wrote to Krehbiel how fascinated he was by discovering that the “Roman and Greek tongues” were derivations of “Sanskrit.” This testified to his hypothesis that all languages can be traced back to one source language in the Orient. The evolutionary and transformational law of nature, he concluded, controls all living creatures not only in physical form but also in all other metaphysical aspects of life, including language, perception, and consciousness.²³ The “bearded gray face” of the Christian God, therefore, is not the ultimate creator of the world; there is still a larger encircling presence of, to use Spencer’s term, the “Unknown,” that controls all. Just as De Coulange in his book examines the development of religion as a structuring force in society from the Greek to Roman periods, Hearn traces the development of the young girl’s religious sentiment in *Chita*. As she grows up among people who also live with old superstitions and legends, her initial conceptualization of the “bearded gray face” as an anthropomorphic and pale-faced God figure evolves into a pantheistic and atmospheric presence of “the great Blue Soul of The Unknown” (12). Chita remembers the illustrated image of the Christian God, but her humanized image of God the Almighty is replaced with the mighty powers of Nature as “The Unknown.”

In another letter Hearn wrote in 1894, he referred to himself as “agnostic, atheist, anything theologians like to call,” yet “still profoundly religious in a vague way.” At base he was unable to ignore the question of a “religious sense.” He felt that a religious

²³ See Hearn’s letter to Krehbiel (Life and Letters 1 202); later in Japan he also wrote to Bisland (13 March 1894), “The great beauty of De Coulanges’s work, ‘La Cité Antique,’ is perhaps in illustrating the tyranny of antique life. No Greek of the golden Greek prime ever enjoyed so much as the faintest sense of modern civic freedom. Even the Gods were not free.” (*The Japanese Letters of Lafcadio Hearn*, ed. Elizabeth Bisland 283).

consciousness forms the basis for humans to develop their insight and sensibility. Concerned about children's education, he says: "It will be a very ugly world when the religious sense is dead in all children. For it is the poetry of the young, that should colour all after-thought, —or at least render cosmic emotions possible later on" (16 February 1894, *Japanese Letters* 250). Hearn fears that modern civilization will narrow experience to a finite materialistic world. The "religious sense," which he rephrases as "poetry," prepares children for understanding beyond the material world, or the infinite vastness of the universe.²⁴ Hearn sets Chita in an ideal environment where multiple languages are spoken and different religious practices are observed. He lets her encounter wild nature with which she naturally develops an affinity. She responds to the blueness of the sea and the sky and feels "the melancholy wrought by [the sea's] moods of gray" and "days of windy joy, hours of transfigured light" (758). Although at the time female sensitivity was generally considered delicate, passive, and as yet intellectually weak, Hearn's female child demonstrates open-mindedness, flexibility, adaptability and strength. She does not perish in the storm, which demonstrates her physical endurance and her will to survive. It is not that she was chosen, for instance, by God, but that the life force in her was stronger than others. From her mother's dead arms, she was removed to be embraced anew by the waves of the sea and later by the arms of the "brown" faced Spanish Creole, Carmen. Lili becomes Chita, named after Carmen's dead child, who, Carmen believes, was brought back by the Black Virgin from the depths of the sea. Faith can be effective when it is practiced with reverence by a humble human and not when it is based on a single domineering God figure who declares what is good and what is wrong. In the multi-colored Creole world, all are equally given life but are also equally vulnerable to the capricious metrological changes of the sea and the sky.

Chita grows up strong and healthy as "the strength of the sea had entered into her; the sharp breath of the sea renewed and brightened her young blood" (86). She is happily freed from the social mores of the white Creole world in New Orleans that would have fashioned her into a Southern Belle, sheltered and confined. In her new life on the island, Chita runs jubilantly following the moon and swims in the sea, unlike before when she had never been "allowed to play so much in the sun" (73). As her

²⁴ In a letter to Henry Watkin (1824-1910), a printer and cooperative socialist in Cincinnati to whom Hearn wrote from New York in 1887, he refers to his "God" as follows: "When I write God, of course I mean only the World-Soul, the mighty and sweetest life of Nature, the great Blue Ghost, the Holy Ghost which fills planets and hearts with beauty" (*Letters from the Raven* 85).

foster mother notices, Chita also reveals a bud of racial prejudice. She first called Carmen's "odd little Virgin with an Indian face," "a *negra!*" (72). Feliu had brought the figure back from his Mexican voyages to present to his wife, a "brown" woman from Barcelona.²⁵ Hearn must have known of black Virgins in Europe as they had been worshipped since medieval times in Mediterranean countries. Although their origins remain unknown, it is said that the figure is a hybrid of a pagan earth goddess and the Christian Madonna. For Hearn to insert a black Virgin from Mexico into his story suggests some belief in a black dimension already imbedded in the idea of the eternal Mother, signifying the power of life-giving and life-destroying earth. Carmen's faith in the Black Virgin changes Chita's perspective: hearing Carmen's story about the Virgin, Chita begins to see "something very wonderful about the little figurine" and regards it "as an object mysterious and holy" (72).

In *Chita* the importance of early education is emphasized. Hearn knew that at an early age children of white Creole families held no prejudice against their black nurses, learning their patois and singing their songs. These children inevitably grew up bilingual, but the inferior tongue of patois was eventually repressed in white Creole society.²⁶ Hearn imagines what would happen to these children, if they were allowed the freedom to grow up multi-lingual. The habits that Chita had acquired from her New Orleans education are described as "little eccentricities." In other words, they are nothing but different ways of doing things.

And, one by one, most of Chita's little eccentricities were gradually eliminated from her developing life and thought. More rapidly than ordinary children, because singularly intelligent, she learned to adapt herself to all the chances of her new environment, —retaining only that indescribable something which to an experienced eye tell of her hereditary refinement of habit and of mind: —a natural grace, a thorough-bread ease and elegance of movement, a quickness and delicacy of perception. (72-3)

²⁵ The use of Mexico may refer to the ongoing combative relationship between the US and Spain in the mid nineteenth century. Mexico, having won independence from Spain in 1821, annexed California to the US as compensation for the Mexican-American War (1846-48).

²⁶ Alfred Mercier in *Étude sur la langue créole en Louisiane* (1880), the earliest essay on Louisiana Creole French, describes how children stop speaking "the dialect of the negroes": "All the white little ones of French origin, in Louisiana, have spoken this patois, concurrently with French; there are also among us those who have exclusively made use of the dialect of the negroes to the age of 10 or 12 years; I am one of those: I remember the reward presented to me on the day when I agreed with my parents not to speak to them in anything other than French in the future" (Qtd. Jones 115).

While Chita soon adapts to her new environment,, in order to survive in nature, she also has to learn to fear it. Once she did not heed Carmen's warning about a certain forbidden place of "a Dead Man," dared to go there, and "received a terrible lesson, —a lasting lesson, —which taught her the value of obedience" (74). The place proved to be the home of a large, poisonous snake whose "brown death's-head, with its empty eyes, and its nightmare-smile" scared Chita to death (74). Carmen also uses stories to teach Chita fear and obedience. Indeed, Hearn emphasizes the significance of such stories and songs in childhood education, especially in the development of imagination and sensitivity. In short, Hearn does not cast Chita an "ordinary" child. Her "hereditary refinement of habit and of mind" and her hybrid Creole education transform her into an exceptionally sensitive and strong child.

The "refinement" Hearn speaks of does not belong to a modern life of sophistication in the city, but naturally to the fundamental goodness of the ancient golden age of civilization, when people possessed "a natural grace," an "ease and elegance of movement," as well as acute "perception." In other words, Hearn imagines that the refined traits of ancient Greek culture are inherited, or to use a Jungian term, live within the collective unconscious. When transplanted to the soil of the free-floating hybrid Creole culture on Last Island, these hereditary traits in Chita sprout and blossom. The kind of segregated white Creole culture in New Orleans would have only undermined the sensibility to perceive the foreign and accept the hybrid nature of her own being. Indeed, as a child, she already had a double identity: Lulu, as her parents called her (being a little white girl), and Zouzoune, as her black nurse called her (being a little Creole girl). Were she to have grown up in the city, her Creole identity would have been soon denied and repressed: "the little ones were indulged in the habit of talking the patois; . . . after a certain age their mispronunciation would be made fun of in order to accustom them to abandon the idiom of the slave-nurses, and to speak only French" (57). Chita thus was given double identity speaking both "the *patois*" and "*gumbo*," a mixed language of the whites and the blacks. For Hearn, such hybridization of languages²⁷ testifies to the transformative quality of civilization's evolutionary process.²⁸

²⁷ He terms miscegenation and hybridization "creolization," which was probably first used by Hearn. See the first entry listed in the *OED*, originating from Hearn's *Youma* printed in *Harper's Magazine*. Feb. 416/1.

²⁸ Hearn obviously touches on the very sensitive issue of the race. By making his story one of a fairy-like survival story told through impressive and colorful descriptions of nature and exotic images of Creole culture, he seems to have escaped criticism at the time.

When Chita's biological father Julien falls ill during his doctor's rounds around the islands, Chita's foster parents take care of him. Chita meets him again for the first, and last, time. She speaks in Creole, evidently growing up in a mixed culture with the speech of "a *baragouin*.":

—"*M'sieu-leDecteur, maman d'mande si vous n'avez besoin d'que'que chose?*" . . . She spoke the rude French of the fishing villages, where the language lives chiefly as a *baragouin*, mingled often with words and forms belonging to many other tongues. She wore a loose-falling dress of some light stuff, steel-gray in color; --boys' shoes were on her feet. (100)²⁹

Primitive as she may have appeared to Julien in her "boys' shoes," which also indicate that she is ready to run like a boy, her facial features and her graceful movements remind him of his beloved wife Adèle. Thus, while Chita grows up as a Creole girl who speaks "a *baragouin*," she is depicted as mythical: her "boys" shoes could refer to the Greek god Hermes, and her movement is comparable to the Greek goddess Nike, the Winged Victory,³⁰ also known to be clad in "a loose-falling dress of some light stuff." In mixed language Chita addresses Julien, who even though he is feverish and fatally ill, is presented as Hearn's ideal Greek seafarer. In his last dream in his delirium resound the voices of ghosts in different languages. A Creole experience, or a multi-lingual and cultural education, therefore, opens channels for other voices to be heard. In one's daily life, however, these channels are controlled by the conscious mind. It is only when they lose control, as in the mind of dying Julien, that the world of dreams and the past merge, mixing memories and voices.

Based on the true story of an tragedy at sea in which a single child survived, Hearn wrote his "philosophical romance" that projects his Spencerean view of the process of creolization and hybridization an evolutionary truth. Given Hearn addresses intermixing with African Americans, his story could have easily created controversy over the question of the race. But by crafting his narrative as a "romance" about the survival of a white child, he perhaps tried to express his own understanding of

²⁹ Chita's words are translated as "Doctor, sir, mamma asks if there isn't something you need?" "*Baragouin*" means "crude spoken language" (see notes by LaBarre to Chita 100).

³⁰ The Winged Victory Nike of Samothrace was discovered in 1863, restored, and placed at the top of Daru staircase at the *Louvre* in 1884. The image seems to have been popular and there is a reference to "Victory" in Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour."

Spencerian “philosophy.”³¹ Hearn sees the entire society becoming creolized, or to apply Mary Louis Platt’s conceptualization of transculturation, becoming “a contact zone” in itself.³² Although Hearn’s readers were not yet primed to accept it, creolization for Hearn was a simple fact, a certain shift.

“True Realism” and a Hybrid Narrative

A contemporary of major nineteenth-century realistfiction writers, Hearn expressed his critical view of “realism” in American literature.³³ In his 1879 article “Extremes of Mental Culture,” referring to a contemporary report on the suicides of poverty-stricken young writers, Hearn describes how their visionary minds made them too sensitive to human sorrow to stay engaged in secular daily life. Hearn’s point is that realism and naturalism only focus on the dry, distressed aspects of life in modern society and that idealism is dismissed as unrealistic. He argues that “realism and idealism” in contrast were not clearly distinguished in ancient Greek culture whereas his fellow writers have mistakenly decided that one represents the truth and the other mere fancy. Thus, a young writer is obliged to choose one or the other, even though the

³¹ As discussed earlier, George Washington Cable dared describe the hybrid origin of white Creoles in Louisiana. In *The Grandissimes*, he writes, “pilgrims fathers of the Mississippi Delta” have taken “wives and moot-wives from the ill specimens of three races” (Qtd. Jones 123). The “three races” here refer to Indians, Africans, and French. Jones points out that Cable was aware of “the pervasiveness of hybrid modes—whether genealogical, linguistic, or musical—throughout white Louisiana culture.” It is not surprising that the white Creoles denounced him for having “maliciously caricatured . . . and satirized” their pure traditions (Jones 123). An Edinburgh physician Robert Knox in *The Races of Man* (1850) wrote that “nature produces no mules; no hybrids, neither in man nor animals” and that hybridization would lead to race extinction; in turn, Ralph Waldo Emerson approvingly wrote, “A child blends in his face the faces of both parents and some feature from every ancestor whose face hangs on the wall. The best nations are those most widely related; and navigation, as effecting a world-wide mixture, is the most potent advancer of civilizations” (Qtd. Christopher Hanlon, “‘The Old Race are All Gone’: Transatlantic Bloodlines and English Trains” 15).

³² See Mary Louise Platt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992).

³³ In his summary of leading magazines for January 1874, Hearn gave special attention to “The Last of the Valerii” for its fantastic and unreal experience of a realist narrator (*Atlantic Monthly*, January 1874), an early story by Henry James before he was well known (ref in Mordell’s “Introduction” *An American Miscellany* xvi). In his essay “Realistic Fiction,” 10 September 1882, Hearn defines “realism” by saying that it is “the description of things as they are, rather than as we would wish them to be,” and names “Henry James, Jr.” as “[a] pure and talented writer of realistic fiction as the English century has produced” (*Essays on American Literature* 100). Here, Hearn proposes James as one of the realists who is unable to convey a sense of either invisible presence or idealistic vision. Although he often pairs James and Howells as representatives of realistic fiction, however, he directs his criticism more toward Howells. In one of his lectures at Tokyo University in the late 1890s, Hearn still maintains his initial inclination toward James and introduces him to his Japanese students as a writer of “psychological art” comparable to “Daudet or Bourget.” Being “capable of an astonishing variety of work,” James is “a moral fabulist” in the way that he takes his reader “out of the known world of fact into the unknown world of psychological fact” (qtd. in Yu, *An Ape of Gods* 130).

fact remains that they do not have a choice and must pursue their careers as “realist[s]” in a money-conscious, materialist world. They give up being “idealists,” which in time leads them to give up all hope and take their own lives (“Extremes of Mental Culture,” 24 March 1879, *Occidental Gleanings* 2 5). In his later 1886 - 1887 articles, Hearn continues to attack the popularized notion of “realism” as “false realism,” especially the kind represented by William Dean Howells. Hearn contends that the “realism” of Howells “suppress[es] . . . all emotion, all enthusiasm, all veritably natural feelings” and that his morality is “limited to Sunday-school standards.” He argues further that “Mr. Howells' dogmas about Love and Duty as motives in novel-writing” reflect the “spirit of neo-Puritanism” and that Howells's standards are provincial in as much as Howells' “realism” represents the practices of his own social circle in the North (“Songs of Genius,” 6 June 1886, *Essays on American Literature* 189).³⁴

Writing as a literary spokesperson for the South, Hearn was no doubt motivated by a desire to resist the dominance of New England's literary tastes and its privileged position in the world of publishing. Yet, his criticism of popularized realism was also rooted in his ideal notion of a new literary genre, which he called “true realism that denies the distinction between “realism” and “idealism” (“One of Mr. Howells' Realisms,” 12 April 1887, *Essays on American Literature* 229). In an article titled, “The Spiritual Sense in Literature,” Hearn calls attention to the absence of the “intangible feeling of the spiritual and the divine” in “so-called ‘realistic’ literature.” The kind of “realistic” literature Hearn refers to deals with materialistic and commercial aspects of society and ignores life's religious and spiritual dimensions. For Hearn, if literature were no more than a reflection of American materialistic society in which the pursuit of happiness signified securing property of everyday comforts, then literature would have no enlightenment to offer. Hearn writes, “No more than atheism can ever supply moral force to a social body, can realism, as opposed to idealism, ever take the place of imagination of spiritual passion in poetry and in prose” (“The Spiritual Sense in Literature,” 1 May 1887, *Essays on American Literature* 245).

³⁴ In the same article, Hearn criticizes Howells' prudish morality and asserts that a true “genius” is not always in accordance with a society's moral code. Howells depreciated Goethe for his immoral conduct in his private life, arguing that a “genius” must have a moralistic private life in order to create a fine work of art. Lannom Smith discusses the “genius” controversy in which Hearn was involved. See “Howells and the Battle of Words over 'Genius,’” *American Literary Realism, 1870-1910* (1980), 101-107.

While Hearn's career as a reporter made him value close observation and accurate representations of everyday life, he nonetheless disapproved of Howellsian . Above all, he believed that it ignored the emotional and sensuous aspects of human experience. Positioned as a writer in the South, moreover, Hearn considered Howells's poetics of fiction to be applicable only to urban industrial society in the North. Howells's approach undermined a sense of the spirit of place which Hearn had observed through his experiences in the South: the lost glory of the past, the traumatic scars of the Civil War, the magnanimity of feminine beauty, the gay and vigorous mulattoes and Creoles, and the unintelligible voices of the wind and the sea. Hearn conceptualized his idea of "philosophic romance" because it would allow him to express life experience as a whole, including the unknown and the unseen from a scientific point-of-view of seeking truth. A writer of a "philosophic romance," therefore, needed to cultivate a nomadic, mobile perspective in order to see life from different angles as well as constantly adjust his or her viewpoint according to new discoveries in modern science. In other words, Hearn never refers to preexisting values as standard. When Gould denounces Hearn's literary works because of their total lack of "mind or character to be possessed of loyalty or disloyalty," he dismisses Hearn as "a perfect chameleon" who can only imitate the surrounding colors (Gould xi). Hearn, on the contrary, intentionally endeavored to be "a perfect chameleon" by creating a narrating voice that would mirror the colors of life in the passage of time and to echo the cries of "ghosts" of the past in the sea of human memories. His appreciation of Cable was based on this author's style that mixed "realism and idealism," as exemplified by Cable's incorporation of black Creole songs and stories in his narrative to represent the vibrant hybrid culture in Louisiana. In a review entitled, "Successful Literature," Hearn describes Cable as follows: "He has dressed up local scenes and incidents in the attractive garb of imaginative fiction thus rescuing the facts from obscurity, and weaving strange stories as charmingly real as they are romantically ideal" (26 May 1881, *The Times-Democrat*, Qtd. Turner 104). In his praise of Cable's *Dr Sevier* (1884), Hearn wrote further that no novel in England or America was comparable to Cable's novel with the exception of works by Daudet and the Goncourts for their "combination of the minutest realism with the purest idealism." In an 1885 article "Some Notes on Creole Literature," Hearn also emphasizes Cable's use of "inedited creole literature" including "songs, satires in rhyme, proverbs, fairy tales —almost everything commonly included under the term *folklore*." He praises Alphonse Daudet too for his use of "creole refrains" which create

an “admirable effect” (*American Miscellany* 155; Qtd. Bronner 169-70). Inherent in Hearn praise for both Cable’s and Daudet’s use of Creole material is the acknowledgement that they do not overlook marginalized aspects of life. In Cable’s case, the use of Creole material could have created a controversy unless the question of the color line remained untouched. Hearn was well aware of the sensitivity of the race issue and admired how Cable dealt with this “audacious theme,”³⁵ even declaring that he had opened a “new chapter in social philosophy” (9 September 1883, the *Times-Democrat*, Qtd. Turner 165).³⁶ Hearn followed in Cable’s wake, writing about myriad phenomena of creolization in Louisiana. His method of collecting and recording old material was that of a modern ethnologist. Using a “*folklore*” mode, he successfully highlighted the forgotten past of creolization in the history of the American South. By referencing the French authors Daudet and Goncourts, Hearn tried to legitimize his and Cable’s work that he believed must be differentiated from Howells and literary standards set by white writers in the North.

Hearn, a born hybrid himself, is confident of his aesthetic double vision. In one of his letters to Krehbiel, Hearn mockingly criticizes Krehbiel’s “Gothic standard” and rigid view of art, writing that since they now live in “a cosmopolitan art era,” “the passion and poetry of other races of mankind” should not be neglected by “a Gothic standard” (1880; 13:207). The “Gothic standard” here refers not only to Krehbiel’s German background, but also to Northern values and taste in New York and Boston. The distinction between “Gothic” and “Latin,” or “North” and “South,” also implies, in Hearn’s mind, a distinction between intellect and reason emphasized in the North and the senses and passion preferred in the South. Although he had a tendency to criticize the dominance of the “Gothic?” over “Latin,” or “North” over “South,” Hearn is also aware that for an artist the balance between the two, or rather, the power to create a hybrid of the two is essential. In an earlier letter to Krehbiel, he describes his double vision of the “Northern” mind and “Southern” sensibility. Whereas in the South, he

³⁵ Cable was challenged in local editorials for his belief “that Southern civilization has still further concessions to make . . . to the negro race”; in *Dr. Sevier*, a character addresses the Union soldiers, “your cause if just” (Qtd. Turner 165).

³⁶ Although Cable was criticized for the “audacious theme” in his fiction, his writings “Historical Sketch-Book” and “Guide to New Orleans” (1885) were compiled into a booklet for the 1885 New Orleans Exposition in which Hearn’s essay, “The Scenes of Cable’s Romances” from *Century* magazine was included. See Turner 200.

feels that “beautiful realities fill the imagination to repletion,” in the North “the Spirit of Unrest (. . .) provoketh poetry and romance.” The impressions gathered in the South, then, “must be chiselled into shape” in the North. He further ponders:

Every one has an inner life of his own, —which no other eye can see, and the great secrets of which are never revealed, although occasionally when we create something beautiful, we betray a faint glimpse of it; —sudden and brief, as of a door opening and shutting in the night (. . .) a double existence—a dual entity. Are we not all doppelgängers? —and is not the invisible the only life we really enjoy? (1879; 13:186).

The “inner life” Hearn writes of here does not mean a contemplative, monkish life in seclusion, but the unknown and invisible dimension of one’s life, or the world of ghosts and the collective unconscious. All living people, Hearn speculated, are unaware that they are connected to their ancestors and carry old memories. These memories project ghostly images and echoes and it is precisely these encounters that interested Hearn. In *Chita*, Hearn writes of the ghostly life of each character, and lets the girl, Chita, grow up in an ideal Creole environment. Her adaptability and physical grace are manifestations of the wisdom that she inherited from her long deceased ancestors. Hearn emphasizes that such wisdom of old is necessary for humans to survive in the stormy sea changes of the modern-day world.

A Creole Vision Misfired

Hearn begins his 1885 essay “The Creole Patois” by stating that “the pure Creole element is disappearing from the *Vié faubon*,” an area on the margins of New Orleans, known as an exotic place where rich white Creoles lived in villas with their colored mistresses. Out of this place emerged a mixed Creole language that white children then learned from their black nurses. Hearn regrets that such a hybrid speech is fading away, briefly summarizing:

It will be sufficient, therefore, to state that the creole patois is the offspring of linguistic miscegenation, an offspring which exhibits but a very faint shade of African color, and nevertheless possesses a strangely supple comeliness by virtue of the very intercrossing which created it, like a beautiful octoroon. (*American Writings* 746)

Hearn's language is subtle. As he describes the "patois" language which reveals "a very faint shade of African color" and so the "intercrossing" creates "comeliness," he gives a concrete image of such wonder in the "beautiful octoroon." His "linguistic miscegenation" deftly slides into a kind of racial miscegenation that produces the "octoroon." Then, cleverly again, instead of describing the "beautiful octoroon" and the *fait accompli* of racial miscegenation, he traces the social history of the Creole language in the manner of a philologist. Devoted as he was to the idea of creolization, he traveled to Martinique in order to write more about Creole history and culture after finishing *Chita*. The essays he wrote there were compiled into the well-received volume, *Two Years in French West Indies* (1890). Thereafter, he published a second novelette, *Youma: the Story of a West-Indian Slave* (1890) about a black nurse known simply as "da" who embraces her charge, a white Creole child, as she dies in a fire set by fellow slaves who have revolted against their white Creole masters. The story represents Hearn's ambivalent feelings about the future of race conflicts and the progress of creolization. While in *Chita* the child in her mother's arms survives, in *Youma* the child dies along with her "da." A *New York Times* book review noted that Hearn "is not of the Abolitionist breed, but makes one feel that slavery of some kind is good for the men and women of African descent, assuring himself thereby incidentally of sympathy on the part of his fellows in Louisiana who have not forgiven Mr. Cable his Northern heresies" (1 June 1890). Like the reviewer who notes that Hearn leaves "moral questions to be decided by his readers," the ending of the story is ambiguous. Does the nurse's choice to die with her white charge indicate that whites are superior to blacks? Or does it invite the sympathy of the readers to side with blacks? Taking sides, however, does not resolve racial conflict. The reviewer also points out Hearn's use of Creole in the novelette, and his viewpoint is clear, denigrating language used by the black slaves as "barbarous French patois" (1 June 1890). A mixed Creole who can find no consolation, Youma dies a martyr. She is caught between the white side and the black side in his story. Hearn does not suggest that her Youma's experience offers any solution to racial conflicts brought about by modern civilization; rather, he ends his story with a tragic result of it.

His credo of "realism and idealism" turned out to be an unrealistic approach to representing the race issue. In fact, it is not possible to draw an idealistic picture of creolization as an optimistic evolutionary narrative. After Martinique, Hearn briefly stayed in New York, but finding no home there, he jumped at the chance to go to Japan as a reporter for *Harper's Magazine* in 1890.

In Japan, Hearn was revered as both a teacher and connoisseur of traditional Japanese culture. He married a Japanese woman and became a hybrid father to three hybrid children. He chose not pursue the theme of creolization in terms of miscegenation and hybridization, but instead he disciplined himself to write a story in a style merging “realism and idealism.” As he had done before, he collected old songs and stories, and devised a way of retelling these stories framed from a traveler’s perspective. He, however, never forgot his bitter American memory. While living in Kobe from 1894 to 1896, he briefly worked for the *Kobe Chronicle*, and one of his articles was titled “The Race-Problem in America.”

The old prediction that miscegenation would settle the problem, —that the race would be ‘bleached out of existence “—would never be ventured to-day (. . . .) it is sadly evident that the worst ultimate consequences of slavery are yet to come; and that the enormous error of it will furnish legislators yet unborn with a host of Sphinx-riddles to solve. (*Lafcadio Hearn’s America* 216).

In an earthquake-prone Japan, he must have thought about life’s unpredictability and human frailty. In 1896, Hearn heard an earthquake and *tsunami* disaster that happened in north Japan, and immediately wrote a survival story based on an old Japanese legend, “A Living God.” This time, he ventured to write a hybrid religious story which envisions people sharing the same faith in goodness of human heart. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, this story has been repeatedly revived whenever a large-scale *tsunami* occurs. Interest in *Chita* was also revived at the time of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. One article declared that “Nature has the upper hand” and quoted Hearn’s description of the hurricane back in 1856: “So the hurricane passed, —tearing off the heads of the prodigious waves, to hurl them a hundred feet in the air, —heaping up the ocean against the land, —upturning the woods. Bays and passes were swollen to abysses; rivers regorged; the sea-marshes were changed to raging wastes of water” (“In the Ruins,” *The New Yorker*). Faced with Nature’s power, humans, regardless of race or class, are equally powerless. And in the aftermath of such a cataclysmic event, Hearn did not fail to observe how a society’s vulnerabilities can surface like debris floating atop waves. In *Chita*, it is the question of race. In “A Living God,” as will be discussed in the next chapter, it is the spiritual experience of Shinto worship.

THREE

Oceanic Reconstruction (2): Facts into Legend

In my Father's bedroom:
blue threads as thin
as pen-writing on the bedspread,
blue dots on the curtains,
a blue kimono,
Chinese sandals with blue plush straps.
The broad-planked floor
had a sandpapered neatness.
The clear glass bed-lamp
with a white doily shade
was still raised a few
inches by resting on volume two
of Lafcadio Hearn's
Glimpses of unfamiliar Japan,
Its warped olive cover
was punished like a rhinoceros hide.
In the flyleaf:
"Robbie from Mother. "
Years later in the same hand:
"This book has had hard usage
on the Yangtze River, China."
It was left under an open
porthole in a storm.

"Father's Bedroom" by Robert Lowell (1917-77)

1. Voyage Out

In the above poem, the twentieth century poet Robert Lowell lists things he discovers in his father's bedroom. Among them are a book of Hearn's on Japan, a Japanese garment, and Chinese sandals. Because these items are found in his father's bedroom, Lowell appropriates them as signifiers of his father's private experience in

the Far East. The “warped” appearance of Hearn’s volume makes his father’s experience seem distant both in time and space. The worn condition of the book, moreover, suggests that his father, an engineer in the US Navy, had carried it with him on his journey to the Far-east and brought it back to the US. Hearn may have served as a spiritual and navigational guide for his father’s voyages to both Japan and China. For the poet Lowell, Hearn also serves as a guide to navigate him through the Orient of the past, and on to his father’s memory. Hearn’s book, therefore, gives the poet access to his father’s personal history and his experience of encountering an unknown culture.

Hearn himself had carried an image of Japan as being remote and untouched by Western civilization. In his case, he found his guide in Robert Lowell’s ancestor, Percival Lowell. His well-known book on Japan, *The Soul of the Far East* (1888), inspired Hearn with an exotic image of a far eastern country that is totally different from the West. Hearn’s exotic expectations, however, were quickly dashed. By 1890 when he arrived in Japan, Japan’s Westernization was already underway. Nevertheless, his ethnographic and archivist spirit quickened once again. “Naturally adept in research” in Cable’s words, Hearn continued to collect old stories and legends as before, this time taking the opportunity to observe Japanese customs.

I myself was about ten when I first read Japanese ghost stories by an author named Koizumi Yakumo. They were scary tales, reminding me of my grandfather’s old house and family gravesites. Only years later did I learn that Koizumi was the adopted name of Lafcadio Hearn, then described as a Westerner who had come to Japan and “translated” old Japanese stories into English. What I had read was in actuality the “re-translation” of his English “translation.” Despite his 14-year stay in Japan, his Japanese skills were at best akin to a pidgin form of the language, but somehow he was able to select stories and translate them, which impressed many Japanese for their being so Japanese. Ethnically, let us recall that he was a hybrid, being half Greek and half Irish, and people saw him as anything ranging from white to black. His indeterminate appearance enabled him to step inside the native culture wherever he went, particularly in New Orleans and Martinique. He was called a “chameleon,” as he seemed to be able to integrate into any given environment, even though, he never felt at home. In Japan, he adopted the family name of his wife, obtained Japanese citizenship, and had a family. Most striking, he found similarities between his exposure to Japanese culture and ancient Greece. Thus for Hearn, Japan turned out not to be a far away and “unfamiliar” culture after all, but a place where people shared the same essential origins with

Westerners. Although Hearn still maintained his “chameleon” identity, he eventually found a home in Japan—a civilization founded on both Shinto and Buddhist belief systems—where spiritual hybridity was neither foreign nor untenable.

As a writer, Hearn was cast as an “English” writer who submitted most of his manuscripts to American publishers. His stories and essays served as windows through which English-speaking readers could look at Japan. He also served as a cultural translator, who took on the role of re-telling folktales in a global context for contemporary readers. It is conceivable that a sense of modernity in Hearn’s writing might have been the reason for Robert Lowell’s father to choose Hearn’s writings over his uncle’s work to take with him on his trip to the Far East during an era of western colonialist expansion.

Hearn did not only serve as a window for the West to view the East, but also for new Japan to view old Japan and even greater East Asia to look at Japan. He translated old stories because he feared that they would soon disappear in the course of Japan’s rapid Westernization. In a 1902 letter to philosopher Yrjö Hirn (1870-1952),¹ he wrote: “I watch, day by day, the destruction of a wonderful and very beautiful civilization, by industrial pressure. It strikes me that a time is approaching in which intellectual liberty will almost cease to exist, together with every other kind of liberty, –the time when no man will be able to live as he wishes, much less to write what he pleases” (14:208). Out of an ethnographic spirit to preserve old traditions that were fading away, he gathered old stories and songs, just as he had done in America with Creole material, but he was anxious that the waves of modernization were surging on to Japanese shores obliterating a rich heritage. In place of old tradition, he was concerned that the small island country of Japan was building up its military power instead to fight back those waves coming from the West. It became clear in Hearn’s volumes of writing on Japan that he was caught in between the two movements His Japanese students helped him to collect material over time, and after his death, translated all of his works into Japanese. The reference to China in Lowell’s poem further illuminates a coincidental and associative connection of not only the dichotomous relationship between East and West, but also of the idiosyncratic one among peoples in the Orient. Because Hearn wrote in

¹ Yrjö Hirn, an acclaimed aesthetics philosopher, taught at University of Helsinki, and his wife Kim translated Hearn’s *Exotics and Retrospectives* into Swedish in 1903, and *Kwaidan* in 1904. See Steven Donovan, “Conrad in Swedish: the First Translation,” *The Conradian* (Autumn 2006) 118; see also Laura Stedman’s bibliography in *Concerning Lafcadio Hearn* 251.

English, a language of a world power at the turn of the twentieth century, his works on Japan were also read in China. In *Koizumi Yakumo to Kindai Chugoku* [*Koizumi Yakumo and Modern China*] (2004), Riyu Guni documents how Hearn's writings were translated into Chinese during the Communist regime of the 1930's as valuable sources of information on Japan.²

The reassessment of Hearn as a cultural translator and archivist is a meaningful task. He sought a common ground in his narrative space in which cultural encounters would enable a new narrative to emerge—a shared myth for the modern nomads. His writings, therefore, do not simply contrast the differences between the East and the West (in which the West is usually considered superior); rather, they adumbrate various subaltern differences and similarities, as they are always mutually influential.³ Nomad that he was in the modern world, Hearn could only find his place in what Homi Bhabha calls the “in-between space,” or Mary Louise Pratt the “contact zone.” To use Christopher Benfey's words, he was typical of a “Gilded Age Misfit” from the Western world,⁴ but was also someone who became too Japanese to deserve the description of a “Japanese Eccentric.”⁵ In other words, Hearn was “eccentric” regardless of the

² See Ryu Guni, *Koizumi Yakumo to Kindai Chugoku* [*Koizumi Yakumo and Modern China*]. I would like to add that the Hearn-China connection has also become part of my personal experience. The discussion on the translation history of “A Living God” was originally presented for the panel “A Translation Turn in East-West” at the American Comparative Literature Association Conference held at Penn State University in March 2005, which was co-chaired by Professors Ning W. Wang of Tsinghua University and Leo Chan of Lingnan University and was co-attended by Mainland Chinese, Taiwanese, and Chinese-Americans, not to mention Japanese participants.

³ In this sense, Hearn overwrites Percival Lowell's *The Soul of the Far East* in which Lowell's scientific point of view is fixed and lists the contrasts between the West and East (Japan). Japan is differentiated from the West as being both alien and primitive. On the other hand, Hearn's comparative method seeks for a common ground between the two places, since he believes that all civilizations share sources rooted in the ancient past. For example, he finds similarities between ancient Greek and ancient Japan, or between Western legends and Japanese ones.

⁴ Homi Bhabha's concept of “in-between space,” or “Third Space,” applies to Hearn's case perfectly. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha states, “we should remember that it is the ‘inter’—the cutting edge of translation and renegotiation, the *in-between* space—that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national anti-nationalist histories of the ‘people.’ And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (38-9). In her introduction to *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992), Mary Louise Pratt refers to a “contact zone”: “A ‘contact’ perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. It treats the relations among colonizers and colonized, or travelers and ‘travelees,’ not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power” (15).

⁵ In *The Great Wave: Gilded Age Misfits, Japanese Eccentrics, and the Opening of Old Japan: a Study of Early Modern Japan*, Christopher Benfey aptly expresses that for those who tried “to open Japan culturally meant to open themselves in turn, and to risk transformation in the process” (xvi). The translations done by such “misfits” (those who went to Japan from America) and “eccentrics” (those who went to America from Japan), I would like to contend, reflect their own personal and emotional experiences as well

particular cultural domain he occupied. From the viewpoint of outsider and stranger, he wrote about Japan in English. At the same time, as husband and father of a Japanese family, he saw Japan from the inside and empathized with Japanese people. Taking advantage of being in the “in-between space,” he wrote stories that offer a double perspective, eastern and western.

The fact that Hearn chose to write in English is crucial. At the turn of the twentieth century, English was gaining ground as an international language. Hearn himself must have been aware of the influential power of the English language as his books had already been translated from their original English into Finnish, Swedish, German, and French during his lifetime. At the same time, because of Japan’s aggressive imperial expansion, it attracted increasing attention in the West. Had Hearn chosen to write in Japanese instead, his stories and essays could not have been read so widely at that time. Interestingly enough, in this era of rising Japanese nationalism, his writings were all the more appreciated and studied by Japanese. While learning English through Hearn’s writings, they simultaneously rediscovered their own vanishing tradition. Although it is true that Hearn’s stories derive from Japanese tales, contradictorily his appropriation of them helped to revive lost Japanese culture as it was remembered and dreamed of as a shared narrative by both Japanese and Westerners.

During his pursuit of Creole themes, Hearn could not ignore moral questions concerning the issue of race in America. Since he assumed these matters would not be resolved in his lifetime, he moved on and left for Japan. He did maintain his truth-seeking journalist spirit in Japan, for example, when he was in Kobe (1894 – 1896) where he wrote opinion pieces critical of the US. He pointed out that America’s great question would be “not of race-supremacy, but of race-existence” (*Editorials from the Kobe Chronicle* 39). Though oceans apart from America, the issue of race there crept back into his moral outlook. Two decades later in 1916, progressive American writer Randolph Bourne (1886-1918) wrote an essay, “Trans-national America,” in which he refuted the idea of a melting pot society. He said that new immigrants would not be assimilated into standardized white American culture and saw America as “a cosmopolitan federation of national colonies, of foreign cultures.” He proposed a possible model for a trans-national community: “the peaceful living side by side, with character substantially preserved, of the most heterogeneous peoples under the sun.” In his ideal “environment of the Beloved Community,” “nationality” refers to one’s

as their observations and analysis of the target cultures.

“spiritual country.” That is for Bourne, “trans-national” means that people do not have to identify their nationality with the actual place where they live.⁶ In the 1890’s Hearn already embraced such a dream place where people could co-exist, where each seeks for his or her own “home” in spiritual experience—a place of no “race-supremacy” but of “race-existence.”

⁶ This article is said to be the classic first argument on the idea of the “Trans-national.” Focusing on “the failure of the ‘melting-pot,’” he states, “Assimilation, in other words, instead of washing out the memories of Europe, made them [immigrants from Europe] more and more intensely real. Just as these clusters became more and more objectively American, did they become more and more German or Scandinavian or Bohemian or Polish”; see “Trans-national America” (1 July 1916), *The Atlantic*. The phrase “transnational,” however, only came to be popularly used after the rise of multiculturalism in the 1980s. See Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: a History of Multicultural America* (1993), and in American literature, Anita Patterson, *American Literature and Transnational Modernisms* (2008) and Paul Giles, *Virtual America: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imagery* (2002).

2. New Ethics in “A Living God” (1897)

Now a familiar word in the English lexicon, the Japanese word *tsunami*, meaning a seismic sea wave, a tidal wave, or a great wave, was used for the first time in an English context in Hearn’s writings, as previously discussed. Indeed, the first usage quoted in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is a passage from Hearn’s story “A Living God”: “‘Tsunami!’ shrieked the people; and then all shrieks and all sounds and all power to hear sounds were annihilated by a nameless shock . . . as the colossal swell smote the shore with a weight that sent a shudder through the hills.” The use of the Japanese word was intentional for Hearn because it imparted a sense of the unknown as well as of the mysterious magnitude of the disaster in the text. Although *tsunami* had been used as a technical term in earth science throughout the twentieth century, it became loaded with a sense of terror when it was used to describe the unprecedented 2004 Sumatra Earthquake (M 9.1). By the time of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake (M 9.0), “*tsunami*” had already acquired universal currency in the world discourse. Curiously, it is not only the word “*tsunami*” that has become a household word around the world, but so has Hearn’s story “A Living God” that first used the term, with references to it that resurface in times of oceanic catastrophes.

The revival of Hearn’s *tsunami* story at times of disaster has made me reflect on the power of narrative and how it can be remembered and re-articulated in across different forms and languages and yet still maintain its original evocative quality. About a month after the Sumatra Earthquake in January 2005, then Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi alluded to Hearn’s story in his opening address at the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in Kobe. The City of Kobe hosted the conference to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Kobe Earthquake and raise people’s awareness of disaster prevention. The Sumatra Earthquake and its subsequent *tsunami* disaster occurred a month before the conference, and its importance overrode the original intention of the organizers. They had wanted to advertise Kobe internationally as a safe city for business and tourism, but the disaster caused them to revise their purpose and their speeches, including the Prime Minister’s address. Koizumi welcomed the international participants and mentioned “an old Japanese story”

which Hearn had recorded in English a hundred years prior. The story is about the village chief, Giheé Hamaguchi (1820-85)⁷ who saved a village of about 400 by successfully warning them to move away from the shore.

When Japanese newspapers reported the Prime Minister's address, they added an additional comment that the *tsunami* story to which Koizumi referred was a story written by a foreigner, Lafcadio Hearn and it had appeared in school textbooks before World War II. The transformation of the Hearn story itself told of history over the past 150 years. The original source of the *tsunami* story is an actual disaster that occurred in 1854 in Wakayama, Japan.⁸ Hearn wrote up this story in 1896, and in 1936, a Japanese schoolteacher re-translated Hearn's version of the original story into Japanese for an elementary school textbook and titled it "Inamura no Hi" (The Fire of Rice Sheaves).⁹ It was included in textbooks from 1937 to 1947, until the Japanese education system was reformed as part of Japan's post-World War II reconstruction. The actual event, Hearn's translation of it, the abridged re-translation for the textbook, and the Prime Minister's conference speech share a common plot based on real facts, while their points of emphasis differ in delivering messages suited to their different socio-historical contexts.

Hearn's "Living God," as the title indicates, focuses not on the *tsunami* disaster itself, but on the nature of Shinto worship in old Japan. The *tsunami*, though catastrophic, generates an opportunity for simple observances of faith and acts of gratitude among local people, strengthening their communal spirit. The village chief saves the villagers' lives, and in turn, the grateful villagers build a shrine to worship him. Hearn ends his telling of this incident with a commentary on Shinto and the Japanese spirit. The incident Hearn used in "A Living God," however, was not based on the *tsunami* story of 1896, but an old legend based on a real man who saved the lives of his villagers in 1854. In order to make his story more appealing, Hearn switched the

⁷ See "Address by Junichiro Koizumi" and the description of the conference at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan website: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/conf0501/address-2.html>. The *Asahi Shinbun* (Asahi Newspaper) ran a column entitled, "Prime Minister Appeals Japanese 'Wisdom'" and added a note to explain that the old Japanese story referred to by Prime Minister was a true story from the Edo period which was rewritten by Koizumi Yakumo; see *Asahi Shinbun*, 19, Jan. 2005.

⁸ Both *Chita* and "A Living God" are set in the 1850s when the US and Japan were facing equally critical historical shifts. The hurricane in *Chita* occurred in 1856. In the US, 1856 was also the year of the presidential election in which the issue of slavery was in heated contest. In Japan, 1854 was the year of Commodore Matthew Perry's second docking in the bay of Edo (Tokyo), which lead Japan to sign Treaty of Amity and Commerce. This point will be discussed later in this chapter.

⁹ Both introductory and concluding comments by the narrator, presumably Hearn himself, were not translated, and thus Hearn's criticism of Japanese religions was not part of the story adopted for the textbook.

original story to the one he learned of from the local newspaper.¹⁰ In actuality, a series of *tsunami* occurred, and although the village chief almost drowned, he survived, using a torch to guide villagers through the dark night to safety. Although in the real event there were some casualties, in Hearn's story all the villagers are saved. Hearn also changed the name of the village chief Giheé to Gohei.¹¹ Gohei is a heroic character that possesses ancestral wisdom, and foreseeing the *tsunami*, sets fire to his newly harvested rice sheaves in order to warn the villagers. In response, they immediately turn to run up to his hilltop house, anxious that the village chief's house might be on fire. The sheaves are burned, but Gohei's heroic deed saves the villagers. Hearn also added that the villagers were so grateful that when they recovered from the disaster, they built a shrine in honor of Gohei and revered him as a deity even when he was still living. Hearn's emphasizes the "living god" and faith of people in old Japan.¹² This episode, however, did not actually happen, as Giheé, a man of Western learning, resisted the idea of having a shrine built, a practice considered too primitive from a Western perspective.

Hearn wrote "A Living God" for the *Atlantic Monthly*. In order to introduce an unfamiliar religion to American readers, he tried to appeal to their imagination by way of an old anecdote and framing it within his observations of both old and new Japan.

¹⁰ Sukehiro Hirakawa discusses these changes and quotes a biographical essay by Hamaguchi Goryo (Giheé). See also, "Ikegami-sama" (A Living God) by Masaru Tohda in *Koizumi Yakumo Jiten*. Giheé was a respected governor and businessman who was well informed of international situations. He died while visiting New York. His son studied at Cambridge University and when he was invited to give a talk by The Japan Society in London in 1903, a woman named Stella de Lorez asked him if he was related to the great man depicted in Hearn's "A Living God." This episode testifies to the fact that Hearn's story could create invisible connections among its readers regardless of their national, racial, linguistic as well as gender differences. The story miraculously enabled a fortunate encounter between Giheé's son and his distant admirer in U.K. to take place. Sukehiro Hirakawa, who wrote entries related to Giheé Hamaguchi in *Koizumi Yakumo Jiten*, has a detailed account of the episode in *Koizumi Yakumo: Seiyō Dasshutsu no Yume* [Koizumi Yakumo: A Dream of Exodus from the West] (1981), 173-176.

¹¹ The name Goryo is traditionally used by the head of the Hamaguchi family who owned the soy sauce company Yamasa that is still in business today. The hero in "The Living God" inherited the name at the age of 34. The *tsunami* episode happened in the following year. When a member of the Hamaguchi family later became governor at 52, he gave himself another name, Goryo. Studying under the progressive philosopher Sakuma Shozan in the 1850s during a time of political turmoil in Japan, Goryo embraced progressive and philanthropic ideas. During a tour of the world, he died in New York in 1880. See "Inamura no Hi" website <<http://www.inamuranohi.jp/person/hamaguchi.html>> and Yamasa Company website <<http://www.yamasa.com/enjoy/history/inamura/>>.

¹² From comparative literary, religious and cultural points of view, Sukehiro Hirakawa offers a thorough discussion of Shinto as seen from the outside by Europeans, Americans and other Asians, and also notes that Hearn as well as Paul-Louis-Charles Claudel, a writer and ambassador to Japan from 1921-1927, possessed an understanding of Japanese nature from an insider's perspective. See *Seiyōjin no Shintokan: Nihonjin no Aidentiti wo Motomete* (2013).

Hearn begins the story with an architectural description of the façade and structure of a Shinto shrine (or temple) and how, over the years, it has become part of the natural landscape, manifesting “the Earth-god, the primeval divinity of the land” (8: 2).¹³ He states that it is nothing like the Western idea of a temple and rather like a “haunted room, a spirit-chamber, a ghost-house” (3). People do not go inside to pray and there is literally nothing housed inside the structure. He imagines what it is like to be inside and enters the “haunted room” in his imagination, pretending himself to be a ghost of a past hero or himself a god. He, however, soon dismisses this as mere fancy:

But I never can become a god, —for this is the nineteenth century; and nobody can really be aware of the nature of sensations of a god—unless there be gods in the flesh. Are there? Perhaps—in very remote districts—one or two. There used to be living gods. (8: 11)

He elaborates that Shinto gods are not “national gods, but as lesser divinities (. . .) village-gods. There was, for instance, Hama-guchi Gohei, a farmer of the district of Arita in the province of Kishu, who was made a god before he died. And I think he deserved it” (8: 12). Hearn describes traditional Shinto worship practiced in local areas of Japan. In 1869, Shinto was officially designated as the national religion whereby the Emperor was hailed as a direct descendant of the creationist gods of Japanese mythology. This is worthy of note. Although recognized since then to be the titular head of Japan and a direct descendant from mythological gods, Hearn deliberately disconnects the Shinto religion from these political inventions, and focuses on religious practices of ordinary people. Hearn presents an example taken from an old tale in which an ordinary man becomes “a living god.” The actual historical character Giheé was the head of a wealthy family who ran a successful soy sauce business and went into politics, but Hearn instead characterizes his hero as “a farmer” who has been made “a living god” by his villagers. In other words, Hearn seems to revise the moral of the story, suggesting that all mortals who achieve moral superiority deserve to become “living gods.” Effectively, Hearn creates an egalitarian meritocracy out of old Japan in order to appeal to his English-speaking readers in America and enable them to understand the Japanese religious spirit, which Hearn viewed as spontaneous and generative and by no means dogmatic.

¹³ Pagination derives from *Gleaning in Buddha Fields* (1887).

In her historical study, *Republic of Word: the Atlantic Monthly and Its Writers, 1857-1925*, Susan Goodman presents a chapter on Hearn and Percival Lowell both. She values Hearn's contribution to the magazine as a writer who could vividly portray Japan for American readers: "Atlantic readers . . . loved Hearn's minute descriptions of Shinto shrines, samurai legends, jujitsu, and marketplaces, which displayed strange sea creatures and bean curds of every imaginative texture. He made them feel as if they saw the places and knew the people themselves. In this respect, he lived up to his own wish to be 'a literary Columbus'" (174).¹⁴ Capturing the feeling of a mysterious and exotic culture in the Orient by way of simple story à la folklore, he invited the sympathy and admiration of his readers.¹⁵ "A Living God" demonstrates how Gohei's altruistic act makes the villagers revere him as a god, thus showing Japanese respect for human goodness and wisdom. At the end of the story, Hearn adds a postscript on Japanese Shinto spirits: Japanese people "believed that the ghost within him [Gohei] was divine," turning him into a god as a way to honor the man for his good deeds. Moreover, they believe he takes the form of many ghosts that can be worshipped at different shrines at the same time, even though he is a single living figure. Hearn then gives a twist at the very end by asking a question of a Japanese philosopher about the difference between Japanese and Western notions of the soul.

"The peasants," my friend answered, "think of the mind or spirit of a person as something which, even during life, can be in many places at the same instant . . . Such an idea is, of course, quite different from any Western ideas about the soul."

"Any more rational?" mischievously asked.

"Well," he responded, with a Buddhist smile, "if we accept the doctrine of the unity of all mind, the idea of the Japanese peasant would appear to contain at least some adumbration of truth. I could not say so much for your Western notions about the soul." (8: 28)

¹⁴ See Chapter 20, "From the Far East to Mars: Lafcadio Hearn and Percival Lowell." Goodman's discussion of Hearn before Lowell may indicate Hearn's relative importance as a contributor to the magazine.

¹⁵ He considered using stories the best way to convey his ideas. He wrote to his friend and student Nobushige Amemonori that it is like adding "sugar" to "medicine": Everybody likes sketches, stories, reveries; few love thinking for the mere sake of thinking; but all people of real culture can be made to like it by being betrayed into doing it. So when I flank a paper on abstract questions with two little sketches or stories, the medicine is taken for the sake of the sugar." See "Lafcadio Hearn, the Man," *The Atlantic Monthly* Oct. 1905, 523.

The narrative ends here with a kind of Zen dialogue, asking a question but providing no specific answer. The sudden introduction of the philosopher with “a Buddhist smile” might have confused his Western readers, since the background of the story is Shinto, and it may have been thought odd to expect an answer from “a Buddhist smile.” A sudden reference to a “Buddhist” may have sounded stranger still since the story is about Shinto. Moreover, it would be incomprehensible why one would ask for wisdom from a “Buddhist” when the new government only acknowledged Shinto as Japan’s official religion. In the early Meiji Period (1868-1877), anti-Buddhist movements arose, triggered by a new policy for the “Separation of Shinto and Buddhism.” Hearn, however, was fascinated to find that Shinto and Buddhism had coexisted, or comingled, in Japan ever since the introduction of Buddhism in the 6th century. It might be said that while Shinto, or ancestor worship, deals with emotional aspects of life, Buddhism provides a rational approach to philosophical teachings about awareness and altruism. Both religions complement each other, and neither is monotheistic. At the end of the story, the narrator “mischievously” asks the philosopher with the “Buddhist smile” if peasants’ faith is “more rational” than the Western faith. The philosopher responds that if viewed according to the Buddhist “doctrine of the unity of all mind,” the peasants’ faith, based upon ubiquitous divine spirits for worship, has some truth in it, but the philosopher does not know about Western ideas enough to comment on them. While Shinto and Buddhism co-existed in daily life, Hearn assumed that this coexistence needed to be explained in the contrasting contexts of Western logic and Buddhist “doctrine.”

Through his observations of spiritual belief in Japan, Hearn developed the idea that the Buddhist “unity of all mind” and Shinto “ghosts” shared the same truths, and to some extent, they also corresponded to new discoveries in Western science. What he takes to be Western logic here refers to Spencerian ideas on evolution as well as modern discoveries in Western science. What seemed to be mystifying about Japanese religion, therefore, was that it could be scientifically proved, he believed. In a letter to Amenomori, his student and friend, he described his “psychological sketches” as “a mingling of Buddhist and Shinto thought with English and French psychology—(they do not simply mix well, —they absolutely unite, like chemical elements, —crush together with a shock).” Furthermore, he points out why Western science, which for Hearn is represented by Spencer, and Buddhism share a common ground:

Spencer supposes psychical units as the ultimates of sensations. Buddhism supposes the combination called the karma. Thus both Science and Buddhism seem to me to agree in denying the simple character of that which we call self. By Buddhism and Science alike the individual is a composite. But the composition is different. Science gives the multiple for the past ten centuries at about fifteen quintillions of ancestral inheritances for each individual. The nature of karma is still a puzzle to us all. But that the psychical karma is a mere temporary combination involves the idea of other combinations. Worlds, mountains, etc., are created (as phenomena) by acts. Do not these acts imply combinations of phenomena? I think they do. The suggestion of science to me is that the whole universe consists of nothing but vibrations representing soul-polarities. And I feel pretty sure that in the West we must soon throw away the idea of individuality, which leads only to selfishness. Science will force us to do so; for the new schools of philosophy teach that the Self is an almost infinite compound. And I think this is Buddhism. (*Lafcadio Hearn, the Man* 522, my underline)

The above quotation seems to amplify the “Buddhist smile” of the Japanese philosopher. In “A Living God,” the peasants’ simple faith in “ghosts,” that has grown out of an emotional experience, is given a “rational” explanation by way of Buddhism. The harmonious coexistence of Shinto and Buddhism since Buddhism was first introduced from China in the sixth century especially impressed Hearn. He found Japan’s resiliency was to be found in the flexibility and adaptability of such spiritual guidance. Unfortunately in Hearn’s time, the Meiji Government issued an anti-Buddhist policy and a great number of Buddhist temples were destroyed in order to establish the Emperor as the Living God of the Japanese people and institutionalize Shinto as the national religion. At that time in history, even a slight reference to Buddhism serves as a measure of the enduring presence of Buddhism in spite of efforts to eradicate it. Additionally, its philosophy can even be detected in lingering facial expressions like a “smile.” Further, if advanced science and old religious doctrine can agree on the idea that “the Self is an almost infinite compound,” Hearn surmises, the idea of individualism will be viewed as a mistake for having led the West in a wrong direction. In one of his lectures that he delivered at Tokyo Imperial University titled “The New Ethics,” he talked about an “ethical economy” and stated that “self-suppression” found

in religious practices “does not mean the destruction of any power, but only the economical storage of that power for the benefit of the race” (*Books and Habits* 154-5). He thus found a model for an “ethical economy” in the survival of Japanese religious practices, which is a hybrid of Shinto and Buddhism.

Hearn shrewdly put together his story so as to first make his readers admire the heroic action and then leave them puzzled with questions about individualism. The *tsunami* story is a heroic success story because of the altruism of the village chief and selflessness of the villagers, but it derives from an old legend. Hearn was convinced this kind of story was no longer plausible given the split between the two religions that had taken place as Japan had opened itself to the world and began to introduce Western civilization. As Hearn argues in the above letter, he saw individualism as a counter force to the traditional Japanese spirit that had existed in old Japan. Percival Lowell observed that the selflessness of the Japanese was a sign that they were still a step behind the Western world of individualism in the evolutionary progress. Hearn, on the other hand, thought that “the Self is an almost infinite compound” and such a feeling could be expressed via old Japanese stories. Hearn served up “A Living God” as sugar-coated content for his Western readers to reflect on their individualist mindset.

Yet one might still wonder why Hearn thought this anecdote appropriate for his story about Japanese religion. The actual event took place in 1854 at the end of Tokugawa shogunate and before the 1868 establishment of the new Meiji government and its nationalist agenda. In “A Living God,” Hearn describes pre-Meiji people as open hearted and cooperative: they “preserved peace” and “compelled mutual help and mutual kindness” (13). Those people could save themselves from the *tsunami*, because, simple and innocent as they were, they faithfully followed their leader who in turn willingly sacrificed his wealth for them. Such mutual relationships created a deep faith that united the whole community. The old story of 1854 contrasts the *tsunami* of 1886 that swallowed up more than 20,000 lives, and this too suggests differences between old Japan and new Japan.¹⁶ In another essay Hearn wrote for the *Atlantic*, “The Japanese Smile” (1893), he describes the essence of an ideal Japanese government of old before the opening of Japan: one that was “based on benevolence, and directed to securing the welfare and happiness of the people. No political creed has ever held that

¹⁶ Northern Japan suffers from a large-scale earthquake followed by a *tsunami* in every twenty to thirty years. The 2011 East Japan Earthquake and the ensuing *tsunami* caused unprecedented damage, and Hearn’s story was revived and printed in elementary school textbooks. Because of the unmatched destruction of the Fukushima nuclear power plant, a true picture of the overall damage will not be clarified for many years to come.

intellectual strength should be cultivated for the purpose of exploiting inferiority and ignorance” (175).¹⁷ Here Hearn critiques new imperialist Japan, but at the same time, his phrase “exploiting inferiority and ignorance” also refers to American and European imperial expansionism in which individualism justifies a selfish pursuit of wealth and exploitation is its justified means. The year of the first *tsunami* episode in 1854, which Hearn used in his story, was the very year of Commodore Matthew Perry’s second visit to Japan. He came bearing a letter from US President Fillmore and succeeded in having Japan sign a “Convention of Peace and Amity.” Thus Japan, after 260 years of a closed-door policy opened its door. The *tsunami* surging from the Pacific may well represent the expanding power of the US in the Pacific regions. Hearn’s *tsunami* story pinpoints the moment of the great sea change that changed history on both sides of the Pacific. When he was in Kobe, Hearn worked for the *Kobe Chronicle* as a journalist. In an article he wrote at the time, “Earthquakes and National Character” (27 October 1884), he calls attention to the “instability” of material life in Japan, explaining that because of “war, fire, flood, earthquake,” no building lasts more than a generation, and thus, houses are “rarely built to last.” He curiously comments that if people had a home, “it is not the place of birth, but the place of burial, which is the dearest spot to soul of the Far East.” Even their houses are never permanent, just as “the shrines of the holiest, —the shrines of Ise—must by traditional custom be pulled down and rebuilt every twenty years” (51). Their ghosts, or souls, have a permanent home called a tomb, but their physical being, including their home, are all vulnerable and liable to collapse. Hearn was impressed by the “uncommon national capacities of endurance, patience, and self-adaptation to environment; and these are precisely the qualities which we do find in the Japanese” (52). Hearn assumed that Japan’s earthquake prone environment had prepared its people for survival. The essence of survival he points out is “self-adaptation,” upon whose concept his stories of survival, *Chita* and “A Living God,” are also constructed. Reading these stories side by side, we can see that Hearn is particularly concerned about the ability to survive in a changing world. He also imagined that stories, particularly those embracing ancient wisdom, would survive and be revived as a reminder at the time of crisis.

Natural disasters inspired Hearn’s imagination, and at the same time, his journalistic sincerity made him frame his imaginative stories in comparative cultural analysis. Although the two stories I have discussed in this chapter are set in different

¹⁷ “The Japanese Smile” is included in his first book on Japan, *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* (1894).

geographical settings, they both share the same historical context of the 1850's when, on both sides of the Pacific, the political situation was in turmoil. In 1856, the year of the hurricane in *Chita*, the US was in the midst of a presidential election in which the issue of slavery was a heated theme. As discussed in the previous chapter, although *Chita* does not directly deal with the question of slavery, it is unquestionably a story that touches on the race issue—about the creolization of race, language and culture, illustrating how to survive in the face of a changing reality. The child in *Chita* survives the disaster because of her simplicity, flexibility and adjustability. Moreover, the early nursery education she received from a black Creole nurse was not to be diminished; it built a foundation for her multilingual and -cultural mind. Her foster mother's stories about the black Virgin nipped racial prejudice in the bud and her adjustment to multicultural Creole society on the island was successfully carried out. For Chita to survive, a sentimental education through storytelling and immersion in nature are integral to the story. By the time Hearn wrote "A Living God" almost a decade later, Hearn was more aware of the tenuous politics abroad, including Japan's imperialist expansion into Korea and China as well as those of the US in the pacific regions. The actual year of the *tsunami* in the story, 1854, thus cannot be dismissed simply as a coincidence. Perry's second visit was a pivotal year of change for Japan, not to mention for the US. Yet, Hearn regarded social change as inevitable and unavoidable in the course of history, a perspective he adopted from Spencerian evolution. Moreover, natural disasters can interrupt, wiping out in a moment whatever civilization has built up. What Hearn is concerned with is the ultimate question of survival of the race. His Japanese stories, especially his ghost stories, are meant to enhance awareness of the bygone, the forgotten and the overlooked and thereby enforce moral strength. He found power in Japan's hybrid spirituality, or the co-existence of Shinto and Buddhist religious ways to revere and worship ancestors and the dead.

3. The Second Wave—Rewriting Hearn’s “*Tsunami*” Story

Hearn’s *tsunami* story involved a complex process of translation and re-translation from Japanese to English and English to Japanese. As a Westerner living in Japan, Hearn took it upon himself to introduce Japanese stories to fellow English-speaking readers. From a post-colonial Orientalist point of view, he appropriated Japan and molded it into his image of the exotic. However, because his stories were also revealing about old Japan and breathed new life into Japanese tales, they were also of interest to Japanese readers. He impressed Japanese students who were sympathetic with Hearn’s critical view of modern Japan. Like Tsunezo Nakai, the Wakayama school teacher who translated “*Tsunami*” into Japanese, others, in turn, re-translated Hearn’s stories and re-appropriated them for their own Japanese stories.. Examining the translation history of “A Living God,” in particular, sheds light on the process of how a story is retold to linguistically and culturally distinct readerships, and more generally, what makes a story worth translating, re-translating, and re-told.

As discussed in the previous section, an undeniable explanation for the popularity of Hearn’s stories was that he wrote in English. To reiterate further, had Hearn written in Japanese, his stories would not have been read so widely, nor known worldwide. It also must be emphasized that because he wrote in English, his writings were also appreciated and studied diligently by Japanese seeking to improve their English language skills during an era of conscious nation-building and Westernization in Japan.¹⁸ Curiously, by learning English through Hearn’s writings, Japanese readers simultaneously rediscovered their own traditions. While the origins of Hearn’s stories may be tied to Japanese tales, his appropriation of their content rejuvenated aspects of Japanese culture that Japanese and Westerners alike had otherwise lost to memory or now merely dreamed of. Hearn’s act of translation/appropriation might be read as a precursor to subsequent acts of re-translation/re-appropriation, which took place at different times in modern history. Hearn’s work would offer possibilities for narrative

¹⁸ Wenceslau José de Sousa de Moraes (1854-1929), the first Portuguese Consul General to Japan, came to Kobe in 1899, nine years after Hearn and also wrote about his experiences. But written in Portuguese and published there, his books have not been translated nearly as widely as those of Hearn. Moraes eventually gave up his ambassadorial work and moved from Kobe to Tokushima where his beloved partner Oyone was buried and her niece Koharu lived. Both women died young and de Moraes spend the rest of his life visiting their tombs. He was considered a sympathizer to Japanese sentiment, and although his books exist in Japanese translation and have been read well there, only one of his books was translated into English and by a Japanese, Kazuo Okada, who subsequently only published in Japan.

that would transform and grow as it made contact with other languages and cultures. Hearn's stories, moreover, merged the past and the multicultural present, suggesting that the ancient wisdom, though foreign as it may first appear, is valid and usable in present-day experience.

Having witnessed the crisis of modernity during his American days, Hearn foresaw that Japan would suffer the same fate in the near future. He aimed to reveal what the new Japan was leaving behind through the world of the Japanese tales.¹⁹ As a child reading his stories in Japanese, I never guessed that they were penned by a Western author critiquing modern Japan. The stories seemed entirely "Japanese." The Japanese translators of Hearn's works apparently had felt so about committed to [I think this verb works better and is more neutral...unless you have evidence that the translators were nostalgic about translating Hearn] Hearn's stories that they were impelled to translate his work into Japanese of such a literary quality that their text revealed nothing of its foreign language origins. Additionally, the Japanese translations of his Japanese stories served to assimilate them into Japanese literature. I began to wonder if these stories in Japanese were the same as Hearn's in English, and if not, in what ways they differed. I also became interested in what particular aspects of Hearn's text his translators had conveyed in their Japanese versions. These questions further lead me to the question of accuracy in translation. The translation history of Hearn's stories above all attest to the fact that what affects their resonance with a particular readership is how the stories sympathize with these readers and not how accurately they are translated.

Faithfulness to the source text, especially in the translation of sacred texts and

¹⁹ Before he came to Japan, Hearn trained himself as a journalist, editor, and translator in the publishing worlds of Cincinnati and New Orleans. In New Orleans, he translated various French articles and stories, and once wrote to his friend in 1886: "I have a project on foot—to issue a series of translations of archeological and artistic French romance—Flaubert's "Tentation de Saint-Antoine;" De Nerval's "Voyage en Orient;" Gautier's "Avatar;" Loti's most extraordinary African and Polynesian novels; and Baudelaire's "Petits Poèmes en Prose" (*The Life and Letters*, 362). He also became interested in oral traditions and collected and translated Creole folktales and songs in New Orleans and Martinique. He was enchanted by "strange" stories throughout his career. Once in Japan, he found a rich reservoir of literary material. His translations were meant to be considered works of creative fiction, although through his close observation and insight, which were the fruits of his training as a journalist in America, he remained faithful in telling true stories about the soul of the Japanese. He carefully researched and found literary sources not only in written and printed texts, but also in oral tales gathered from local informants.

classics, has been an important issue in translation theory.²⁰ This concern arises particularly when one compares the quality of a translation side by side with the source text. But how do we evaluate faithfulness in a translation if there are multiple source texts, that is, if we are interested in a series of translations and re-translations produced at different moments in history? In an attempt to look at translation from a genealogical perspective, I would like to examine the transformation of a text over the course of its translation/re-translation with a focus on the factors that motivate an act of translation. In his hermeneutic study of translation theory, Radegundis Stolze states, “Texts in their faithful interpretation are dynamic, evolving their potential meaning at every new reading,” and, “Translation is an open process towards an optimal solution, responsive to orientation, motivation and revision.” Seen this way, we need to shift our viewpoint “from a relationship between texts to the translator’s perspective” (43). Translation creates a new reading, and it comes out of a certain historical context, which greatly influences the translator’s motivation and interest.²¹

Hearn’s interest in traditional Japanese religious practices, which he saw as a collaborative practice between Shinto and Buddhism, is seen in “A Living Japan” as discussed above. His narrative seems to have been focused not only on detailed observations of the foreign culture, but also on the orally transmitted allegorical story-telling from generation to generation in order to aid survival in the vastly changing world. Hearn’s cultural criticism, however, is conspicuously absent in the re-translation of 1937. Tsunezo Nakai, mentioned above, translated a portion of the *tsunami* incident from Hearn’s “A Living God.” He read Hearn’s essay in a university English class in 1925 and was impressed by it because it was about Giheé, a prominent figure in his hometown in Wakayama. He re-translated Hearn’s story for his pupils to learn about a local celebrity’s praiseworthy spirit. Entitled “Inamura no Hi” [The Fire of the Rice Sheaves], it was selected for inclusion in Ministry of Education textbooks

²⁰ See “Proust’s Grandmother and The Thousand and One Nights: The ‘Cultural Turn’ in Translation Studies” by André Lefevere and Susan Bassnett, and “Translation: Its Genealogy in the West” by Lefevere in *Translation, History, and Culture*, eds. Bassnett and Lefevere, 1999. See also *Post-colonial Translation: Theory & Practice*, ed. Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, 1999.

²¹ In his essay “Übersetzen also Kultureller Transfer” (1986), Hans J. Vermeer refers to a translator as a culturalist and discusses that the value of translation depends on the aim of translation: “Translation is not the transcoding of words or sentences from one language to another, but a complex form of action, whereby someone provides information on a text (source language material) in a new situation and under changed functional, cultural and linguistic conditions, preserving formal aspects as closely as possible” (Qtd. in *Post-colonial Translation*, 81).

and read by children across Japan from 1937 to 1947.²² Nakai's translation highlights the village chief's self-sacrificing conduct, which saved the whole village from the *tsunami*. The year 1937 was an unsettling time before World War II, when Japan felt pressure from the West and sent troops to other Asian countries in order to aggressively expand its territory. The story does not specifically refer to battles or soldiers, but the implication is there. Here villagers confront the *tsunami*, a great force coming from the outside, that attacks their village. The village chief's wisdom and resoluteness, combined with the immediate response of the villagers, saves the village from total destruction. The story, then, had good reason to be selected as textbook material as it raised the morale of young children and encouraged communal cooperation.

Nakai took the story directly from Hearn's text, and similarly used the name Gohei that Hearn had appended to the hero, even though being a Wakayama native, Nakai must have known the hero's real name was Giheé. What Nakai changed was Hearn's ending. Given Nakai's focus on the morally respectable spirit of the noble chief, he ended his story with the villagers thanking him. The details of whether they made him into a god, or built a shrine to him as in Hearn's story, are erased. Nakai's Japanese, moreover, is simple, terse, and powerful—suitable to classroom recitation. As textbook material, it was studied as a model of good Japanese writing. The quality of Nakai's Japanese text was more critical perhaps than faithfulness to Hearn's text. With the aftermath of World War II and textbook reform, Nakai's story was omitted and his ideal Japanese hero was forgotten.²³

In 1983, another *tsunami* hit northern Japan and swept away thirteen children who were playing on the beach on a school excursion. Newspapers remembered the school story, "The Fire of the Rice Sheaves," and underlined the importance of teaching children such stories so that they would know what to do to avoid the dangers of "*tsunami*." Newspapers at that time also identified that Nakai was the author of the

²² Seismologist Akitsune Imamura made an appeal to adopt "Inamura no Hi" for national textbooks to raise children's awareness of earthquake disasters, and wrote "*Inamura no Hi*" no *Oshiekata ni tsuite* [How to Teach "Inamura no Hi"] (1940). In his chapter on Hearn's "A Living God" in *Koizumi Yakumo: Seiyō Dasshutsu no Yume*, Sukehiro Hirakawa remembers reading the Japanese translation and Hearn's *tsunami* story in the Japanese textbook, he makes a point that those who remember this story as a Japanese story would be surprised to know that it was originally written by Hearn in English. Hirakawa refers to Hearn as a Japanese writer who wrote in English and gives a detailed account of the historical background and discusses how journalistic truth and poetic truth are conflated in "A Living God" (155-176).

²³ Nakai's story was selected for inclusion in the 2013 edition of an elementary school textbook in Wakayama, the home prefecture of Giheé Hamaguchi and Nakai.

textbook version of the story. Responding to people's interest, Nakai self-published 500 copies of the story to distribute for free to those who wanted to read it. By that time, the 75-year-old retired schoolmaster was awarded a distinguished service medal by the Director-General of the National Land Agency for his contribution in raising awareness of the *tsunami* disaster. The death of the 13 children by the *tsunami* raised people's consciousness of the necessity to inform children of the dangers of *tsunami*. In this instance, notably, the timely social goal of accentuating the protective measures detailed in the story overrode Nakai's original emphasis on ideal leadership and cooperation among the villagers written into the very same text.

Around this time, from the 1980's to the 1990s, economic prosperity made it possible for Japan to host international conferences, which eventually provided opportunities for translation to take place. In order for Japanese to participate, they generally had to express themselves in English, as it was the most frequently used foreign language. Japanese have long welcomed knowledge from the outside. During the Meiji Period in particular when Hearn was writing, they studied foreign languages and translated and read foreign texts to gain knowledge and consider new ways to restructure their social systems. In reverse, in the last decade of the twentieth century Japan itself voluntarily started to dispatch information to the outside world—using English—as the primary means of communication. In 1993, the International *Tsunami* Symposium was held in Wakayama prefecture, the site of Hearn's *tsunami* story. In the conference proceedings, Nakai's story was then translated into English. As a new re-translation of Hearn's *tsunami* story, it was introduced to the conference participants as one example of Japan's experience with the *tsunami* phenomenon.²⁴

In 2005, now 150 years after Giheé's heroic act, Nakai's story was revived again

²⁴ A year after the *Tsunami* Symposium of 1993, Hearn's great grandson, Bon Koizumi, a professor of Folklore Studies, wrote a short column for the *Mainichi Shinbun* [*Mainichi Newspaper*] about his visit to the US state of Colorado in the summer of 1993. During the visit, he was surprised to find a story entitled "The Burning of the Rice Sheaves," a re-translation of the translation of his great grand-father's story, included in the elementary school textbook which was currently in use. It was not apparently adopted from Hearn's "A Living God," but was a direct translation from Nakai's textbook story. Bon Koizumi also mentions that the *tsunami* incident in Hearn's story was incorporated in the proceedings of the *Tsunami* International Symposium, and, although it was not from Hearn, it was a newly translated version of Nakai's story titled in English, "The Fire of the Rice Sheaves." See 26 June 1994, The *Mainichi*: "Inamura no Hi" Archive,

<<http://www.inamuranohi.jp/cgi-bin/browse.cgi?no=13&dir=06&model=>>.

for the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe as discussed in detail above. In the context of re-translations, it is illuminating to revisit Junichi Koizumi's keynote speech where he again modified Nakai's "The Fire of the Rice Sheaves." Whereas Nakai's story ended with people thanking the village chief, Koizumi closes with a sequel of what actually happened: the village chief Giheé had a seawall built which, to quote Koizumi, "saved many lives when another *tsunami* struck that same village about 90 years later." Koizumi also took a moral lesson from the story: "This story teaches us the importance of disaster reduction measures, such as remembering what we know and have been taught about disasters, quickly making decisions and actions, and always making everyday efforts to be prepared for an emergency situation." Interestingly, this quotation is taken from the English translation of his address that was then posted on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website. Koizumi's address, though oral in format, can also be regarded as another example of translation in the transformation genealogy of Giheé's story. The 2011 Great Tohoku Earthquake, with its awesome *tsunami* that devastated northeastern Japan and destroyed the nuclear power plant built along the shoreline, once again revived Nakai's story. I reappeared this time after 64 years in the elementary school textbook in Wakayama where the original incident took place.

This brief history of the story's transformation illustrates how each translation has been charged with a specific purpose. Re-translations and Re-readings both have depended on the specific needs of time and place, from Hearn's search for a spiritual guide in Japan to Nakai's passion to discipline the minds of young people and Koizumi's political message to build a global system of disaster prevention. In any case, stories are enlivened and quickened by catastrophic circumstances—perhaps, as Hearn assumed, stories must be re-told in order to survive. At each stage, their translations, although they modified according to the translators' motivations, enriched the stories to meet their target readers' expectations. In the case of the Disaster Reduction conference address, when the *tsunami* story was re-translated into English, it contained a new message: it was presented to the world community, inviting them to share the traditional wisdom of Japan together as "our" property.

The reference to China by way of Hearn in Lowell's poem which I quoted in the epigraph of this chapter reflects a coincidental and associative connection of the dichotomous relationship between East and West. Hearn as a Western writer living and writing in English in the Orient serves as a witness of the nineteenth century worldview

on the outskirts of the Western world. What is unique about Hearn, a “civilized nomad” as he called himself, was that he was able to see Japan in different phases both in time and space—both old and new Japan as well as Japan in the cartography of the modern world. He was both revered and privileged but was also discriminated against as an alien Westerner in Japan. His view of Japan was not simply one of exotic Orientalism. In fact, whatever exotic image he might have had about Japan was only destined to change in the westernizing new Japan.

Hearn’s work might have altered Japan-US relationship in history. Sukehiro Hirakawa discusses “A Living God” in his lecture at the Japanese Education Meeting of Aichi Branch, and supplements it with an episode that posits Hearn as an important and ghostly ambassadorial figure in post-WWII Japan. Hirakawa refers to the American officer General Fellers, the aide-de-camp to General MacArthur. Post-war reports made by Fellers, who was a passionate reader of Hearn, might well have affected the decision making process of the post-WWII measures in Japan. In fact, despite the long court processes at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East which sentenced many Japanese military officers as war criminals, the Emperor was not court-martialed.²⁵ The moral way, or the Shinto spirit, that Hearn delineated influenced an American who came to see the cultural significance of the Emperor in a critical moment of history. Hearn’s story served as a guide for General Fellers to understand the Orient, as it did for Robert Lowell’s father. Recently, General Feller’s story was revived in Peter Webber’s film, *Emperor* (2012). At each stage, therefore, as the case of “A Living God” demonstrates, Hearn’s story has been translated and transformed in order to meet the contemporary readers’ needs and expectations. This renewal of the tale through its various translations has also enriched the story’s potential. Hearn’s story re-tells an old story, one that needs be recounted repeatedly as a reminder and warning in order for civilization to evolve in an ethical way. “A Living God” serves as the best example of a story with endless potential to be re-told and transformed, and thus to survive.

²⁵ See “‘Inamura no Hi’: Yoki Kokugo Kyokasho no Omoide [‘The Fire of the Rice Sheaves’: Memories of Good Reading in a Japanese Textbook],” 5-6.

FOUR

Trans-Pacific Songs

1. My Song and Our Song:

Demystifying Whitmanesque America

Over the Western sea hither from Niphon come,
Courteous, the swart-cheek'd two-sworded envoys,
Leaning back in their open barouches, bare-headed, impassive,
Ride to-day through Manhattan.

The Originatress comes,
The nest of languages, the bequeather of poems, the race of eld,
Florid with blood, pensive, rapt with musings, hot with passion,
Sultry with perfume, with ample and flowing garments,
With sunburnt visage, with intense soul and glittering eyes,
The race of Brahma comes!

Walt Whitman, "A Broadway Pageant," 1860¹

Then with a delicious shock of surprise I see something for which I had been looking,
—far exceeding all anticipation—but so ghostly, so dream white against the morning blue,
that I did not observe it at the first glance: an exquisite snowy cone towering above all
other visible things—Fujinoyama! Its base, the same tint as the distances, I cannot
see—only the perfect crown, seeming to hang in the sky like a delicate film,—a phantom.

Lafcadio Hearn, "Winter Journey to Japan," 1890²

¹ From "A Broadway Pageant" ("The Errand Bearers"), *Leaves of Grass*, Norton Critical Edition, ed. Scullery Bradley (1973) 242, 243; the poem was included in the 3rd edition (1860) of the book.

² From *An American Miscellany*, 2, 262-63.

The epigraphs I cite above suggest aspects of nineteenth-century Western (American) views of the Orient (Japan). Walt Whitman sees the Orient as a mythical Mother figure and the origin of civilization and democratic America as her son at the pioneering frontline of history. The Mother comes to greet the prospective son whose democracy will eventually govern the whole globe. Whitman mythologizes the Orient, using it in his poem to praise democratic America. Hearn's essay, in contrast, posits Japan as "a phantom," a politics free fairyland. Unlike Whitman, he is not mystifying Japan for the sake of exoticism. Hearn's sight of Mt. Fuji looming in the distance for instance, appeared as a dream—in the shape of large "corn," "a crown," and thus an unnamed "phantom." Leaving behind a Whitmanesque America, a land celebrated for democracy and individualism, Hearn explores an alternate world in the Orient where people, according to Percival Lowell, did not possess individuality. In order to understand the nature of the Japanese, however, Hearn struggled to transcend the pervasive Whitmanesque values of his time. Drawing from discussions in the previous two chapters, this chapter examines Hearn's view of America, by way of Whitman, and his observations of Japan as a counterexample to American individualism.

As is clear in "A Broadway Pageant," Walt Whitman conceived of the Orient as the "Originatress" of all languages and cultures. In 1860, Tokugawa shogunate sent three delegates to ratify the new Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation between the US and Japan.³ It was their welcome march on Broadway that Whitman saw and referenced in his poem. Curious *samurai* costumes and strange hairstyles were probably inspiration enough to imagine the "Originatress" in the Far East. Whitman's portrayal of these samurai figures, however, were not meant to welcome them, but to highlight young America's vision of democracy. He imagines that the Orient, the maternal force behind civilization, has come all the way to Manhattan to pay tribute to the son as the future of civilization. The arrival of the messengers from the Orient serves as a symbolic sign: the "Originatress." It sanctions the expansion of American democracy to the West. In time, America will arrive at the original starting point, the Orient where the sun rises, the orbital movement will then complete of itself, and a new era of American democracy will begin. In Whitman's poem, the poet calls on the son: "Young Libertad! / With the venerable Asia, the all-mother, / Be considerate with her,

³ The delegation altogether consisted of 77 *samurai*.

now and ever, hot Libertad—for you are all;/ Bend your proud neck to the long-off mother, now sending messages over the archipelagoes to you;/ Bend your proud neck low for once, young Libertad” (245). The “Young” America is asked not to treat the aged “all-mother” disrespectfully because she has her “messages” to unfold in support of her son's project. The respect paid by the delegates from “Niphon” to America in fact was an act of acknowledging the rising power of “Young” America. The purpose of the delegation had been to redress the unfair exchange rate, which was not accomplished. Whitman’s poem suggests that American expansion in the West is a divine mission. It was written just before the outbreak of the Civil War, and Whitman might have felt the need to praise the values of American democracy and the significance of fostering a united spirit. Nonetheless, “A Broadway Pageant” records the initiation of Japan-US relations. It presents Japan as an odd, old, and obsolete nation, whereas the US through American democracy is characterized as young, vibrant, and well meaning, whose masculine, imperial power would soon reach the Orient.

“Winter Journey to Japan,” the first piece Hearn sent to *Harper's Monthly Magazine* from Japan, is not about Japan per se, but about his journey en route through the Canadian prairies and Rocky Mountains and across the Pacific Ocean to Yokohama, Japan. Because his trip to Japan was sponsored by Sir William Van Horne, the president of the Canadian Pacific Railway, his essay was a tribute to Canadian landscapes (Stevenson, *The Grass Lark* 206; Tinker 332). It serves as a prelude for his voyage to a foreign land and prepares the narrator, or Hearn, for a strange encounter there. Hearn's perception becomes more refined as he passes through the vast whiteness of the Canadian territories and the magnificent Rockies. Arthur Kunst comments that Hearn's language in “Winter Journey to Japan” shows his “mastery of the rhythms of the American language,” and the variations and repetitions of rhythms slowly awaken the sensations and awareness of the observer: “the sensation of speeding along by train through a series of cold Canadian landscapes” and the “sleepy realization of a beginning” produce a mental state in which “the eyes adjust to detail, the mind responds with greater agility” and “the prose reflects this reaction in its complexity” (88). The emerging vision of Japan that ends the essay resonates with anticipation for something new to be discovered in “ghostly” Japan. Whatever that might be, the traveler is now open to it. Hearn slowly but surely penetrates the body of Japan in order to reach its soul.

Robert A. Rosenstone's multi-voiced biographical narrative, *Mirror in the Shrine*:

American Encounters with Meiji Japan traces the experiences of three nineteenth-century Americans who went to Japan, William Elliot Griffis, Edward S. Morse, and Lafcadio Hearn. Referring to Hearn's "The Winter Journey to Japan," Rosenstone declares that his "appetite is too great": "What he wishes is not a single item, but a store full. And more than that: he wants the shop and its owner, the whole street, the city and bay, the mountains, the land and its people. He wishes to purchase the moment, put it in a box, wrap it up neatly and keep it inviolate forever" (29). Although modest and shy, Hearn had an enormous passion for thorough knowledge of his subject. He was a ravenous writer who desired to take in everything, not only what was observable and collectable but also the entirety of a cultural phenomenon. Hearn's experience in the French West Indies (1888-1890) had already taught him that the object of observation, whether it be landscape or local people, would escape him if he tried to describe it within the framework of his Western preconceptions.⁴ His solution, therefore, was to wait—to wait for the moment when something emerged in his thoughts, instead of on whatever his eyes rested. His discipline as a writer was to remain aware of and shed his preconceived value judgments.

Hearn had ambitions to become a prose-poet and write something new. When he had found out that he could go to Japan as a reporter, he wrote to William Patten, the art director of *Harper's Magazine*, about the prospective topics he could pursue in Japan. He knew he had to propose something different as Japan was "so well trodden" already, but he was also confident that he could find something to write about. He wrote to Patten that his book would be full of "life and colour" and would give his readers "vivid sensation" like an immediate experience (Qtd. in Murray 328-9).⁵ Hearn had just finished writing his *Two Years in the French West Indies* and knew that ethnological travelogue would be profitable. He thought that Japan would be his second *Martinique*; he would spend a couple of years there and complete a book for a travelogue readership.⁶ Hearn was correct that Japan had become a fashionable topic for

⁴ For his experience in Martinique, see Nabae, "Kureo-ru no yume—Lafcadio Hearn no 'Futuryou nishi inndoshotou no ninennkann' to 'Youma' (Creole Dreams in Two Years in the French West Indies and Youma)," *Iso no Jikuukan—amerika bunnngaku to yutopia [arious Phases of Space and Time—American Literature and Utopia]*, 35-56.

⁵ William Patten was the Art Editor of *Harper's*; see Murray 328.

⁶ Hearn later described his journey to Japan as undesired and wrote in his unpublished autobiographical notes: "Went to Japan against my will, simply because it was either that or a return to journalism. Journalism allows little time for literary study or work of the durable sort; —so I chose Japan. Stranded. Found employment as teacher—and the story ends. Fantastic Journey" in "Autobiographical notes written in Japan undated," in the U of Virginia Library Hearn archive; qtd. in Murray 132.

turn-of-the-century America. By the mid 1880's, the Boston Museum had obtained a large collection of Japanese pottery brought back by Edward S. Morse, Japanese and Chinese paintings and Buddhist art from Ernest Fenollosa, and about twenty-six thousand miscellaneous Japanese craft objects from William Sturgis Bigelow.⁷ Carl Dowson states that “Chamberlain knew more; Fenollosa had a finer sense of Japanese arts; Edward Morse was better informed about architecture and handicrafts; Percival Lowell arrived at clearer opinions about religion and culture. It remained for Hearn to explore, in a sense, from within, to ask probing questions about his own emotional response, so that he could translate his feelings for his audience” (132). Hearn’s Japan was “trodden” indeed, but he still could write something new because he was not interested in static cultural icons. He was interested in interactions between people and things as well as the changing phases of culture in the globalizing age. As Dowson states, Hearn was interested in translating “feelings” of not only his own but the people he met in Japan. His mission was to translate these “intangible cultural assets.”

Hearn left New York for Japan in desperation. After his return from Martinique, he first sought refuge at his friend George Gould's home in Philadelphia, where he only found himself to be an uninvited guest. Gould, moreover, had used Hearn as an example in an ophthalmology article he had written about the relationship between vision and mental states, using Hearn’s notes without his permission and asserting that Hearn’s poor vision was the cause of his abnormal mind. Hearn broke with Gould and went to New York to seek help from his old friend Elizabeth Bisland, then editor of *Cosmopolitan* magazine. Yet, he was again humiliated. A friend of Bisland’s invited Hearn to be the guest of honor at her grandiose apartment on Central Park South, but the doorman directed him to the service elevator judging that such a seedy looking man was not “carriage company.” Hearn was said to have not uttered a word throughout the dinner party (Cott 33). Of Irish-Greek mixed blood, small in stature, near blind in one eye, and poor—Hearn was far from the stereotypical young American male. Within a year after his return from Martinique, he left for Japan on 8 March 1890. Bisland, who Hearn admired, was in the news at the time because she had been in an around-the-world race, competing with another New York woman journalist, Nelly

⁷ See “Introduction,” *Lafcadio Hearn: Japan's Great Interpreter: A New Anthology of His Writings 1894-1904* (1992) 8.

Bly.⁸ As major New York magazines sponsored such global races, touring in unknown corners of the world was becoming a fashion. As if following Bisland's passage abroad, Hearn left New York anticipating a triumphant return in a few years' time. Unfortunately he died in 1904 and never made it back.

Demythologizing American "Individuality"

In writing to William Patten of *Harper's* about his plans for his book on Japan, Hearn made a detailed list of what he would cover. The list reads:

"First impressions: climate and scenery; the poetry of nature in Japan,"

"City life to the foreigner"

"Art in everyday life: effect of foreign influences on art products"

"The new civilization"

"Amusements"

"The Guéchas (dancing girls) and their profession"

"The new Educational system, —child life—child games, etc."

"Home life and popular domestic religion"

"Public cults—Temple ceremonies and the duties of worshippers"

"Curiosities of Legends and superstitions"

"Woman's life in Japan"

"Old popular melodies and songs"

"The Old Masters of Japan —in the arts: their influence as a survival or a memory; their powers or value as reflectors of the life and nature of the country"

"Curiosities of popular speech, —singularities of verbal usage in everyday life"

"The social organism, —political and military conditions"

"Japan as a place to settle in; the situation of the foreign element, etc."

(Lafcadio Hearn, *Japan's Great Interpreter* 8)

His topics are similar to what he had written about in his Martinique travelogue. First impressions, home life, cults, legends, women, and songs were all familiar topics for

⁸ See Kudo, *Yume-no-tojo* for a biographical account of Bisland and a discussion of the competition with Nellie Bly in 1889.

him to address. He apparently aimed to focus on ethnological and anthropological aspects of life in Japan, as he had done in Martinique. In his proposal to Patten, he also promises that he will make his chapter titles more “romantic—possibly Japanese” for his target readership/the magazine’s target readership. He further describes his “aim”:

“The studied aim would be to create, in the minds of the readers, a vivid impression of *living* in Japan, —not simply as an observer but as one taking part in the daily existence of the common people, and *thinking with their thoughts*. Whenever possible a narrative would be made at least as entertaining as a short story” (8).

It is noteworthy that he planned to write “a vivid impression of *living* in Japan” that was to entail “*thinking with their thoughts*.” His purpose was not to display, describe or interpret, since these approaches had already been taken by others before him. But to present a moment to be shared with his readers in America was something else. In other words, Hearn intended to invite people of different backgrounds to share a foreign experience in his literary space. While in Japan, he published a book a year. Each volume consists of various writings, stories, songs, ranging from daily life, religion and education in an effort to present Japan from different perspectives. In this way, the readers could imagine themselves seeing Japan as an insider, “*thinking with their thoughts*.”

About a year before his death, and thirteen years after he wrote the above-mentioned proposal to Patten in 1902, Hearn wrote to his old friend, Mrs. Wetmore, née Bisland, about the possibility of a series of lectures at American universities. He was thinking about returning to America in order to provide his son Kazuo with an American education. He wrote to his friend about his prospective lecture topics: “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” (15:226). At the time, he was obliged to give up his position at Tokyo Imperial University, and most probably out of desperation, he resumed his correspondence with his old friend. He wrote: “I was forced out of the university—on the pretext that as a Japanese citizen I was not entitled to a ‘foreign salary’ (. . .) I have been only driven out of the service, and practically banished from the country” (15:232). Though he had

already published ten books on Japan, Japan clearly being a familiar subject, he confessed in the letter in language italicized for emphasis: “*I have learned about Japan only enough to convince me that I know nothing about Japan*” (15:226). It might appear affected, but perhaps after thirteen years, Hearn was still mystified by Japan and its people. The theme for his prospective lectures, he continued in his letter, would be the nature of Japanese mentality and its historical development: “I am treating of religious Japan, —not of artistic or economical Japan, except by way of illustration. Percival Lowell’s ‘Soul of the Far East’ is the only book of the kind in English; but I have taken a totally different view of the causes and the evolution of things” (1903, 15:245). During his stay in Japan, his main focus was on religious practices in Japan. He was not concerned with religion itself, but about how it had helped to shape the mentality of the Japanese people. Hearn referred to Lowell because they were in agreement that religious practices had much to do with the formation of the mentality and spirituality, or “(non)-individuality,” of the Japanese. As discussed in previous chapters, the question of religion and individuality were important issues that Hearn considered in Japan. His uniqueness, I would argue, is that he was not simply thinking on the level of the pure “Japanese” race and their religion, but of the global populace as a whole and their spiritual guidance in the form of a new ethics. The increasing trade and political exchanges around the world would produce multiracial and multilingual children. And Hearn was trying to write stories that could be shared by this future global populace.

Hearn’s return trip to the US was nearly finalized in 1903. But the contract he had successfully drawn up with Cornell University at a salary of \$2,500 was unexpectedly cancelled because a typhoid epidemic in Ithaca had depleted university funds.⁹ Hearn also had received a favorable letter from the President of Stanford University, but he died suddenly in September 1903 and his plan to go back to the US had never been realized. His lecture notes were published posthumously as *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation* (1905). In this book, unlike Lowell who develops his argument deductively beginning with an assumption followed by supporting examples, Hearn

⁹ See Letter to Mrs. Wetmore, Tokyo 1903, *Life and Letters*, 2, 493, 492. Mrs. Wetmore wrote to a number of universities in the United States and also in London. In one of his final letters to Mrs. Wetmore, Hearn refers to a letter he had received from President Jordan of Stanford University. He might have continued the correspondence had he not fallen ill and suddenly died in September of 1904. After the “depletion” of Tokyo Imperial University, he was fortunate to be offered a professorship at Waseda University founded by Count Ohkuma and was about to postpone his return to America to pursue this opportunity.

argues in an inductive way. He attempts a comparative method by juxtaposing different cultures and elements in order to discover a unifying principle. To delineate the soul of Japan, he refers to Greek social mores described in Fustel de Coulanges's *The Ancient City*. He locates similarities between the Japanese and ancient Greek cultures, assuming that like the Greek model, Japanese society was founded on ancient ancestor worship and a family social system. These similarities fascinated Hearn and the association with ancient Greece gave authority to his accounts of old Japan. He understood that the Greek and Japanese social systems were not old and undeveloped, but rather, were ideal and fully developed. Hearn was ready to refute Lowell's argument that the Japanese have no individuality and are thus underdeveloped in the process of evolution. Hearn reiterates his point that individuality does not serve as a measure to judge cultural sophistication.¹⁰

As is shown in his letter to Mrs. Wetmore, Percival Lowell's *The Soul of the Far East* (1888) had been on Hearn's mind throughout his career in Japan. Serving first as a guide for him, his direct experience of Japanese culture eventually led him to reevaluate Lowell's assumption that unlike Westerners Orientals lack individuality or personality. In his letters to Basil Chamberlain, Hearn occasionally refers to Lowell. He is at first struck with admiration by the idea that presence or absence of individuality is what differentiates Westerners from Orientals, but after a year or so in Japan, he becomes skeptical. Although he maintains that *Soul of the Far East* is beautifully written and he finds Lowell's clear-cut scientific argument "luminous and psychically electric" (To Bisland 1889; 14:83), he points out that in order to argue for the presence or absence of individuality or personality, one has to take for granted that "individuality" or "personality" are things substantial enough to be judged as signs of a civilized human being:

I have been reading Mr. Lowell's book over again; for it is one thing to read it in Philadelphia, and quite another thing to read it after having spent a year and a half in Japan. And the power and the charm impress me more than ever. But I am so much horrified by its conclusions—at least a few of them—that I try very hard to find a flaw therein. I think the idea that the degree of the development of individuality in a people necessarily marks its place in the great march of mind is not true necessarily. At least it may be argued about. For as the tendency of

¹⁰ In *Seiyojin no Shinto kan*, Hirakawa devotes two chapters to discussing the significance of Fustel de Coulanges in relation to the Japanese family system and ancestor worship.

the age is toward class specialization and interdependent subdivision of all branches of knowledge and all practical application of that knowledge, the development of the individuality of every integer of a community would seem to me to unfit the unit to form a close part of any specialized class. In brief, I doubt, or rather I wish to doubt, that the development of individuality is a lofty or desirable tendency. Much of what is called personality and individuality is intensely repellent, and makes the principal misery of Occidental life. It means much that is connected with pure aggressive selfishness: and its extraordinary development in a country like America or England seems a confirmation of Viscount Torio's theory that Western civilization has the defect of cultivating the individual at the expense only of the mass, and giving unbounded opportunities to human selfishness, unrestrained by religious sentiment, law, or emotional feeling. (1891; 14: 142)

Later in 1893, Hearn argues that the same rule cannot be applied to different cultural samples and argues that Lowell's ideas of "individuality" and "personality" imply "an abstract quantity" that does not exist in reality. He suggests that the idea must be dealt with as a phenomenological manifestation and "as a quality."

(. . .) I forgot in my last to chat about Mr. Lowell's "impersonality" and "personality" as an abstract quantity. I think as a quality, personality cannot be said to exist at all in the transcendental sense. I don't believe in *that* sense of it. The impression certain men can produce upon others by their nerve presence is not, and cannot be proved to be, due to anything magnetic or hypermagnetic inside of them—but to the recognition by others of force of aggressive will and other traits, uncommonly developed; —they cause, in other words, a certain sense of caution and danger. (15:354)

Through his direct contact with the Japanese, Hearn discovers that from behind their expressionless, mask-like faces, "personality" flickers. That is, the outside appearance and the inner mental state for Japanese are two different levels of reality. It takes time for a stranger to realize this fact and it requires patience to wait for the moment when the inner quality of a Japanese person manifests itself as something personal and unique. Hearn writes to Chamberlain:

Yet Lowell says the Japanese have no individuality! I wish he had to teach here for a year, and he would discover some of the most extraordinary individuality

he ever saw. There are eccentrics and personalities among the Japanese as with us: only, they show less quickly on the surface. No man can make a sweeping general statement about Japanese character in a negative sense, without finding out his mistake later. It is only by degrees, however, that one finds out they have just as much difference among them as any Orientals. But physiologically and conventionally these are less perceptible at first sight. (1894; 16:198)

Just as Hearn had discovered diverse coloring among the Creoles in the French West Indies, he observes different expressions that flash behind the solemn faces of his Japanese students. It is not that they have a unique character, but that they react in their own unique and varied ways at different moments so that they appear as “eccentrics” or “personalities.” What Hearn is trying to say is that for Japanese, individuality is something they also “have,” but there is the tendency for it to only manifest itself as some kind of personal characteristic based on the circumstances. Thus, Hearn thinks if Lowell had spent a long enough time with Japanese students, he might have discovered such an inner tendency of Japanese as well.

What Hearn discovers in the faces of his students are varied representations of a Japanese mentality that have been shaped through Japan’s long history of religious and moral practices. “From the Diary of an English Teacher,” appearing in *The Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* (1894), describes the faces of the Japanese students Hearn taught in Kumamoto from 1891 to 1894. He records this observation: “compared with Occidental faces they seem but ‘half-sketches,’ so soft their outlines are,” and “Some have a childish freshness and frankness indescribable (...).” He finds that they have no desire to express their emotions: “all are equally characterized by a singular placidity—expressing neither love nor hate nor anything save perfect repose and gentleness” (6: 156). Their faces, however, express some “healthy tone of skepticism” because they are able to respond intelligently to the changes of their era in which “Scientific education is rapidly destroying belief in old superstitions.” Hearn nevertheless observes, “the deeper religious sense remains with [the students]” (145).

Hearn contends that the “individuality” of Japanese appears phenomenologically in conversation. He gives examples of social situations that have impressed him and asserts that he can further surmise, in an inductive way, how Japanese would likely behave. In those times of modernity and the ensuing global exchange of commercial, political, and territorial expansion, Hearn’s students were exposed to Western ideas which made them waver between an old Japanese system and a new Westernized one.

In a position to hybridize their mind for the modern world, “individuality,” or the recognition of an independent self distinct from others, was necessary equipment in order to be viewed and taken seriously by their Western counterparts. Yet such “individuality” required them to become “pseudo-Western” and repress their Japanese nature, based on collective values. Hearn witnessed students going through mental struggles related to this issue. In “Jiujutsu,” his student asks if Japanese virtues of self-sacrifice for society could be appreciated in the eyes of the West: “And our old society cultivated those qualities of unselfishness, and courtesy, and benevolence which you admire, at the sacrifice of the individual. But Western society cultivates the individual by unrestricted competition—competition in the power of thinking and acting” (7: 178). For a Westerner like Lowell, the selfless state of Japanese people translated into an absence of individuality, while for the Japanese student, the Westerner’s individuality meant an aggressive pursuit that undermined communal harmony and sympathy.

Whitman—Yes or No?

In order to fully appreciate Hearn's Japanese writings, his twenty-year experience in America must be examined further. When Hearn refers to Western culture vis-à-vis Japanese culture, he has an American ideal in mind. To Hearn, America offered the world the ideals of individualism, freedom, and democracy. To Hearn, his contemporary, American poet Walt Whitman represented the very spirit of America as the spokesperson of American democracy and the American dream. Hearn’s critique of American individualism as a self-complacent egoism may be further explained by looking at his analyses of Whitman.

Whitman idea represented democratic, progressive, and confident postbellum America. His *Leaves of Grass* offers, as Sacvan Bercovitch states, “the highest Romantic tribute to the process of poetic self-creation, as text-proof of America's errand into the future” (29). Being skeptical of “America’s errand into the future,” however, Hearn felt both attraction and repulsion to such claims. He writes about his ambivalent feelings in a letter to Gould in 1888:

You ask about my idea of Whitman? I have not patience for him—not as for Emerson. (. . .) Then there is a shagginess, an uncouthness, a Calibanishness about Whitman that repels. He makes me think of some gigantic dumb being that sees things and wants to make others see them, and cannot for want of a finer means of expression that Nature gives him. But there is manifest the rude nobility of the man—the primitive and patriarchal soul-feeling to men and the world. Whitman lays Cyclopean foundation which, I fancy, some wonderful architect will yet build up some marvellous thing. . . . (14:58)

Then as a postscript he added:

Speaking of Whitman, I must add that my idea of him is not consciously stable. It has changed within some years. What I like, however, was not Whitman exactly—rather the perception of something Whitman feels, and disappoints by his attempted expression of. (14:58-59)

Hearn read Whitman thoroughly over the course of his life. What he took issue with, in particular, was Whitman's crude and imposing manner to "make others see." While he confesses some appreciation for Whitman's "rude nobility" and "the primitive and patriarchal soul-feeling," he found such manliness and insistence of his own view to be unsettling. Hearn felt some affinity, however, with Whitman's larger baroque vision which embraced the entire universe.

As a literary editor and reviewer for the newspaper *Times-Democrat* in New Orleans, Hearn critically reviewed Whitman's work in his column "*The Leaves of Grass*" (30 July 1882). He read the above-mentioned 1882 edition published by the Rees Welsh and Company of Philadelphia. The reference to this particular edition might suggest the publication history of the book. *The Leaves of Glass*, published by James R. Osgood and Company in 1881, had been accused of obscenity by the Society for the Prevention of Vice and Oliver Stevens, District Attorney of Massachusetts, accordingly threatened Whitman with prosecution. As a result, the publisher abandoned its contract with Whitman, even despite the fact that 2000 copies had been already sold. In March 1882, Rees Welsh and Company took over and published the book, promoting it through vulgar advertising.¹¹ This background story explains why Hearn wrote that the book of this particular edition lies on the table "entire, priapic, undraped" and that "we

¹¹ See Roger Asselineau, *The Evolution of Walt Whitman* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1999) 236-242.

sought in vain for those immortal beauties by Walt Whitman, suppressed in Massachusetts” (*Essays on American Literature* 91). In fact, Hearn's description of the barrenness of the book criticizes the taste of the publisher as well as the prudish literary climate of the North, which had eliminated from the printed text the voice of Whitman's “immortal beauties” but enhanced his crudities on the cover. By making much of the publishing history of the book, Hearn cleverly avoids direct commentary on its content.

In his review, Hearn states that he does not judge a work of art “from the standpoint of religious or purely social ethics” and that his ideal in literature is the presentation of “a perfect human body.” Hearn nevertheless concludes that Whitman's muse is “indecent and ugly, lascivious and gawky, lubricous and coarse” (93, 92). Hearn, in short, did not feel comfortable with Whitman's style or explicit sexual expressions. He criticized Whitman by calling him “an American Naturalist,” and by “Naturalist” Hearn refers to writers in the camp of pseudo-scientific materialists, those who “describe only that which is; they are mere dissectors when they are not mere photographers” (92).¹² Reading Whitman may have reminded Hearn of “a dissecting room and a butcher's shop” whose sickening materiality he had known well as a reporter in Cincinnati.¹³ Whitman's listing of the visible in America made Hearn respond that Whitman only had perspective to see materialistic America. In his review, Hearn abstains from commenting on both Whitman's scandal and the content of the book, though he does refer to Whitman's power of language in his verse: “there is some philosophy in the book; there are pages of force and rough beauty; there is originality, depth, strong feeling. The book is not the creation of a literary quack. It is the work of an honest man, —rude in his conceptions, reckless in his expressions, erroneous occasionally in his deductions, eccentric, erratic, inartistic, enthusiastic, dogmatic likewise” (94). Hearn intuits a poetic voice in Whitman that comes out of his sincere feelings and passions and even expresses approval in a Whitmanesque manner by his poignant use of adjectives.

In an 1883 letter to William D. O'Connor, champion of Whitman and author of “The Good Gray Poet,” Hearn makes an apologetic comment about his review of Whitman. He also confides, “I have always secretly admired Whitman” (August 1883;

¹² In *The New York Examiner*, 19 Jan. 1882, a reviewer comments on Whitman: “He is a wicked Tupper, he is an obscene Ossian, he is a poetical Zola; he is —Walt Whitman” (qtd. in Asselineau 248).

¹³ See my discussion in Chapter One, “Let the Body Speak: Lafcadio Hearn's Cincinnati Journalism.”

13: 263-264).¹⁴ Mercurial though he could be, Hearn is probably telling the truth rather than attempting to make a flattering statement to Whitman's friend; he wrote outright that he "admired Whitman" for his true voice and power. Still, Hearn feels uncomfortable with Whitman's verse due to its lack of form.¹⁵ He explains his ideas to O'Connor:

There is no possibility of praising Whitman unreservedly in the ordinary newspaper, whose proprietors always tell you to remember that their paper "Goes into respectable families," or accuse you of loving obscene literature if you attempt controversy. Journalism is not really a literary profession. (. . .)
(13:264)

He believes Whitman lacks the artistry to finesse his material:

(. . .) I want to see the gold purified and wrought into marvellous fantastic shapes; I want to see the jewels cut into roses of facets, or turned as by Greek cunning into faultless witchery of nude loveliness. And Whitman's gold seems to me in the ore: his diamonds and emeralds in the rough. (. . .) Whitman's is indeed a Titanic voice; but it seems to me the voice of the giant beneath the volcano, poignant half stifled, half uttered, poignant roaring betimes because articulation is impossible. (13: 264-265)

While one could argue that Whitman and Hearn had much in common in their passion for literature, Hearn prefers art as a well-wrought urn, rather than a chunk of gold.¹⁶ In the late 1890's, in one of the lectures he gave at Tokyo Imperial University, Hearn used

¹⁴ Their correspondence began when, impressed by Hearn's articles on Doré, O'Connor wrote to him. O'Connor also introduced Hearn's works to Whitman. See "Gustave Doré" (2 January 1883) and "Doré's RAVEN" (2 December 1883), *American Miscellany* 107-120. Hearn expressed his appreciation of Whitman's criticism of the narrow policy of American magazines that limited opportunities for young American writers; see "American Magazines" (27 October 1879), *Editorials* 70-72.

¹⁵ Young Henry James, Jr. criticizes Whitman for the same reason. He addresses the poet, "You must respect the public which you address; for it has taste, if you have not. It delights to see these conceptions cast into worthy form. It is indifferent to brute sublimity. . . . It is not enough to be rude lugubrious, and grim. You must also be serious. You must forget yourself in your ideas. Your personal qualities—the vigor of your temperament, the manly independence of your nature, the tenderness of your heart poignant these facts are impertinent. You must be *possessed*, and you must strive to possess your possession. If in your striving you break into divine eloquence, then you are a poet. . . ." (16 November 1865), *Nation*, *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature American Writers English Writers*, Library of America (1998) 633-634.

¹⁶ In a December letter to O'Connor in the same year, Hearn included this postscript: "If Symonds praises Whitman, stand reprov'd for my least doubts; for he is the very apostle of *classicism and form*" (*Life and Letters* 1 286).

Whitman's work as an example of a coarse and unfinished form of art.¹⁷ Hearn first describes the nature of poetry and tells his students, "when a composition has no form, it is nonsense to call it poetry"; rather, it is "literary protoplasm." Then, he says that Whitman's verse possesses "certain merits of coarse strength and excellent sincerity," but it is not "literature in the true sense" (*On Poets* 817-41; Qtd. in Yu 129-30). It seems to be true that, as Carl Dowson contends, Whitman had "qualities too close for Hearn's comfort" (123). They were in a sense both literary outcasts in their own lands, attracted by the Orient and by the beauty of "a perfect human body," and both possessed fanatical passion to convey their sensuous experiences. Whitman chose to sing in a roaring, growing verbosity, incorporating every new passion into his chanting voice. Hearn, on the other hand, preferred refined notes like the chirpings of insects and wrote in a short essay or folkloric form.

Moreover, Hearn was not comfortable with Whitman's open admiration of himself as well as his belief in American democracy. He was skeptical because he believed these attitudes encouraged democratic capitalism, selfish pursuit of materialistic gain, and self-complacency. He feared that a materialistic and economic America would undermine the spiritual, or invisible realms that he saw as the sources of creative imagination. In another letter to O'Connor, Hearn ponders whether Oriental wisdom could be integrated into the Western way of thinking:

After all, Buddhism in some esoteric form may prove the religion of the future. Is not the cycle of transmigration actually proven in the vast evolution from nomad to man, from worm to King through innumerable myriads of brute form? Is not the tendency of all modern philosophy toward the acceptance of the ancient Indian teaching that the visible is but an emanation of the Invisible—a delusion—a creature, or a shadow, of the Supreme Dream? What are heavens for all Christian fancies, after all, but Nirvana—extinction of individuality in the eternal interblending of man with divinity; for a bodiless, immaterial, non-sensuous condition means nothingness, and no more." (1883; 13: 285-286).

Hearn is referring to Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* (1879). He speculates that what is "visible" to humans is only a partial manifestation of "the Invisible." Whitman's

¹⁷ This is noteworthy because Whitman was not yet part of classic literature taught at universities in the US. Hearn's lectures were unique, as they were not bound by the idea of the so-called classics of his day.

“Naturalist” gaze, therefore, appears insufficient as it only focuses on visible materiality. Hearn yearns for “Nirvana” as an ideal place because it is free from “individuality,” or the secular self, and all living things can equally find their spiritual haven there. He further adds that what evolutionists George John Romanes,¹⁸ Charles Darwin, and Tito Vignoli¹⁹ “convince us of interrelation—the brotherhood of animals and of men” was “anticipated by Gautama.” As was discussed in the previous two chapters, Hearn is not concerned about religious belief in his references to Buddhism, but argues rather that ancient Oriental wisdom and modern Western science should converge and reach the same conclusion.

In Japan, Hearn naturally came to know more about Japanese Buddhism and contemplated the composite soul of the human race that he was convinced one inherits from prehistoric times. In an essay entitled “Dust” he avows: “I am individual, —an individual soul! Nay, I am a population, —a population unthinkable for multitudes, even by groups of a thousand millions! Generations of generations I am, æons of æons!” (8:73). Hearn’s emphatic tone almost echoes a Whitmanesque chant: in *Leaves of Glass*, having named everyone and everything he sees, Whitman sings, “I am large, I contain multitudes.” Whitman’s composite American self, however, does not eliminate the individual self, since individual freedom is the basis of his idea of American democracy. In contrast, Hearn believes that one has to make efforts to erase one’s individuality in order to achieve an ethically sound society. Thus he first uses the word “individual,” but later rephrases it as “individual soul” and then enlarges its concept to “population.” Hearn’s “multitudes” refer to the “generations” of the human soul that people inherit over the course of evolutionary transformation. This concept is different from Whitman’s “multitudes” which refers to his fellow Americans with whom he is united under the flag of American democracy. Overall Hearn was critical of individualism because he believed it fostered human selfishness and greed and encouraged imperialistic and economic expansion.

Hearn was simply unable to sing the song of democratic America together with Whitman. In a 1904 letter to Earnest Cosby, he deplored that American democracy, or

¹⁸ George John Romanes (1848-1894) is a Canadian-born British evolutionary biologist and physiologist and the founder of comparative psychology.

¹⁹ Tito Vignoli (1829-1914) is an Italian anthropologist and became the director of the Museum of Natural History in Milan in 1893. His *Myth and Science* (1879) was translated into English and published by Appleton in 1882.

capitalistic democracy, swept away the beauty of “American liberties”:

No higher condition of human freedom ever existed than what America enjoyed between –let us say, 1870 and 1885. To effect higher conditions, a higher development of human nature would have been necessary. Where have American liberties now gone? A free press has ceased to exist. (. . .) In the so-called land of freedom men and women are burnt at the stake in the presence of Christian churches—for the crime of belonging to another race. (. . .) Competition will soon be a thing of the past; and the future will be to your stock-companies, trusts, and syndicates. The rule of the many will be about as merciful as a calculating-machine, and as moral as a lawn-mower. (. . .) Here are gloomy thoughts for you! You see that I cannot sympathize with the Whitmanesque ideal of democracy. That ideal was the heart-felt expression of a free state that has gone by. It was in itself a generous dream. But social tendencies, inevitable and irresistible, are now impelling the dreamers to self-destruction. The pleasure that in other times one could find in the literature of humanity, of brotherhood, of pity, is numbed today by perception of the irresistible drift of things. (14: 251)

Hearn’s criticism of American democracy and individualism did not mean a wholesale rejection of the value of freedom. He says that the 1870’s and 1880’s in the time of his youth, was a golden age for “American liberties.” As is clear from the above quotation, Hearn was most concerned about the suppression of freedom of speech and the press. He singles out the hypocritical Christian moral codes that victimized people of color and dehumanized the social system. All of this, he adds, is the outcome of a “Whitmanesque ideal of democracy.” Whitman may not have been wrong, but his optimistic cries might have misled more simple-minded people in the wrong direction. It is ironic then that already by the 1870s Whitman deplored the selfish turn of American democracy in *Democratic Vistas* (1871) and voiced the need for spiritual fellowship among fellow Americans. Hearn’s vision of “Nirvana” projects a fellowship among world citizens, or all living things, and Whitman’s revised vision of spiritual fellowship might not be far from it.

The real Japan of course did not offer Hearn “Nirvana.” Because of rapid Westernization, society was in chaos, as everything old was jettisoned to make way for new Western ways. Hearn observed how such conflicting circumstances affected people’s daily lives. A prime example is found in his observation of his students. In

“Jiu-jutsu,” from his *Out of East* collection (1895), Hearn articulates his concern over future transformations of Japanese mentality in an era of accelerated Western modernization. In this essay, the Japanese student confides in his Western teacher of his bewilderment. He is at a loss as to how to reconcile Western ways of scientific thinking that he is expected to master at school with traditional Japanese morality upon which his daily life is based. The student comments that the two values cannot coexist and that he is caught in a double bind:

Not to be able to compete with the West means ruin; but to compete with the West we must follow the methods of the West; and these are quite contrary to the old morality. (. . .) The law of the struggle is that the strong and active shall win, the weak and the foolish and the indifferent lose. But our old morality condemned such competition. (. . .) We must forsake our past. (. . .) Then, Sir, no matter how good the old morality, we cannot make any great industrial progress, nor even preserve our national independence, by following it. We must learn in Japan to be moral by reason, instead of being moral by emotion. A knowledge of the moral reason of law is itself a moral knowledge. (7: 178-179)²⁰

“Emotional morality,” the student argues, was integral to the old Japan, whereas in the outside world—a competitive foreign market of threatening Western powers—it was non-existent. Japanese communities were once held together by mutual emotions—a sense of empathy. The young student is in crisis because choosing one means abandoning the other. In other words, if he were to pursue Western studies, he would be unable to fulfill his duties to his parents and ancestors. Hearn, however, also proposes an example in which the two systems coexist and work together. In “At a Railway Station” (1896), a criminal confronts the wife and small boy of a man he has murdered. The highlight of the narrative is the moment when the penitent criminal asks forgiveness from the boy, “O little one, be pitiful!—forgive me!” People gathered at the police station, all weep, the police officer included, sharing a sense of pity not only for the fatherless child but also for the criminal. Such a scenario can happen in Japan

²⁰ “Jiu-jutsu” refers to the techniques in Judo, which teach the way to use the opponent's power to one's own advantage and make use of all available power. When practicing *jiujutsu*, the most powerful is not always the strongest. Beongcheon Yu explains that the student in this narrative was modeled after Hearn's student, Asakichi Yasukochi, a future Vice-Minister of Home Affairs; see Yu, *An Ape of Gods*, 190.

because, as the narrator explains, “the appeal to remorse” originates in “the criminal's sense of fatherhood, –that potential love of children which is so large a part of the soul of every Japanese” (7: 268-269). The man will be ostracized from the community for his criminal act, but his “remorse” and piteous feeling for the child prove for the Japanese readers that he is a fellow human in heart. What is interesting, moreover, is that this piece is based on a true story reported in the newspaper.²¹ In Hearn’s Japan, “emotional morality” is a reality. Pity as a solvent to the criminal’s pleads “be pitiful!” redeems the fact of his crime and he is admitted back into the community as one-of-us who shares the feelings of a loving father. He may be prosecuted on a legal level, but he is forgiven on an emotional level for the paternal sentiment he demonstrated in public that proves him to be a member of the community. The “pitiful” feelings of each individual causes everyone to recognize their own relative weaknesses and imperfections. Hearn's story attests to “emotional morality” that creates the sense of a “we-world” in Japanese society, contradicting the individual-oriented morality based on the “you-and-I-world” of Western society.

In the first-person narrative “A Conservative” (1896), Hearn further explores the issue of moral confusion raised in the story “Jiu-jutsu.” This time the narrator is a young Japanese who goes to Europe to study Western ways of thinking. As he makes his return to Japan, he faces a critical question: which should he follow, the Western way or the Japanese way.²² The narrator compares and contrasts the Occident and the Orient: “For even as the Occident regards the Far East, so does the Far East regard the Occident, only with this difference: that what each most esteems in itself is least likely to be esteemed by the other. And both are partly right and partly wrong; and there never has been, and never can be, perfect mutual comprehension” (7: 413). He struggles with the dilemma because he is afraid that his newly acquired knowledge of the West will prove incompatible with his native value system. As for survival-of-the-fittest principles, he knows that the values of the stronger (Western) will prevail whereas

²¹ The original newspaper article appeared in *The Kyushu Nichinichi Shinbun*, 3215 (22 April 1892 [26th year of Meiji]) and is reprinted in Manabu Maruyama, *Koizumi Yakumo shinko* [New Aspects on Koizumi Yakumo, or Lafcadio Hearn] (1996) 108 - 112.

²² This story is a kind of sequel to R. L. Stevenson's essay about a patriotic Japanese and his symbolic significance at the dawn of modern Japan, “Yoshida-Torajiro”; see *Familiar Studies or Men and Books* (1912) 172 - 191. See also Yu, *An Ape of Gods* 193. In his obituary for Hearn in the *Wiener Neue Freie Presse*, Hugo von Hofmannsthal commented on “A Conservative”: “This is not a short story at all: it is more like a commentary, a political commentary given the compression of a work of art and carried out in the form of an anecdote. I think it is simply the product of journalism, but of the most highly-cultivated, life-giving and serious kind possible.” See “Hugo von Hofmannsthal on Lafcadio Hearn” (1963) 67- 69.

those of the weaker will be forsaken.

The young man in “A Conservative” is ultimately unable to sympathize with Western ideas and finds no moral guidance during his sojourn in Europe. He criticizes Western materialism and egoism, describing the West as “a world of mockery and masquerade and pleasure-seeking selfishness, ruled not by religion, but by police” (7:415). It is noteworthy that he refers to “religion” and “police” both of which have to do with the moral, one being spiritual and private and the other social and public. In his understanding, police mechanically govern people by law, while religion emotionally unites people together. In “A Conservative,” the Japanese narrator dialectically juxtaposes his view of the West with that of Japan and tries to reach an acceptable synthesis:

Surely the old Japanese civilization of benevolence and duty was incomparably better in its comprehension of happiness, in its moral ambitions, its larger faith, its joyous courage, its simplicity and unselfishness, its sobriety and contentment. Western superiority was not ethical. It lay in forces of intellect developed through suffering incalculable, and used for the destruction of the weak by the strong. (. . .)

And, nevertheless, that Western science whose logic he knew to be irrefutable assured him of the larger and larger expansion of the power of that civilization, as of an irresistible, inevitable, measureless inundation of world-pain. Japan would have to learn the new forms of action, to master the new forms of thought, or to perish utterly. There was no other alternative. And then the doubt of all doubts came to him, the question which all the sages have had to face: *Is the universe moral?* (7: 418-419)

In a manner of a *bildungsroman*, Hearn's narrative follows the transformational process of a young man looking at the world: he comes to know the virtue in his old faith through experiencing vice in the Western world of vanity. He undergoes various stages from the nihilistic “nay” to finally reach the positive “yea,” to use Carlyle’s terms.²³ He in time rediscovers the value of old Japan as a spiritual resource for his future. Through his experience of “being there” in Europe, the young Japanese gains an external vantage point from which to view the values and cultural practices of his own country.

²³ Hearn gave a lecture entitled “On the Philosophy of ‘Sartor Resartus’”; see *Interpretations of Literature*, 1, 208-232.

In other words, he returns home as a “conservative” with a double vision. As he sails back to Japan, he envisions his happy childhood with his father and mother. He is going back to a traditional patriarchal family system. In another piece “At a Railway Station,” Hearn refers to the “potential love of children” as a foundation for such a family system. In other words, parent-child relationships in Japan serve as strong bonds to maintain the solidarity of society as a whole. In Hearn's view, a “conservative” in this case is not someone who possesses insular thinking; on the contrary, the young man’s experience in the West helps him to cultivate a comparative viewpoint. His comparative and dialectic thinking itself is a sign of his Western learning. It does not make him a Westerner, but his awareness does make him an intellectually and mentally strong man. Going back to Japan, he justly chooses the traditional Japanese way of moral life. This moral way is his religion—ancestor worship being the essence of Shinto and Confucianism that teaches respect for one’s father and mother and the belief that elders govern conduct. He is, in effect, the projection of Hearn's eclectic ideal of the future Japanese man.

In “Jiu-jutsu,” Hearn defines Japanese identity as part of one’s national character. “Psychologists may theorize on the absence or the limitations of personal individuality among the Japanese,” but he writes, “there can be no question at all that, as a nation, Japan possesses an individuality much stronger than our own” (7:172). It must be added that no equivalent word or concept that resembles “individual” in the Western sense existed before the opening of Japan in the mid-nineteenth century, indicating that the Japanese did think in that way. Hearn found each student different, but at the same time, he found that the students as a group could unite into one wonderful unison of chanting:

It is quite an experience to hear four hundred students chanting one of these [patriot songs] at the school in which I teach. (. . .) [T]he leader sings a verse, and the students repeat it with surprising spirit, throwing a peculiar emphasis always *on the last syllable* of each line, so that the vocal effect is like a crash of musketry. It is a very Oriental, but also a very impressive manner of chanting: you can hear the fierce heart of Old Japan beating through every word. (7: 173)

Hearn heard the “fierce heart of Old Japan” in the chants of the students. One voice may be too small to be heard, but hundreds or thousands of voices in harmony could make a huge impression. As the song was part of a preparatory course for military discipline, it was certainly intended to cultivate their patriotism. It must also be

remembered that when Hearn wrote this essay, Japan was at war against China (First Sino-Japanese War, 1894-1895) and this must have heightened the sense of their nationalism. From their song, however, Hearn detects a strong overtone of the voice of old. He thus finds the “individuality” of the Japanese nation manifested through their voices chanting in unison.

Hearn was disturbed by Whitman’s patriotism, his self-aggrandizing individual song of democracy that he also felt was loud, overly assertive, and imposing as well as associated with American materialism and democratic capitalism. In the collective chanting of the Japanese students, he heard the voice of an ancient race inherited since the beginning time and it penetrated his whole body. The irony was that the aggressive situation with Japan at war encouraged this solidarity to help unite citizens against the outside enemy. But because an ancient spirit was also discernable to Hearn, the observer with double-vision, he was both conscious and critical of Japan’s imperialist aggression as the flipside of Japan’s ancient spirit of ethical harmony.

2. Insect Music: Lafcadio Hearn's Orphean Song²⁴

--why European poets, during the last two thousand years have written so little upon the subject of insects?

Lafcadio Hearn, "Some Poems about Insects"²⁵

Lafcadio Hearn went to Japan in 1890 as a reporter commissioned by *Harper's Weekly*. He had just published *Two Years in the French West Indies*, a travelogue based on his Martinique experiences which received good reviews. After having worked as a journalist, literary editor, book reviewer, and translator for twenty years in Cincinnati and New Orleans as well as Martinique, he was determined to become an independent writer and explore a new literary territory. Japan was his next material. His initial plan was to spend a year or two gathering information for his book, but he ended up spending the rest of his life there. He found a teaching position, first at Matsue Ordinary Middle School, then at the Fifth Higher Middle School in Kumamoto, later at Tokyo Imperial University, and lastly at Waseda University. Moving around in Japan such a way, his Japanese experience literally ranged from the small Japanese ancient city of Matsue to the modern Westernized capital of Tokyo. He married a Japanese, learned old Japanese tales, customs and habits, and published eleven books on Japan. Those books earned him the reputation of a Japanologist rather than a literary writer; however, his life-long goal was to become a prose-poet who could evoke in his writing the spirit of a place. His essays are descriptive and exact, reflecting his training as a journalist in his youth, but they are also crafted and suggestive. His Japanese experience inspired him and, as will be discussed in this paper, made him search for an Orphean voice. Hearn worked on a metaphorical form of the essay in which both ancient and

²⁴ This section was originally published in *Lafcadio Hearn in International Perspectives*, ed. Sukehiro Hirakawa, ISBN9781905246267 (Folkestone, Global Oriental, 2007) 139-151. As I have reprinted this section as it was in the original, some descriptions may overlap with those in other parts of this monograph.

²⁵ *Complete Lectures on Poetry*, 413.

modern voices could mingle, turning an old story into a modern allegory and bringing the dead back to life through his narrative.

Curiously, one particular literary subject that Hearn favoured was the insect. His interest in insects can be traced back to his early American days; he wrote newspaper and magazine articles on both entomological and literary issues. In Japan, he discovered the aesthetic appreciation of listening to insects, and considered the insect to be a suitable subject for modern poetry. This paper will chronologically examine Hearn's insect writings and the transformations of his treatment of the insect as an object of observation and as a literary subject. As early as 1876, he reported on an exhibition of butterflies with vivid colour descriptions in the Cincinnati newspaper. In his 1884 magazine articles on the New Orleans World Exposition, he admired the Japanese display of handcrafted miniature insects. In the essays and lectures of his Japanese period, from 1890 to 1904, the insect was no more a simple object of observation and curiosity, it became a compound metaphor to render both aesthetic and ethical aspects of culture. He wrote his books in English, and most of them were published in the US and some in UK. His works were also translated into several European languages, such as Finnish, French and German.²⁶ To his Western readers, Hearn introduced the Japanese custom of listening to insect-music²⁷ as an example of an aesthetic sensibility which the West had yet to learn. To his Japanese students, he lectured on insect poetry, comparing cultural and literary histories in the East and the West, and pointed out that both the old Greeks and the Japanese wrote poetry about “musical insects, crickets, cicadae,” underlining the long tradition of the Japanese insect poetry (“Some Poems about Insects” 289)²⁸.

²⁶ Sections from *The Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* were translated into Finnish as early as 1896. *Kokoro: Hints and Echoes of Japanese Inner Life* (1896) into German and Dutch in 1905, French and Polish in 1906, Italian and Spanish in 1907, and Hungarian in 1909. See *Lafcadio Hearn: a Bibliography of His Writings*, P. D. and Ione Perkins (Tokyo: Hokuseido, 1934).

²⁷ Appreciation of singing insects is a shared custom in both China and Japan. In China, during the Tang Dynasty (618-906) they began to keep crickets in order to enjoy their chirping and, under the Sung (960-1279), the sport of cricket fights was developed, although the latter custom did not root in Japan; see Berthold Laufer and Lafcadio Hearn, *Insect Musicians & Cricket Champions: A Cultural History of Singing Insects in China and Japan*, ed., Lisa Ryan Gail (1996).

²⁸ Hearn's lectures were dictated by his students and were later collected and published; see ‘Tōdai kōgi [Tokyo University lectures]; *Koizumi Yakumo Jiten [Reader's Guide to Lafcadio Hearn]*, comp. Hirakawa (2000), 399-400.

“Butterflies”

In his American writings, Hearn especially excelled in microscopic descriptions. Edwin Henderson, the editor of the *Cincinnati Commercial*, thought that Hearn was gifted and could use his language “as polished and as full of colour as if it had come from the pen of Gautier.” Hearn’s “Butterfly Fantasies” (9 May 1876) is such an example of a vivid and colourful presentation after Gautier who was one of young Hearn’s literary inspirations.²⁹

In this article, Hearn gives a report on an entomological exhibition and describes the colours, shapes and sizes of butterflies collected from all over the world.³⁰ He calls the beauty of their wings as ‘Nature’s painting’ and names the colours to present its ‘artistic design’: “Combinations of gold, with a gleam of green; of blue, with silvery veins; of scarlet, with ermine white; of ebony black, with flaming yellow; of onyx colour, with purple-edged dots of brown; of blood red,” and these colours “scintillated, shone, flashed” (“Butterfly Fantasies 191-192). He enjoys depicting the insects as if he were an illustrator of a coloured picture book. As a reporter at a scientific exhibition, he must be objectively accurate in his delineation but does not have to be worried about the meaning of the “Nature’s painting.” He freely takes advantage of the opportunity and experiments with his language to produce true-to-nature but lusciously aesthetic effects.

Hearn’s article, however, is not a mere (dis)play of colours; it testifies to his realization that no matter how he tries to hold up a transparent mirror against “Nature,” his mirror is warped by his preconception. When he comes across one ‘grotesque’ moth, colours suddenly fade away and it immediately reminds him of its other name used by the superstitious English peasant “the death’s head.” Then, he starts making associations, with the image: “its wings have the richness of costly funeral trappings; its back bears plainly painted, in the yellowish colour of moldering bone, the hideous outlines of an eyeless and gibbering skull” (192). In the paradisiacal world of “aerial graces” of butterflies, he encounters death, and the article bespeaks a conventional moral, *memento mori*, whose message is reinforced by the use of words such as

²⁹ See Murray, 28.

³⁰ The article is based on Hearn’s visit to Charles Dury Museum, Cincinnati; see ‘Afterword.’ *Chōno Gensō* [*Butterfly Fantasies*], trans. Nagasawa Sumio (Tokyo: Tsukiji shoten, 1988), 277.

“funeral” and “skull.” The change of tone also betrays the rapture in the narrator’s point of view; while he tries to illustrate the entomological exhibit as an objective, moral-free, and artistic reporter, he cannot do away with his tendency to apply a known maxim to humanize the natural phenomenon.

He feels refreshed, however, on entering the Oriental section because he is able to admire the beauty of the insects, forgetting the haunting image of death: “To turn from this grotesque insect to the spiritually delicate butterflies of China and Japan was something of a relief” (192). He once again plays with the colours and makes aesthetic associations, linking one pattern to another. A different atmosphere provides him with a different emotion. He thus imagines a correspondence between a people’s character and their environment: “the nature of a race is molded by the nature of the climate of their land; that their arts and customs are strongly influenced by the conditions of their atmosphere; that their tastes are developed in accordance with the peculiarities of their natural surroundings” (193). The discovery was liberating, since, in the case of the Japanese, he assumes the correspondence to be spiritual and aesthetic. Wings of the Japanese butterflies, therefore, remind him of the patterns on the Japanese fans: “One, a Japanese butterfly, bore upon its wings in scarlet and pale blue, mingled with touches of white, an exact counterpart of a favorite sky-design on Japanese fans” (192-193). The Oriental section, moreover, excites him because he also discovers the privilege of being a stranger. He feels that there is no need to be obsessed by the preconceived moral framework of his Western mind. The position of a stranger, in other words, enables him to become a fanciful ethnographer of culture.

For young Hearn, Japan was a remote and exotic world. He filled up its unknown space with his imagination and fancied a world of beauty which he believed could no longer exist in the Western hemisphere. “Butterfly Fantasies” foretells Hearn’s desire to find the Orient, namely Japan, as an ideal literary Utopia where he can let his language freely fly. Two decades later, in one of his Tokyo Imperial University lectures, he refers to the butterfly as an important metaphor for the spirit in both Western and Japanese poetry. His idea of insects gradually matured throughout his career as he learned more about insects in both literature and science.³¹ Before going into a discussion of Hearn’s

³¹ Since Hearn’s knowledge of insects was such, not only Japanese literary writers but also scientists have shown great interest in his insect writings. Nagasawa Sumio who translated and edited Hearn’s stories and essays about insects is a scholar of entomology and agriculture. Konishi Masayasu, another well-known entomologist, wrote “Koizumi Yakumo to Mushi [Koizumi Yakumo and Insects],” *Rekishi to Jinbutsu [History and Famous Figures]* (1975), 24-6; he also refers to Hearn in his *Mushi no Bunkashi [History of*

literary achievements in Japan, his view of Japanese art in relation to insects first needs to be examined.

Cotton Insects

Hearn welcomed entomological discoveries of his day, and thought that they would break the spell of old superstitions and beliefs about insects. He was especially impressed by the communal life of insects described in Jules Michelet's *L'Insecte* and wrote an article in 1882 entitled, "News about Ants." Hearn spotlighted Michelet's account on 'the Republic of the Ants' and introduced the life of ants as organized as "the ideal Greek republics" (*Occidental Gleanings* 2 51). He also learned that they had a highly developed sensitivity. Knowing entomological discoveries of his day, Hearn assumed that, as far as the evolution of the conscious was concerned, insects might be more advanced than humans; therefore, they were moral-free but orderly, and sentiment-free but supersensitive. In Hearn's logic, they were ethical because they were devoid of egoistic desires.³² When he saw beautifully crafted imitation Japanese insects, he immediately associated Japanese culture with both of his ideal models of insects and ancient Greece.

In 1885, Hearn wrote a series of reports on the New Orleans Exposition.³³ His articles on the Japanese exhibit show his excitement at witnessing a happy marriage between old tradition and modern technology. He examines the display of printed books which are overlooked by most visitors and expresses his admiration at the level of the Japanese technology which is comparable with any Western counterpart.³⁴ Such modern features in the Japanese exhibit dispel the fixed notion of Japan as the exotic

Insect Ethnography] (1992). Ushimura Kei describes Hearn's point of view as 'that of a scientist'; see 'Mushi Mezuru Hahn [Insect Appreciating Hearn], *Hikaku Bungaku Kenkyu [Studies in Comparative Literature]*, vol. 47 (1985), 162.

³² Hearn also refers to the ecology of insects as a model of an ethical community in his lecture 'Beyond Man,' *Complete Lectures on Art, Literature and Philosophy*, ed., Ryuji Tanabe, T. Ochiai and I. Nishizaki (1932), 237-44.

³³ One article was published in the *Times-Democrat*, "Oriental Literature at the Exposition" (24 February 1885); four in the *Harper's Weekly*, "The New Orleans Exposition: The Japanese Exhibit" (31 January 1885), "The East at New Orleans" (7 March 1885), "Mexico at New Orleans," (14 March 1885), "Some Oriental Curiosities" (28 March 1885), and "The Government Exhibit at New Orleans" (11 April 1885); and another in the *Harper's Bazaar*, "Notes of a Curiosity-Hunter" (4 April 1885).

³⁴ See "Oriental Literature at the Exposition," *Oriental Articles*, ed., Ichiro Nishizaki (1939), 149.

Other but allow Japan to claim its presence in the civilized modern world. Hearn finds two particular items in the exhibit, crafted “cotton” insects and a musical instrument very similar to “the ancient Greek seven-stringed lyre,” which perfectly proved his belief in aesthetic and ethical Japan (*Occidental Gleanings* 2 227).³⁵

The “cotton” insects are especially, the objects of his wonder, and he reveres the subtlety of Japanese craftsmanship on two levels: that they are able to produce such skillful miniatures, and that they are attentive even to the smallest elements of their exhibition:

[The bugs and beetles] are so life-like that you may actually weigh one in your hand a moment before you find that it is made of cotton. . . There are cotton crickets with the lustre of lacquer, and cotton grasshoppers of many colors; the korogi, whose singing is like to the sound of a weaver, weaving rapidly (‘ko-ro-ru, ko-ro-ru’), and the kirigiri, whose name is an imitation of its own note. (212)

The “cotton” insects are “so life-like” not only because they represent the anatomical exactness but also because they bear a sense of life in motion and appear as if they might at any moment “fly away” and start singing in silvery chorus. He intuits that the essence of such craftsmanship is “*movement*”: “What Japanese art of the best era is unrivaled in—that characteristic in which, according even to the confession of the best French art connoisseurs, it excels all other art—is *movement*, the rhythm, the poetry, of visible motion” (211). Japanese craftsmanship captures the lively vibrations of the “cotton” insects. In ‘Butterfly Fancies,’ Hearn experimented with his language to illustrate colorful designs of butterflies; now, he discovers that the Japanese are able to express the ‘visible motion’ of the passing moment in the static art forms.

The craftsmanship of the “cotton” insect is factual evidence for Hearn that Japanese art is the product not of imitation but of recreation of the prime moment of life. In his 1898 essay, “About Faces in Japanese Art,” he describes that, while Western painting focuses on imitation and particular characteristics, Japanese painting on

³⁵ In the same article, Hearn refers to a report on Japanese music written by Isawa Shūji whose investigations were conducted by order of the Japanese Minister of Education, Ōki Takatō. Hearn quotes from Isawa: ‘There is no scale in the Japanese classical or popular music which may not be found in Greek music’ (pp. 227-8).

idealism and the general law of form registered in the painter's "memory" (116). He also explains the long apprenticeship period that is required for a Japanese craftsman to master one brushstroke, a fleeting movement that appears effortless and spontaneous. He describes how such a drawing is made:

The Japanese artist depicts an insect, for example, as no European artist can do: he makes it live; he shows its peculiar motion, its character, everything by which it is at once distinguished as a type, —and all this with a few brush-strokes. But he does not attempt to represent every vein upon each of its wings, every separate joint of its antennæ: he depicts it as it is really seen at a glance, not as studied in detail. We never see all the details of the body of a grasshopper, a butterfly, or a bee, in the moment that we perceive it perching somewhere; we observe only enough to enable us to decide what kind of creature it is. We see the typical, never the individual peculiarities. (107)

Living in Japan, Hearn comes to value a sense of the passing moment as an important subject of art. In the Western way of realism, an artist will immobilize an object in order to depict it from a fixed perspective. Hearn, however, learns that an artist does not have to be concerned with anatomical particulars and there is no need to dissect to kill to capture reality; all he has to do is to register the impression of the moment. The fact that he refers to the insect as an example in the above passage is significant, because it announces the insect as a representative subject matter in Japanese art. In poetry, he also learns that the custom of listening to the insect-music and composing poems about it has been a most cherished aesthetic pastime for the Japanese for more than one thousand years. From Hearn's Western point of view, however, the insect theme is a discovery.

Insect Musicians

In one of his lectures at Tokyo Imperial University, "Old Greek Poetry about Insects," Hearn introduces Greek insect poetry and explains how the Greeks' appreciation of the insects is similar to that of the Japanese. He categorizes Greek insect poetry into three classes, "cicadæ, musical grasshoppers, and some kinds of night crickets" and contends that the three correspond exactly to the classes of "Japanese Musical Insects" (*Complete Lectures on Poetry* 439). His reference to ancient Greek

poetry enables him to define Japanese culture as equally significant and worthy of respect by Westerners. The more he learned about the insect as a theme in Japanese art, the more it became valuable for him to revive in his writing. With his knowledge in both literatures of poetry and of science, he regarded the insect theme as a useful compound metaphor which would superimposedly project both literary (non-material) and scientific (material) aspects of culture.

“Insect-Musicians” (1898) is an example of Hearn’s attempt to write a philosophical essay on culture which is at once literary and scientific, or poetic and socio-historical, naturalistic, poetic, and critical. In this essay, Hearn uses a Japanese poem as an epigraph and guides his readers to learn how to read its hidden meaning. For this purpose, he provides the readers with detailed accounts of the history of the insect-music and its literary tradition in Japan. The prefacing poem is also followed by his own translation:

Mushi yo mushi,
Naité ingwa ga
Tsukuru nara?

‘O insect, insect! --think you that Karma can be exhausted by song?’— (9:30)

The narrator talks about his experience of purchasing an insect at a night festival. A connoisseur of Japanese culture, he knowingly introduces the history of the Japanese custom of keeping insects as pets as well as the history of the insect business. In the manner of a naturalist, he categorizes the insects, explains their characteristics, supplies them with their scientific names and life-size illustrations, transcribes their sounds, lists their prices, and complements all of this with Japanese insect poems. After having spent about forty pages on socio-historical, scientific, and literary portraiture of insects, the narrator reintroduces the previously cited poem. The poem, therefore, must be read again anew with some knowledge of Japanese cultural background in order to construe the ‘indirect double-suggestiveness’ of the poem.

The narrator tries out his interpretation: “The Western reader would probably suppose that the insect-condition, or insect-state-of-being, is here referred to; but the real thought of the speaker, presumably a woman, is that her own sorrow is the result of faults committed in former lives, and is therefore impossible to alleviate” (107). The poem not only expresses the speaker’s sorrow but also carries the echoes of the “revival of ancestral pain” and “inherited . . . memories” of the race. Being exposed to Japanese

culture, the narrator's Western mind is challenged. He humbly admits that the Japanese know not only how to enjoy "insect-music" but also how to respond to the "sorrow" of the race which is vibrantly transmitted in its tone. Such sensibility, which responds to the vicissitudes of life, he calls "an aesthetic sensibility," and regrettably declares that it has been left "unexplored" in the West (41).³⁶

The ideal Japanese "aesthetic sensibility," however, may soon be extinct. Hearn was clearly aware of the rapid process of Westernization in Japan. He concludes "Insect-Music" with his critique of modern culture:

Surely we have something to learn from the people in whose mind the simple chant of a cricket can awaken whole fairy-swarms of tender and delicate fancies. We may boast of being their masters in the mechanical, their teachers of the artificial in all its varieties of ugliness; but in the knowledge of the natural, in the feeling of the joy and beauty of earth, they exceeded us like the Greeks of old. Yet perhaps it will be only when our blind aggressive industrialism has wasted and sterilized their paradise . . . that we shall begin with remorseful amazement to comprehend the charm of that which we destroyed. (80)

His reference to ancient Greece here adds an elegiac tone. The ideal ancient Greek culture perished, and so would be the fate for Japanese culture. Using the editorial "we," Hearn places himself as one of the "aggressive" Westerners. No matter how he tries to live a Japanese way of life and learn their "aesthetic sensibility," he is a stranger representing the powers of Western modernization.

"The Insect-Musicians," nevertheless, is a testimony of Hearn's compassionate response to the kind of Japanese sensibility that could pity an insect, because it was believed to have a soul of its own and shared the same fate as humans. From Hearn's vantage point as a Western outsider in Japanese society, he was able to observe the idiosyncratic nature of the Japanese sensibility, very different from the Western one, and discerned the formula of the "indirect double-suggestiveness" in an innocuous

³⁶ Hearn here observes that the Japanese listen to the chirping of the insect as if it were a language. In 1978, an audiologist Tadanobu Tsunoda put forth a theory which would scientifically prove Hearn's view. Based on his experimental data on brain dominance patterns of sound registration, Tsunoda categorizes the brain function in two patterns, "Japanese" and "Western," and says that the "Japanese" pattern processes the chirping of crickets as a verbal sound in the left brain, while the "Western" one as a non-verbal sound in the right brain. He contends that the linguistic/cultural environment in the early stage of brain formation determines the pattern and that there is a correlation between brain and culture; see *The Japanese Brain* (1985), 74-86.

popular poem. For the Japanese, the poem's elegiac tone was so internalized an experience that, although emotionally felt, it was not analytically explained; on the other hand, for most Westerners, insect poems appeared as playful and primitive pathetic fallacy, thus unworthy of special attention. Hearn in this sense was an exception. He was a surprisingly insightful culturalist who detected in an obscure poem the essential nature of the race. "Insect" as a literary metaphor was an inspiration for him, since it would allow him to write a modern allegory in which both an ancient wisdom and a modern perspective could be simultaneously rendered.

Kusa-Hibari (Grass Lark)

Hearn's essays on Japanese culture and translations of old Japanese tales have ethnographical value. As to the actual collecting of various materials for his writing, however, the credit goes to his students. They were asked to make a thorough search at the Imperial Library or other archives in order to find, for example, poems on a certain subjects that he was after.³⁷ It is pointed out that Hearn's discovery of the Japanese insect-poetry is 'the result of a successful obsession' and his Japanese writings do not so much mirror Japan as Hearn himself.³⁸ Indeed, Hearn selected his materials and used them to create his Japan; nonetheless, if he was obsessed, it was not because he was a collector but because he was searching for a new literary form which could mirror the changing modern world. He considered that any fixed image about Japan

³⁷ Hearn's student at Matsue Otani Masanobu, his wife Setsuko, and an archivist at Tokyo University Minari Shigeyuki were the major providers of information about insects; see "Mushi," *Koizumi Yakumo Jiten*, 630. Hearn also asked his students to write English compositions under specific themes related to Japanese culture. 13 compositions by Otani in two covered Japanese bindings, *Otani Masanobu hitsu Eisakubun Soko*, ms. in 2 covered bindings [*Otani Masanobu Composition Manuscripts by Otani Masanobu*], are owned by Kyoto University of Foreign Studies Library. In 2003, 98 photo plates of compositions by Otani and Tanabe Katsutarou, another student from Matsue, were discovered at Kumamoto Prefectural Library. At the Kumamoto session of "Koizumi Yakumo International Symposium Commemorating the 100th Year of his Death" (3 October 2004), Norio Nishikawa of Kumamoto University gave a paper on the significance of these compositions. He found twenty-five composition themes, including five insect related ones: "Fire-fly," "Centipede," "About the little insects which fly to the lamps at night and burn themselves to death," "Kamakiri [mantis]," and "The Japanese Spider." An independent Hearn scholar Kaoru Sekita, at the same session, also supplemented a brief history of these photo plates which had been possibly made for publication by Professor Sanki Ichikawa. These photo plates are now preserved at Kumamoto Kindai Bungakukan.

³⁸ Junko Umemoto, "The Liberation of Women in Works Retold by Lafcadio Hearn," *Comparative Literature Studies* (1998) 247.

would be a retrospective cliché; Japan could only manifest itself phenomenologically in relation to its position in the world, as well as to his own perspective as an immediate experience. He esteemed old tradition because it was something that could be re-experienced and redefined in the context of his particular contemporary situation. Hearn's stories and essays, therefore, are his attempts to revive the old spirit in a modern narrative. The Japanese insect poetics reveals its meaning in the light of Hearn's own experience.

In his lecture, "Some Poems about Insects," he introduces the image of a butterfly in Greek literature and how it serves as "the emblem of the soul" and "immortality," and fancifully defines that poetry is "the sea in which the soul of man can swim even as butterflies can swim in the air, or happy ghosts swim in the finer element of the infinite ether" (395). He, however, leaves the Greeks and lectures on three nineteenth century English and American poems with references to butterflies, spiders and ants.³⁹ As he concludes his discussion, he asks: "why European poets, during the last two thousand years have written so little upon the subjects of insects?" (413). He answers himself that insects had symbolized mysterious powers in pre-Christian narratives and thus were later considered unsuitable for literary subject in the view of monotheistic Christianity which does not acknowledge divinity in any other forms. He, however, tells his students that the insect would be a befitting subject for future poetry. He calls attention to the Japanese tradition of appreciating insect-music and suggests that the kind of sensibility that responds to nature's music will be able to awaken the eye of the modern people to the rejuvenating and emotional experience of nature.

. . . we must think of insects either in relation to the mystery of their marvellous lives, or in relation to the emotion which their sweet and melancholy music makes within our minds. The impressions produced by hearing the shrilling of crickets at night or by hearing the storm of cicadae in summer woods—those impressions indeed are admirable subjects for poetry, and will continue to be for all time. (434)

Hearn tells his students of the importance of "impressions" in poetry. What he means by "impressions" does not allude to a display of personal sentiments but an expression of impersonal race memory that one inherits in one's unconscious. The idea

³⁹ The poems used in his lecture were: "Fifine at the Fair" by Robert Browning, "Arachne" by a New England woman poet, Rose Terry Cooke, and "King Solomon and the Ants" by John Greenleaf Whittier.

comes from Herbert Spencer whose theory of organic memory Hearn readily adopted.⁴⁰ The “impressions,” Hearn conceived, are the echoes of organic memory which are transmitted through time and space and perceived anew; therefore, one’s emotional experience is the re-enactment of the proto-experience of the human race.⁴¹ In “On Love in English Poetry,” he refers to Spencer and explains that “love” is “a kind of organic memory of relations that existed in thousands and tens of thousands of former states of being” and it is a retracing experience of “a longing and struggling feeling” to be linked to the original experience of “love” (*Complete Lectures on Poetry* 296). “Insect-music,” Hearn imagined, would be the vehicle to re-experience the long-lost love that echoed in organic memory, and to revive the awe-inviting powers of nature which had inspired poets in the pre-Christian era. In Japanese insect poetry, Hearn acknowledged “love” in the form of pity—a feeling towards all mortals, human or non-human.

In “*Kusa-Hibari*” (*Exotics and Retrospectives* 1902), Hearn demonstrates how the “insect” theme can recreate in the modern era a forgotten emotional experience of encountering the mysteries of life,



From “Insect-Musicians” (9:55)

which, he believed, was the most essential element in both Eastern and Western literatures. The essay begins with the narrator listening to the insect, posing as a cultured Japanese. He feels as if his room is filled “with a delicate and ghostly music of indescribable sweetness—a thin, thin silvery rippling and trilling as of tiniest electric bells” (11:145). He complacently enjoys being a connoisseur of subtle Japanese culture. He feels good about having purchased a grass lark for only “twelve cents” which is a bargain, and, to enhance the cozy atmosphere in his room, he makes use of “a good stove” of a Western make. Settled in his room and listening to exotic background music,

⁴⁰ Hearn writes to his friend about Spencer: “I also discovered, for the first time, how to apply the little general knowledge I possessed. I also found unspeakable comfort in the sudden and, for me, eternal reopening of the Great Doubt, which renders pessimism ridiculous, and teaches a new reverence for all forms of faith. In short, from the day when I finished the ‘First Principles,’ –a totally new intellectual life opened for me”; see “Letter to Krehbiel, New Orleans, 1886,” *Life and Letters* I, 374.

⁴¹ Hearn describes Spencer’s organic memory in his letter: “The sensations of that new experience in your own life were millions of years old! Far from simple is the commonest of our pleasures but a layer, infinitely multiple, of myriads of millions of ancestral impressions”; see “Letter to Basil Hall Chamberlain, Kobe, April 1895,” *Life and Letters* 2, 230.

he absorbs himself in his fancy, thinking that the grass lark sings a love song which is “a song of organic memory, —deep, dim memory of other quintillions of lives, when the ghost of him [the grass lark] shrilled at night from the dewy grasses of the hills” (11: 145-146).⁴² The insect-music makes him nostalgic because he interprets that the grass lark is “unconsciously retrospective” and longs for his lost beloved (11:146). The narrator, filled with a romantic notion of love, tries to find a female mate for his grass lark, but the season for these musical insects is already past and his efforts end in vain.



Insect cages from “Insect-Musicians”: “1. A Form of Insect Cage. 2. Cage for Large Musical Insects,—*Kirigirisu, Kutsuwamushi, etc.* 3. Cage for Small Musical Insects, or Fire-Flies.” (*Exotics and Retrospectives*, 1898).

Thanks to the good stove, the grass lark lives beyond its lifespan in the narrator’s room, but one day it is found by the narrator to have starved to death. For lack of food and proper attention, it has even eaten its own leg. The death of the insect affects him so much that, in desperation, he accuses his housemaid Hana of neglect, although he is aware that he is only shifting the blame on her. Remorseful and penitent, he wonders what the grass lark and Hana might think and feel. His sympathy is quickened. In fact, the last three paragraphs in the essay, set apart with a space from the previous section, seem to represent three different ways of looking at the insect. First, the narrator sums up the incident, the death of the insect, his treatment of Hana and the silence in the room. Then, as he reflects, it dawns on him that they all share the same fate as fellow

⁴² Referring to the passage, “a song of organic memory,” Sukehiro Hirakawa explains “organic memory” as Hearn’s philosophy in which his “Buddhistic thanatopsis is coloured with evolutionary theory”; see Chap. 6 “The Song of Kusa-Hibari,” *Koizumi Yakumo: Seiyō Dasshutsu no Yume [Koizumi Yakumo: A Dream of Exodus from the Western World]* (1981), 313.

mortals. He becomes aware that he has felt “the charm of the delicate voice” of the insect because “the atom of ghost in the tiny cage, and the atom of ghost within myself [sic] were forever but one and the same in the deeps of the Vast of being” (11:148). In other words, he was able to respond to “the charm” because he had something within himself that sympathized with the chirping of the insect. He humbly accepts supernatural powers in all forms of life, as the Japanese do, and asks for forgiveness from their ‘gods.’ In the final paragraph, the tone changes once again. It is as if some other voice comes out of his unconscious--perhaps the echoes of organic memory: “Yet, after all, to devour one’s own legs for hunger is not the worst that can happen to a being cursed with the gift of song. There are human crickets who must eat their own hearts in order to sing” (11:149). The narrator, possibly Hearn’s persona, hears of his own fate as fate as one of the “human crickets” who is pitied and is fated to sing to the last.

“Kusa-Hibari” has a Japanese proverb as an epigraph on the title page: “*Issun no mushi ni mo gobu no tamashii*” [Even an inch-long insect has half an inch soul of its own]. In the essay, however, Hearn does not provide its English translation nor refer to it. The essay itself seems to serve as its illustrated translation. Moreover, the proverb obviously projects a Japanese animistic world-view on the insect, which the Japanese would readily accept, but which his Western readers may feel skeptical about.⁴³ Instead of giving its expository explanation, Hearn dramatizes a story of the death of an insect in order to evoke their compassion and stimulate their imagination. The essay is meant to appeal to their sentiments rather than reason. The insect-music then works as a befitting metaphor to emphasize the potential of sense perceptions which may bring the forgotten and neglected “ghosts” back to life again. In “Kusa-Hibari,” Hearn best expresses his voice as a prose-poet, by listening to the small insect which sings for both the living and the dead.

From his American days, Hearn was always interested in Japan and when he arrived, the insect-music particularly enchanted him not because it was curious and

⁴³ When he refers to the spiritual aspect of an insect in “Kusa-Hibari,” Hearn first uses the word “soul,” but thereafter he replaces it with “ghost.” Sukehiro Hirakawa rightly argues that Hearn’s use of these words is deliberate, since he is aware that the idea of an insect having a “soul” will invite skepticism from Christian readers for whom an insect is a mere “automaton,” and “ghost” in a sense of “*Geist*” in German is used as a synonym; see “Hahn no ‘Kusa-Hibari’ to Sōseki no ‘Buncho’” [Hearn’s ‘Kusa-Hibari’ and Sōseki’s ‘Bunchō’], *Rafukadio Hahn: Shokuminchika, Kirisutokyōka, Bunmeikaika* [Lafcadio Hearn: Colonialization, Christianization, Civilization-and-Enlightenment](2004), 291-2. and also “*Issun no mushi ni mo gobu no tamashii*” *Koizumi Yakumo to Kamigami no Sekai* [Koizumi Yakumo and the Realm of Divinities] (1988), 286-291.

exotic but because it allowed him to enter into the inner world of the Japanese psyche.⁴⁴ And to the last, Hearn was listening. On his deathbed he told his wife Setsu: “That tiny creature has been singing nicely. It’s getting cold, though. Is it conscious or unconscious that soon it must die? It’s a pity, indeed.” Then, he died with “a little smile about his mouth” (Setsu Koizumi 523). The last episode of his life finalized Hearn as an insect-musician incarnate.

⁴⁴ Masahiko Nishi examines Hearn’s “ear” and richly unfolds cultural and ethnographical geographies of Hearn and his contemporary Japan from an acoustic point of view in *Rafukadio Hahn no Mimi [Lafcadio Hearn’s Ear]* (1993,1998).

3. Soul Song and Soul Dance

Singing Soul

An artist, Hearn explains in a letter to Basil Chamberlain in 1894, is gifted with “genius” that means that he/she is capable of “remembering—*seeing retrospectively*, through rifts in the curtain of the past” (16: 128-129). An artist is, in other words, a storyteller, translator, or performer who carries the past in memories. In his American days, Hearn wrote about issues concerning “genius” and the function of the artist, and his ideas developed further as he collected old stories in Japan.

In “Howells and the Battle of Words over ‘Genius,’” Lannom Smith traces an interesting debate about “Genius” that enlivened a certain literary circle in the 1880's involving such figures as William Dean Howells, William James, James Lane Allen, E. C. Stedman, and Lafcadio Hearn.¹ According to Smith, the discussants could be roughly divided into two camps, the realists and the romanticists. From his realist point of view, Howells argues that the “romantic” notion of “imagination” and “power” should be equated with “falseness, sentimentality, and melodrama—and egoism and moral deterioration.”² Hearn, on the side of the “romantic,” sees “genius” as the faculty that enables an artist to do things “perfectly.” In his essay “Talent and Genius” (21 March 1886; *The Times-Democrat*), Hearn emphasizes that the “worship of commonplace” in “the sensibilities of a practical and prosaic age” is to blame for the undue depreciation of “genius.”³ Smith points out that Hearn and E. C. Stedman were the two staunchest refuters of Howells' camp. Stedman refers to the etymology of “genius” and states how it had been associated with “divine inspiration” from Plato, Cicero and on to the modern writers, such as Lessing, Goethe, Carlyle, and De Quincey. He claims that “genius” lies in the “power resulting from the unconscious actions of the free intellect, in a manner unattainable by the conscious effort of ordinary men.”⁴ Hearn turns his argument towards a critique of American society which, he believes,

¹ See Smith 101-107. Smith concludes the article as follows: “The argument over ‘genius’ among Howells and his contemporaries was never settled—no one seems to have been persuaded to change his mind in the least—but it did serve to clarify some of the fundamental differences between late nineteenth-century realists and romanticists and to underscore the moralistic and democratic strains in American realism” (105).

² See “Editor's Study,” *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 79. Nov. (1889): 964; qtd. in Smith 101.

³ See “Talent and Genius,” 21 March 1886, *The Times-Democrat, Essays on American Literature* 176.

⁴ See Stedman, “Genius,” *New Princeton Review* Sept. (1886): 154; qtd. in Smith 103.

does not tolerate difference in people's ability and tries to level everyone under a national motto of equality. What makes a difference in America is diligence and hard work, not “genius.” Hearn insists that “genius” is a capacity different from that of “the vast majority of mankind” that “signifies, besides extraordinary executive aptitude, a special and powerful psychical condition, —a condition to which few human minds are ever developed.”⁵ As he explained in his Tokyo University Lecture on “Shakespeare,” “Genius” for Hearn meant “an unusual phenomenon.”⁶

In his 1886 article “Some Musical Literature,” Hearn posits that the poet is a “mouthpiece” of the emotions of a race, rather than of the poet's own personal feelings. He argues that art “should form the ultimate and supreme expression of utterance for those, who, while capable of much feeling, may be incapable of much artistic execution. A masterpiece is, in this sense, a mouthpiece; —representing not merely the emotion of a master, but the emotion of a race or of an epoch” (3 May 1886; *The Times-Democrat, Literary Essays* 193). The “genius” of an artist, therefore, is defined by an ability to have insight into the past and hear the voice from the great cache of the human memory to speak, or sing, as “the mouthpiece” of universal truths about human emotion. For Hearn, creativity means the ability to recollect and reproduce what is already inherited—but forgotten and repressed—in the human mind.

Writing in Japan in the late 1890's, Hearn developed his idea of “genius” as the faculty that perceives the “psychical inheritance” of “the super-individual.” The artist, in other words, is one who can give form to remembrances of things past. Hearn believes that the “genius” of an artist (gendered as male in Hearn's essay) is able to guide his emotional response to nature's forces and maintain his æsthetic sense so as to express the power of beauty without slipping into grotesque images. In “First Impressions” from *Exotics and Retrospectives* (1898), he states:

Only by scientific psychology can the mystery of certain formidable characters be even partly explained; but any explanation must rest upon the acceptance, in some form or other, of the immense evolutionary fact of psychical inheritance. And psychical inheritance signifies the super-individual, —preëxistence recycled in compound personality. Yet, from our ethical standpoint, that

⁵ “The Questionings of Genius,” 24 April 1887, *The Times-Democrat, Essays on American Literature* 243; qtd. in Smith 104.

⁶ “Shakespeare,” *Interpretation of Literature*, vol. 2, 8.

superindividuality which we thus unconsciously allow in the very language used to express psychical domination, is a lower manifestation. Though working often for good, the power in itself is of evil; and the recognition of it by the subjugated is not a recognition of higher moral energy, but of a higher mental energy signifying larger evolutionary experience of wrong, deeper reserves of aggressive ingenuity, heavier capacities for the giving of pain. Called by no matter what euphemistic name, such power is brutal in its origin, and still allied to those malignities and ferocities shared by man with lower predatory creatures. But the beauty of the superindividual is revealed in that rarer power which the dead lend the living to win trust, to inspire ideals, to create love, to brighten whole circles of existence with the charm and wonder of a personality never to be described save in the language of light and music. (9:143-144)

For Hearn, therefore, creative “power” has nothing to do with civic morality. It has its own “higher mental energy, which is ‘evil’” in that it does not work conveniently to conform to established social systems and at base is related to primitive powers of “malignities and ferocities.” Nevertheless, Hearn proposes that through the medium of the “genius” that does fear “evil” in Nature and that is capable of turning evil into creative power, beauty will come out and shine “in the language of light and music” and enhance the development of the human mind for the overall “good.”

Shakespeare, for Hearn, is an example of such “genius.” In his lecture “Notes on the Study of Shakespeare,” he explains that Shakespeare has an “immense way of looking at life,” and that there is “something of the vast indifference of Nature herself, always producing, producing, producing, —evil and good in ceaseless alternation, —yet never preaching, never pitying, never making mistakes.” His art is neither “moral” nor “immoral” but is “altogether real” because it conveys “a morality of superior self-respect, superior knowledge of life, superlative perception of the proper relations of things—perhaps especially of the proper relations of the individual to the family and of the family to the state.” Shakespeare's “genius” is, more than anything, his memory; he is gifted with “a kind of organic memory” and “a kind of inherited memory.” Therefore, he is able to “represent thousands of experiences in hundreds of anterior lives, as man and woman, in different conditions of civilization, and different parts of the earth”

(*Interpretations of Literature* 2 37-38).⁷ The “genius” of Shakespeare recreates fundamental types in humanity, thus readers regardless of their racial or national orientation can read and find truth in his works. The Shakespearean “genius,” however, was slighted in the modern materialistic age because the advancement of technology and science discounted fairies and ghosts as mere fantasies, a major reason why Hearn was so critical of modernization. Hearn felt that ghostly Japan, which possessed wisdom and beauty of the past, was fading away. “Genius” as a “mouthpiece” and medium, therefore, was crucial in Hearn’s stories.

Hearn writes about the tragic fate of a “genius” in “The Story of Mimi-Nashi-Hōichi” (*Kwaidan*), the retelling of a Japanese story about a young, blind lute player, Hōichi. The story is a powerful representation of a singer-genius whose art ghosts appreciate, but whose true voice was never heard by his fellow townspeople. The narrative derives from a Buddhist parable that teaches the fierceness of evil spirits, or the dead, and how Hōichi was exorcised and saved by a *sūtra* that an old priest inscribed all over his body save for his ears. As his ears untouched by Buddhist text were taken away by ghosts, he came to be called “Hōichi-the-Earless,” or “Mimi-Nashi-Hōichi.” Hearn’s retelling of this tale ends happily with a triumphant priest, but it is important to pause to consider Hōichi’s silence.

The narrator introduces Hōichi as a musician “famed for his skill in recitation and in playing upon the *biwa* [four-stringed lute].”(11:162)⁸ Fascinated by Hōichi’s talent, the old priest, who loved poetry and music, invited Hōichi, a homeless orphan, to lodge at his temple. One summer night, when Hōichi was alone at the temple, he received a visitor who asked him to play music for his lord who happened to be staying nearby. Hōichi followed the visitor and played his *biwa* to his narration of a story. He was requested in particular to play the narrative-music of the battle of “Dan-no-ura,” the famous last battle that the Heike clan fought about seven hundred years before. Hōichi impressed the whole audience: he “chanted the chant of the fight on the bitter sea, —wonderfully making his *biwa* to sound like the straining of oars and the rushing of

⁷ In his stimulating Jungian reading of Hearn, Yu discusses the relationship between organic memory and creative faculty in Hearn’s lectures on Shakespeare, stating “Hearn really approaches Shakespeare’s personality as genius, as a complete artist”; see Yu 164.

⁸ Hearn provides a footnote explaining that a *biwa* is “a kind of four-stringed lute” played by professional minstrels who were called “*biwa-hoshū*” or “lute-priests” as they usually had their heads shaven like Buddhist priests.

ships, the shirr and the hissing of arrows, the shouting and trampling of men, the crashing of steel upon helmets, the plunging of slain in the flood.” His listeners were moved to the point that they “wept and wailed so loudly and so wildly that the blind man was frightened by the violence of the grief that he had made” (11:167). The performance surprised Hōichi himself since he had never played better.

It was the servants of the temple who discovered that Hōichi was playing the *biwa* alone in the cemetery in front of the memorial tomb of the lord who had been killed in the battle of “Dan-no-ura.” They also saw “ghostly fires” flying around Hōichi, although the blind musician himself never doubted that he was playing before the noble people who were so appreciative of his narrative music. Upon hearing the report, the old priest inscribed a *sūtra* on Hōichi’s body in order to protect him from evil spirits. The *sūtra* was written over Hōichi’s entire body with the exception of his ears, that had been overlooked. When the ghost came for Hōichi that night, it was unable to see him since the *sūtra* concealed him as if in a cloak of invisibility. Hōichi heard the ghost call his name, but since the old priest told him not to answer the ghost, he remained silent. The ghost, finding the floating ears, took them away. Hōichi’s ears were torn painfully apart, but the old priest finding Hōichi safe and alive, exclaimed: “Cheer up, friend! –the danger is now well over. You will never again be troubled by those visitors” (11: 175).

One should note that Hōichi’s feelings are not described in Hearn’s narrative. The musician does not even cry when his ears are clipped off. But curiously, he is stunned by his own performance at the cemetery, as he has never known himself play so well, and when the temple servant laughs at him, he remonstrates against such a rude attitude, as he does not doubt that he has played before the nobleman. Hōichi here is portrayed as the figure of Hearn’s “genius” who is “an unusual phenomenon.” Being blind, he is not biased against anything visible or material. He hears everything, including the voices of ghosts. The ghosts want him to sing their songs of their pains and of agonies long lost. His performance was splendid and moving because, to quote again the passage from “The First Impression,” “the beauty of the superindividual is revealed in that rarer power which the dead lend the living to win trust (. . .)”. “Mimi-Nashi-Hōichi” thus demonstrates a rare exchange of the dead and the genius and let Hōichi play and sing. Yet, his best performance ever is not heard by anyone living and no one is present to attest to how good he is. His ears serve as a direct line connecting him to the world of the dead. He could hear the vibrations of voices, which reached him across time and space. Voices coming through his ears were then processed and translated into words

and amplified through his mouth. The loss of his ears meant the loss of his life as a genius musician. People came to see Hōichi-the-Earless, but only as an object of curiosity. The old priest saved Hōichi's life, but Hōichi is metaphorically made into an obedient eunuch and entertainer for the old priest. His musician-genius is castrated. He could never play again as he had for the dead audience in the graveyard before he lost his ears.

The original Buddhist narrative emphasizes the sacred power of the *sūtra* that protects Hōichi's life. Hearn's version, however, portrays the act of inscribing the *sūtra* on Hōichi's body as a murderous act for the sake of his artist-self. The demonic powers of the ghosts are evil and dangerous for the community, but they also elicit a creative power in Hōichi. Hearn's narrative questions whether or not the authority of the old priest is fortunate for Hōichi. The act of inscribing the *sūtra* is an act of exploiting Hōichi's body and is described in quite an erotic way. The old priest and his acolyte trace their brushes all over Hōichi's body: "Before sundown the priest and his acolyte stripped Hōichi: then, with their writing-brushes, they traced upon his breast and back, head and face and neck, limbs and hands and feet, even upon the soles of his feet, and upon all parts of his body, –the text of the holy *sūtra* called *Hannya-shin-kyo*" (16). The *sūtra* saves Hōichi's physical life, but his haunting voices are lost. No one cares what he feels and thinks, and no one knows the passion that he had once felt and had moved him to perform so wildly. And then Hōichi shuts his mouth in silence. His silence, especially when juxtaposed with the old priest's excited cries, "Cheer up, friend!" is ominous. He becomes a relic of a legendary musician and a mere entertainer for the old priest who is the guardian of the homeless orphan Hōichi.

Arthur Kunst describes "The Story of Mimi-nashi-Hōichi" as "the usual hauntings, dark journeys, exorcisms, and disfigurings . . . told with a kind of indifferent care" (117). He seems to be reading the story as another bizarre ghost story from the Orient, even though Hearn does not simply copy and print the old story he had found. Hearn, a self-acknowledged "mouthpiece" singer, renders the glory and pain of the artist in Hōichi. The secularization of Buddhist temples in nineteenth century Japan might also be the object of his criticism: temples were no longer the locus of sacred worship but local gathering places that functioned like a town hall. The story can be read as a tragedy of a genius, a young storyteller-musician, whose true worth is not appreciated by his contemporaries. The old priest and his cohorts are neither blind, nor deaf, nor

mute, and they offer prayers to the dead, even when they are unable to see invisible presences or hear their voices. The old priest is said to be a connoisseur of art and music, but his real interest seems to lie in holding a handsome and blind artist as his property.

Hearn became infatuated with Hōichi. While he was preparing his version of the story at nightfall without lighting a lamp, his wife Setsu used to call him “Yoshi-ichi!” (another reading of Hōichi), and Hearn would answer, “I am blind. Who are you?” and remain silent, listening to the darkness (Setsuko Koizumi 38-39). Hearn himself was almost blind and might have kept his ears open in order to listen to the voice of “the superindividual.” As I discussed in the previous chapter, the Japanese custom of listening to insects fascinated Hearn. To listen to the silence as well as to something so easily overlooked as an insect’s song became a metaphor for his artistic genius.

Dancing Girl as a Medium

In an era of global exploration and discovery, Hearn was a curious modern Westerner interested in the achievements and possibilities of ethnological and anthropological studies. He was also fascinated by folklore, myths, and legends as both historical records and new literary material. His own interest in this material paralleled a greater intellectual trend with the founding of the American Folklore Society in 1888 and the American Anthropological Association in 1899. Hearn deliberately collected Japanese folk material for his writing and was lucky to have a Japanese student who happily worked for him as a “fieldworker.” Every month, Hearn gave Mr. Otani, one of his students at Kumamoto, a topic to investigate: “Poems on the Sound of Sea and Wind,” “The Horai (Elysium) and its Traditions and the Conceptions of the Ancient Poets,” or “Folklore and Mythology of Japanese Plants.” These projects were demanding for Hearn’s students, and Otani wrote in his reminiscences that, in order to produce reports for Hearn, he had to consult the encyclopedia and “work hard” during his vacations. He commented that Hearn's essay “Buddhist Names of Plants and Animals” from *A Japanese Miscellany* (1901) was the result of Hearn's “good utilization of [Otani's] investigation” (Noguchi 109-10). Hearn deliberately chose ethnological or anthropological topics that would interest his readers in America. He wrote to Otani: “Your collection of poems this month interested me a great deal in a new way—the songs separately make only a small appeal to the imagination, but the

tone and feeling of the mass are most remarkable, and give me a number of new ideas about the *character of the 'Folkwork' . . .*" (111). Hearn's attention then was particularly focused on this so-called "Folkwork," or local folklore stories, songs, festivals and crafts, all of which he believed would unveil the secrets of the life and history of the Japanese.

Wherever he went Hearn was attentive to the life of common people. He became particularly interested in dancing as a form of popular expression. In his first book on Japan, *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* (1894), he gathered twenty-seven narratives that vary from cultural observations to essays and stories. Among them, three are about dancing: "Bon-Odori," "Kitzuki: The Most Ancient Shrine in Japan," and "Of a Dancing-Girl." These stories reveal Hearn's fascination with dancing and dancing girls in Japan. Hearn examined the originary significance of dance as a religious ritual and traced its transformations through history. In a way, he challenged the prevalent notion of *geisha* (dancing girls) and rewrote stereotypical images of Japan and Japanese women. What he saw in these dancing girls were glimpses of a past long lost. Thus he viewed them as a kind of medium, a "mouthpiece" of human memory.

"Bon-Odori," various forms of Ghost-Festival Dance taking place during All Souls' Week every August in Japan, illustrates a visionary experience Hearn had at a local dance festival dance. He attended the summer festival in the summer of 1890 and the nocturnal scene of impassioned movements and unfamiliar music he witnessed there left him with a haunting memory. He told his wife Setsu, "Oh, what a wonder! How great! It is the first time to see such a dashing and beautiful dance. I wish I could dance with them. And I feel myself as if my body and bones grew big suddenly as those dancers!" (Noguchi 78). Hearn feels primordial emotions emanating from the dancers in the moment of their performance. In "Bon-Odori" he writes:

And always the white hands sinuously wave together, as if weaving spells, alternatively without and within the round, now with palms upward, now with palms downward; and all the elfish sleeves hover duskily together, with a shadowing as of wings; and all the feet poise together with such a rhythm of complex motion, that, in watching it, one feels a sensation of hypnotism –as while striving to watch a flowing and shimmering of water. (5:155)

The narrator, in spite of himself, is transported like "a sensation of hypnotism" in response to the tense moment. To Hearn's surprise, the "Bon-Odori" scene does not

involve any shamanistic loudness (he might have been reminded of Voodoo rituals in New Orleans) but is controlled with solemnity: “No one speaks, not even a spectator.” What he hears are the chants, the sound of “the *shu-shu* of sandals” as the dancers lightly stir the dust, and the chirping of crickets in the background. He tries to explain his feelings, but he only comes up with an assertion that the scene “suggests some fancy of somnambulism, –dreamers, who dream themselves flying, dreaming upon their feet” (5:155). This sense of “somnambulism” and dreams makes him reflective, as if trying to remember forgotten fragments of his dreams. Past moments suddenly intrude into the present “Bon-Odori” space. The dancing field turns into a magic circle of visionary experience. The narrator thinks that he is looking at “something old, something belonging to the unrecorded beginnings of this Oriental life, perhaps to the crepuscular Kamiyo itself, to the magical Age of the Gods.” The scene becomes “unreal” with people’s “silent smilings,” “silent bowings,” “the gray mouldering court,” “the desolate temple,” and “the broken statue of Jizo, smiling”:

Under the wheeling moon, in the midst of the round, I feel as one within the circle of a charm. And verily this is enchantment; I am bewitched, bewitched by the ghostly weaving of hands, by the rhythmic gliding of feet, above all by the flitting of the marvelous sleeves—apparitional, soundless, velvety as a flitting of great tropical bats. No; nothing I ever dreamed of could be likened to this. And with the consciousness of the ancient hakaba behind me, and the weird invitation of its lanterns, and the ghostly beliefs of the hour and the place, there creeps upon me a nameless, tingling sense of being haunted. (5: 156)

“Bon-Odori” is specifically a kind of folk dance held on the evening of the last day of the Buddhist summer festival “Bon.” This period is a time when dead ancestors are said to come back to visit. The dance takes place on temple grounds, and in the background of the dancing circle, the narrator sees the cemetery, or “hakaba,” lit with “lanterns.” His eyes capture the dancer's movements and flickering lights, and his ears the “*shu-shu*” sounds of sandals and “the gentle clapping.” He feels as if he were witnessing a scene in mythological Japan magically recovered, or “Kamiyo,” that translucently flickers between the dancers' movements and the music. He continues:

But no! these gracious, silent, waving, weaving shapes are not of the Shadowy Folk, for whose coming the white fires were kindled: a strain of song, full of sweet, clear quavering, like the call of a bird, gushes from some girlish mouth,

and fifty soft voices join the chant:

Sorota soroimashita odorikoga sorota,
Soroikite, kita hare yukata. (5: 156)

What he is witnessing is not ghostly figures but real live girls whose “waving” movements and “gush[ing]” “girlish” voices create “the chant.” Just as he detected an ancient component of the human memory in “the chant” of the boys in “Jiu-jitsu,” he hears something ancient in the real voices of girls—that is something from “Kamiyo,” Japan’s mythological past.

Hearn thus adeptly inserts historical transformations of adoptive and hybrid Japanese religious practices. “Bon-Odori” takes place at the temple as part of a Buddhist ritual, but the narrator’s dreamy vision captures Japanese memory harkening back to “Kamiyo,” or the ancient times of Shinto gods and goddesses. He sees such ancient visions because he believes ancestor worship of the Shinto religion lies at the very core of the Japanese psyche. In the festive folk dance, he witnesses the most primitive and passionate Japanese way of worship. When the temple bell is gonged, the spell is over and his vision flips back to the actual dancing scene of country girls. The narrator’s vision of the past is overlaid with the present. He knows that he is observing country girls dancing, but ancient goddesses simultaneously reside in them. The superimposed vision is temporary, though he asserts that it is not mere fancy. Sacred elements reside in these living bodies. When “A deep low boom rolls suddenly across the court” sounding the twelfth hour, the pageant ends and the solemn silence disappears. The lively country people return to their chatter and make noise with their *getas*, or wooden clogs:

Instantly the witchcraft ends, like the wonder of some dream broken by a sound, the chanting ceases; the round dissolves in an outburst of happy laughter, and chatting, and softly-vowelled calling of flower-names which are names of girls, and farewell cries of “Sayonara!” as dancers and spectators alike betake themselves homeward, with a great korokoro of *getas*. (5: 158)

The common world of everyday life suddenly takes over and the magic circle disappears. The dancers turn back into ordinary village girls, their straw-woven sandals replaced with *getas* that make loud “korokoro” sounds. He feels “a vague resentment against them for thus materializing into simple country girls,” but the gap is significant in that these ordinary girls all inherit something old and divine from “Kamiyo.” The “simple country girls” become the mediums of rustic customs that retain traces of old

native memories. For Hearn, the “Bon-Odori” ritual offers an exemplary space in which something divine is released from ordinary people.

“Kitzuki: The Most Ancient Shrine in Japan” is based on Hearn’s visit to the oldest shrine in Izumo, believed to be the heart of Japanese mythology. He was the first foreigner who was permitted to enter the inner shrine there and saw “the Dance of the Miko, the Divineress.” A Miko is a Shinto shrine maiden who performs various tasks at the shrine, including sacred dances. In ancient times, she was seen as shaman. Following the “burst of strange music—a sound of drums and bamboo flutes,” the surprising dance of the *Miko*, dressed all in customary white, “a Virgin priestess,” began:

Her every movement is a poem, because she is very graceful; and yet her performance could scarcely be called a dance, as we understand the word; it is rather a light swift walk within a circle, during which she shakes the instrument at regular intervals, making all the little bells ring. Her face remains impassive as a beautiful mask, placid and sweet as the face of a dreaming Kwannon; and her white feet are pure of line as the feet of a marble nymph. Altogether, with her snowy raiment and white flesh and passionless face, she seems rather a beautiful living statue than a Japanese maiden. (5: 234-235)

This “Dance of the Miko, the Divineress” is a stylized, ritualistic dedication at the shrine's altar, where the maiden's circular movements create another worldly atmosphere and trance-like experience. The controlled movements in the dance differ from “Bon-Odori” and distance the narrator from the scene. The miko dance does not involve the narrator emotionally, but aesthetically. As the dance is performed in the daytime, the dark witchcraft quality of the “Bon-Odori” experience is absent; but the dance is authentic and is said to replicate early religious forms. In a sense, the narrator need not imagine what is lost; all is before him. Thus the shrine is almost like a sacred museum. The *miko* is compared to a “statue” that reminds him of “Kwannon,” the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, as well as “a marble nymph” as in a marble statue. Barefoot and robed in snowy white, she could be a Greek statue. The *miko* then is a type of sacred figure not only of Shinto, but Buddhism, and European mythology. In other words, the ultimate prototype of the merciful goddesses is manifest in the dance of Miko.

In “Of a Dancing-Girl,” the narrator is escorted to a banquet hall to see professional dancers, or *geisha*, and begins to write about them. Soon enough, he

curtains this story and introduces an old story about a *Shira-byoshi*, as if he were trying to compensate with another story for some missing spiritual element in the *geisha* dancers' lives. The form of *Shira-byoshi* dancing, derived from ritualistic dancing at shrines and temples in the twelfth century, is considered the beginning of dancing as professional entertainment. Historically, *Shira-byoshi* of the middle ages danced at religious or public festive occasions for the aristocratic class. The juxtaposition of the two stories about *geisha* and *Shira-byoshi* illustrates the loss of the original religious spirit in *geisha* dancing in the commercialized modern world.

The *geisha* are gorgeously clad in silk and wear hair ornaments of “mock flowers” and “curious ornaments of gold” (6:212). The narrator's description, however, does not stop at the exotic surface beauty of the women, but transcends it as he meditates on the custom of entertainment dancing itself. He thinks that the dancers are artificially fashioned “in answer to foolish human desire for the illusion of love mixed with youth and grace, but without regrets or responsibilities (. . .) (6: 217). A *geisha*, he points out, is entirely at the mercy of egoistic male desire and a commercialized entertainment market. He further explains that a dancer begins her career “as a slave,” sold by her poor parents to be trained as “a public singer and dancer”; therefore, her dream in life is to find “Somebody” who can “buy her freedom” (6:219). The narrator, however, breaks with the story here, as he knows that she is unlikely to realize her dream. The tragic circumstances of dancers, who are slaves to the entertainment business in the licensed red-light quarters, depress the narrator. He then shifts his attention to an old anecdote about a *Shira-byoshi* dancer and her life-long dedication to her beloved. It becomes clear that the sense of loss the narrator has felt towards the *geisha* dancers is due to the fact that the *geisha* world lacks religious spirit or devotion. The women are commodities at the mercy of male customers, nothing more. The anecdote, to which the narrator turns, introduces a disinterested artist who can see the true beauty of a “Dancing-girl. “

The narrator of the anecdote about the *Shira-byoshi*, a sacred dancer, is a painter. While on a sketching tour, the young man asked for a night's lodging at the dancer's small hut. That night, when he awakened, he saw a light, and by chance, witnessed her dancing alone in her beautiful *Shira-byoshi* costume in front of a small family altar. She told him in the morning that she dances for her dead lover's spirit every night. Forty-some years later, the painter, now a Master, receives a visit from a shabby-looking old woman who wants him to paint her in return for her old *Shira-byoshi* costume. At the sight of the *Shira-byoshi* costume, he remembers the

night. The woman tells him that she is now too feeble to dance for her beloved every night, and wants to have her portrait painted so that she can hang it before the altar.

The story of the *Shira-byoshi* is really about the Master's art and insight. The Master is Hearn's ideal "moral artist" who feels the virtue of the dancer through his recollected memories and reproduces them in his art. He paints the dancer in her beautiful *Shita-byoshi* costume, but the portrait is created from memory and is not especially naturalistic.

[It is] not a picture of her as she seemed to the Master's pupils, but the memory of her as she had been in the days of her youth, bright-eyed as a bird, lithe as a bamboo, dazzling as a tennin⁹ in her silk and gold raiment. Under the magic of the Master's brush, the vanished grace returned, the faded beauty bloomed again.
(6: 238)

The divine image of the *Shira-byoshi* that the Master paints may remind readers of the Miko in "Kizuki." He is truly the Master because he paints from his memory: his art is the "remembering—*seeing retrospectively*, through rifts in the curtain of the past." Only painting what one sees represents mere materialism and naturalism for Hearn. He makes the Master painter a man who does not judge people by appearance. The Master's students almost kicked the shabby-looking old woman away at one point in the story, but it was the Master who invited her in and listened to her. He also remembered her faith and love and her dancing as a form of worship. All that she had to offer came through in her dancing in the *Shira-byoshi* costume.

On his way to pay his respects to the dancer later, the Master finds her dead alone in her bed and witnesses a miraculous change in her face: "A vague sweetness, like a ghost of youth, had returned to it; the lines of sorrow had been softened, the wrinkles strangely smoothed, by the touch of a phantom Master mightier than he" (6: 241). An artist's highest goal, Hearn implies by this narrative, is insight, an ability to see the invisible, hear the silence, and feel the wonder of Nature. The artist gains this insight through his moral stance, which Hearn calls "soul sympathy."¹⁰ The other important attribute of the Master is his moral response. He does not paint *Shira-byoshi's* portrait

⁹ "'Tennin' is 'Sky-Maiden,' or a Buddhist angel," according to Hearn's note.

¹⁰ In his letter to Basil Hall Chamberlain (14 January 1893), Hearn emphasizes the importance of knowing and understanding people in order to write about them. He criticizes Lowell's point of view as too scientific for a sympathetic understanding of Japanese people. See *Japanese Letters of Lafcadio Hearn* 30-31.

for any remuneration, and his work is proof of his understanding of her lifestyle and his admiration of the beauty of her heart. His artistic mastery enables him to reproduce her “grace” and “beauty” from memory. His dedication to art, moreover, has made him a humble artist, and because of this, according to Hearn, he is blessed with an opportunity to see the true “grace” and “beauty” that can be only created by “a phantom Master mightier than he” in the her dead face. He is the Master of both æsthetics and ethics. In his essay, “The Question of Highest Art,” Hearn writes that “moral beauty, the highest of all, has indeed been a supreme source of unselfish action; but it has moved men's minds chiefly through superhuman ideals, and very seldom through the words or acts of a person, and individual” (*Talks to Writers* 152). The Master is the one able to respond to the “superhuman ideals” of his mind's Unconscious.

The consecrated dancers, the *Miko* and the *Shira-byoshi* serve as mediums at religious ceremonies. However, commercialism has already made inroads into the sacred spheres of the shrine. As Hearn writes in his letter to W. B. Mason in 1892 about his visit to Kasuga Shrine in Kyoto: “Everything seems so factitious this side [Eastern side of the main Island]. Even the dancing of the *Miko* at Kasuga impressed me only as a pretty show given for money: the solemn, dignified Kagura of Kitzuki never danced for money, had the charm of religion, as well as the respectability of primitive tradition to recommend it.” Signs of modern civilization, commercialism and egoistic individualism were becoming conspicuous in every part of Japan. Hearn uses the dance/dancer in order to differentiate its original significance of selfless devotion and its beauty from it becoming an object of male or Western desire and possession that modern commercialism had promoted.

The fact that even the religious sphere was being exploited by commercialism worried Hearn, given that this circumstance too endangered the last sanctuary of the spirit of old Japan. What is significant in Hearn's observation in the three dance narratives is that he deliberately writes about the role of the sacred maidens. The sacred role of the *Miko* and the *Shira-byoshi* at the shrine is related to that of the woman at home who lights the lamp at the family altar for the dead ancestors and devotes her life to her family. The laughing country girls in “Bon-Odori” unconsciously inherit their memory for the dance. Hearn's writings about Japanese women show his concern about the loss of an ideal role as sacred maidens at home. This loss would mean the disruption of the old Japanese social system that is based on family kinship.

Although Hearn at one time refers to Japanese women as “childish,” his position needs to be differentiated from the doll-like stereotypes of women in *Madame*

Chrysanthème or *Madame Butterfly*. Hearn's Japanese women are not the objects of Western male desire, but they exist on their own, embracing their hidden inner world behind their reserved appearance. Hearn makes much of the Japanese woman's childlike innocence, because it suggests her artless and unaffected nature and the moral strength of her simple faith. In *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*, he states that there is "the combination, in this child-soul, of gentleness and force, tenderness and courage" and "Stronger within her than wifely affection or parental affection or even maternal affection, —stronger than any womanly emotion, was the moral conviction born of her great faith." Here Hearn observes that the Japanese "Sister of Charity" is found in any ordinary Japanese home, and although invisible to the public eye, she performs "the multiform duties" for her family. Significantly, Hearn also compares her to a heroine in a Greek tragedy:

Rather might she be compared to the Greek type of noble woman, —to Antigone, to Alcestis. With the Japanese woman, as formed by the ancient training, each act of life was an act of faith: her existence was a religion, her home a temple, her every word and thought ordered by the law of the cult of the dead. (12: 348)

Hearn was fascinated to find similarities between the Japanese and Greek cultures and believed that they both shared the characteristics of a family-oriented social system and ancestor worship. His reference to Greek women spotlights Japanese women as being as high-minded and strong-willed as Greek heroines. Antigone was a noble woman who lived and died for her family and Alcestis, a paragon of a wife who dedicated her life to save her husband. Antigone especially offers a strong link with the Japanese woman in Hearn's imagination because they both serve as priestesses for the family altar and burial rituals. They are the symbol of a social system based on the family unit. In his essay "The Virgin and the God Father: Kinship versus the State in Greek Tragedy and After," Robin Fox argues that in Sophocles's *Antigone* (BC442) the conflict occurs between a kinship-oriented clan society and an individual-based society, and that it is illustrated in the daughter's fate of being "exiled" from her father's house at her marriage (125). Fox regards Antigone not as "an existential heroine" or "the supreme individualist challenging the power of the state," but as a woman of "a stubborn devotion to the divine law," "the unwavering loyal kinswoman does her utmost to

fulfill her duties to her kin group.” Fox states:

In death Antigone is vindicated, but what is vindicated is not her right to her individual conscience, but her adherence to a supraindividual law—almost a law of nature, at least of divine nature. This is why, to Sophocles, she is a heroine and a tragic figure. . . she . . . in accordance with divine law is taken as a manifestation of her instinct—or impulse-driven femaleness—in contrast, of course, to Creon's male ‘reasonableness’ (115).

In short, both Japanese women and Greek noblewomen devote themselves to the “supraindividual law.” If a socio-political change divested Antigone of her sacred role of priestess in her father's home, the same was true with Japanese women in modern Japan. Indeed, Hearn's pessimism was justified since Meiji Japan was eagerly trying to modernize the country by adopting Western systems and the old type of Japanese woman dedicated to the family was becoming obsolete. As early as 1892, Hearn deplored the changes in society that were transforming traditional Japanese character and morality. To Mason he wrote:

But with what hideous rapidity Japan is modernizing, after all!—not in costume, or architecture, or habit, but in heart and manner. The emotional nature of the race is changing. Will it ever become beautiful again? Or failing to become attractive, can it ever become sufficiently complex to make a harmony with the emotional character of the West? It is really a very, very, very hard thing to study, is the Japanese soul. And ever so much of what I wrote in my forthcoming volume of Japanese sketches seems now to me wrong—now that I have lived so long out of Izumo. I see no literary inspiration ahead. (16:291).

Izumo is the Mt. Olympus of Japan, the place where Japanese mythology of Shinto gods and goddesses is said to have originated. Hearn's first teaching position was in Izumo and his love of old Japan started there. There, the *Miko* dancing was authentic, solemn, and aesthetically beautiful. He was in Izumo for only about a year, but he never found his ideal Japan in any other Japanese place. The *Miko* whom he saw in Izumo was the one who he felt had inherited the original beauty of a mythological goddess, but such beauty was fading away in a world of commercialism and materialism:

This wonderful type is not extinct—though surely doomed to disappear. A human creature so shaped for the service of gods and men that every beat of her heart is duty, that every drop of her blood is moral feeling, were not less out of place in the future world of competitive selfishness, than an angel in hell. (12:

The “wonderful type” represents the priestess-preserver of the household gods. She is a consecrated maiden, the *Miko*, or a devoted noble daughter like Antigóné. Without her, Hearn fears, the family social system is “doomed to disappear.”

In “Koizumi Yakumo to bushi no musumetachi [Koizumi Yakumo and the Daughters of the Samurai class],” Masaru Tohda argues that Hearn is principally writing about the daughters of the Samurai class, a class abolished by the Meiji government just a couple of decades prior to Hearn's arrival in Japan. Hearn made much of his wife who was in fact the last living daughter of a Samurai. Tohda's interpretation is that Hearn's stories about the daughters of Samurai family are portraits of his wife Setsu.¹¹ Tohda refers to “Yuko: A Reminiscence” (*Out of East*, 1895), which exemplifies Hearn's idea of the noble daughter of a Samurai. The story is based on the true case of a woman of common class who committed suicide, but Hearn modifies the original story and makes the heroine the daughter of a Samurai, intensifying the tragic aspects of her heroism and martyrdom in a changing modern society.¹² This story reminds us of his above-mentioned comparison of the Japanese woman to Antigóné. In “Yuko,” Hearn writes, in the form of a short reverie, of a tragedy about the last daughter of a noble family.

Hearn's life was a journey in search of a medium, the medium of the voice of the divine and the medium of his art. Kayoko Ikeda speculates that the voice of his Greek mother might have lingered in Hearn's memory and urged him to search for it; he sought it in the voices of Mattie in Cincinnati, a Creole medium in New Orleans, and his Creole maid in Martinique. He even looked for a sonorous voice in the tropical wind.¹³ Yet, he might have himself thought of becoming one with the voice of his ideal woman medium. Setsu remembers, “Hearn's habitual voice was dainty, like a woman's, and his way of laughing was also very feminine; but sometimes he would become very energetic and excited in a dainty talk and would express himself very powerfully”

¹¹ Masaru Tohda, “Koizumi Yakumo to bushi no musumetachi [Koizumi Yakumo and the Daughters of the Samurai Family],” Special Issue on Lafcadio Hearn and Multiculturalism, *Kokubungaku [Japanese Literature]* (1998) 71-77.

¹² Yuzo Ohta in *Lafcadio Hearn: kyozo to jitzuzo [Lafcadio Hearn: the False Image and the Real Image]* (1994) criticizes the incomplete and false information Hearn uses in “Yuko” (157-158).

¹³ Kayoko Ikeda, “Herun na gaijin to iu honyaku gensho [A Phenomenon of Translation: Hearn's Japanese, 'Herun, the Stranger'],” *Kokubungaku [Japanese Literature]* 4

(Setsu Koizumi 48). Recalling one of Hearn's rare social visits, Mrs. Fenollosa also remembers the sonority of his voice:

A small man of grey tone with delicate, slightly distorted features and with his entire personality warped, twisted a little to the right, the result, I suppose, of his semi-blindness and poor eyesight. He was thinner and smaller than I had thought, and his hair is very grey. The white, blind left eyeball is a terrible defect and one feels always his consciousness of this. . . . But his beautiful voice—sweet, vibrating—never loud nor piercing—has an irresistible charm—and as one knows him better and begins to feel that the shy spirit is creeping more and more from its fragile shell—one ceases to care for anything material. (Qtd. in Chisoom 140-141)

Hearn never referred to notes in his lectures, but instead “talked” directly to his students. He recited all the literary material he quoted from memory. It was his principle that stories, and lectures as well, had to be internalized in order to be told. Perhaps unknowingly, Hearn discovered his own medium within himself, in his dreams, stories, language and voice. He knew that listening to an enchanting voice was the beginning of an emotional experience without which creation was impossible. Hearn perhaps felt that he was dissolving into a voice that echoed of the Infinite. The night he died, he was listening to the insects in the garden. He said to Setsu, “That tiny creature has been singing nicely. It's getting cold, though. Is it conscious or unconscious that soon it must die? It's a pity, indeed.” And then he died with “a little smile about his mouth” (*Life and Letters* 2 523). Setsu thought that Hearn once again had embarked on another journey to a distant place, as she remembers his saying, “I traveled for a very long distance. Now that I am smoking here, it hardly seems to have been a real journey. It was like a dream, . . . not a journey in Europe, nor in Japan--it was a strange place” (*Setsu Koizumi* 79). His journey, in search of songs and dreams, was still unfinished.

FIVE

Translation, Re-translation, and Stories Twice-told

1. “Ghostly” Narrative: Translation and Re-telling in “Yuki-Onna”¹⁴

Hybrid Narrative

Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904) was a life-long wanderer, a child of nineteenth century Western imperialistic and commercial expansionism. His wandering life started on the Greek island of Leucadia where he was born in 1850 of an Irish surgeon serving for the British Army and a Greek woman. The family returned to Ireland, but his mother was sent back home when he was four, and his father left for India with his new wife when he was seven. Moreover, his guardian aunt, because of financial reasons, sent him away to America when he was nineteen. In order to discover his path in life in America, first in Cincinnati and then New Orleans, he developed his skills as a journalist and translator. Dreaming of becoming a prose-poet someday, he also wrote numerous articles on multi-cultural issues, minorities, women and immigrants, and translated French articles and stories.¹⁵ Today, despite the significant amount of writing he produced during his

¹⁴ This paper was written as a part of research project (No. 24520302) funded by the Japan Society For the Promotion of Science; it was originally presented at “American Literature Association 23rd Annual Conference,” San Francisco on 24 May 2012, under the title, “Lafcadio Hearn’s ‘Re-told’ Ghostly Narrative: Evoking Ghosts and Creating Home in a Foreign Landscape,” and its revised version, which I have reprinted here, was included in *Kobe Gaidai Ronso* 63.1-5. (2012) 27-38.

¹⁵ Some of the references concerning Lafcadio Hearn’s life includes the following: O.W. Frost’s *Young Hearn* (1958), Christopher Benfey’s *The Great Wave; Gilded Age Misfits, Japanese Eccentrics, and the Opening of Old Japan* (2003), Jonathan Cott’s *Wandering Ghost; the Odyssey of Lafcadio Hearn* (1991), Paul Murray’s *Fantastic Journey: the Life and Literature of Lafcadio Hearn* (1993), Robert Rosenstone’s *Mirror in the Shrine: American Encounters with Meiji Japan* (1998), and Elizabeth Stevenson’s *The Glass Lark: a Study of Lafcadio*

American period, he is better known for his books on Japan that he wrote after 1890 when he went to Japan as a reporter for *Harper's Magazine*.¹⁶ He was naturally called a Japanologist who wrote about old Japanese cultural practices that were quickly fading away in times of Japan's aggressive modernization. He, however, could not have written his Japanese stories had he not been a wanderer during the heyday of the British Empire, the American Gilded Age, and, not to mention, Imperial Japan. As Beongcheon Yu defines him, he is a "translator, a discoverer" (284) of old Japan.¹⁷ He, a life-long traveler, naturally became a sympathetic "global soul," to use Pico Iyer's phrase, who was able to adapt himself to the local cultural milieu.¹⁸ In Japan, he acquainted himself with numerous old Japanese stories, and "re-told" them in English. Although he could not read Japanese text, he was able to experience Japanese stories directly; his Japanese wife, who helped him collect Japanese folktales and other legendary and religious narratives, became, as it were, his own private storyteller. Her recitation in a sense was already a form of "re-telling" of Japanese folktales, which further inspired him to write them down in his mother tongue as "saiwa, (a 're-told' story)."¹⁹ His "re-told" story, therefore, is a deliberately re-worked creative piece onto which he projected his life-long multi-cultural experience.

Hearn's "re-told" Japanese folktales were also translated into Japanese and included in collections of Japanese folktales for children in the mid twentieth century. Most of his stories, of course, were based on old texts and considered as good educational tools to teach children Japanese customs and values. They served indeed as "translations" of old stories into modern Japanese, which, otherwise, might have been scattered and forgotten in the course of history. Surprisingly, many children grew up not knowing that a foreigner had originally written these stories in English, or that what they read were "translations." The

Hearn (1999).

¹⁶ *Lafcadio Hearn: American Writings* published as one of the American Library Series in 2009 finally established Hearn as an American writer. The editor, Christopher Benfey, "is convinced that his [Hearn's] time has come" ("The Library of America Interviews Christopher Benfey about Lafcadio Hearn").

¹⁷ Hearn is said to have been one of the pioneers in folklore and ethnography. For example, see "Honoring a Westerner Who Preserved Japan's Folk Tales" (*NYT*, 20 Feb. 2007), "Insight into 'Irish-American' who Introduced Japan to the World" (*Irish Times*, 11 Oct. 2011); also see Simon Bronner, *Lafcadio Hearn's America: Ethnographic Sketches*, Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 2002).

¹⁸ See Pico Iyer, *The Global Soul: Jet Lag, Shopping Malls, and the Search for Home*.

¹⁹ "Saiwa" is defined as a literature that retells traditional folktales and legendary narratives in modern diction. The term was first used by Teiichi Hirai to describe Hearn's literature (1964). See "Saiwa-bungaku," *Koizumi Yakumo Jiten (Koizumi Yakumo Encyclopedia)*. As to Hearn's "saiwa-bungaku (literature of re-telling)," Yoko Makino has an insightful study from a point of view of storytelling as an act of connecting time through literary imagination: "Toki" o *Tsunagu Kotoba: Ha-n no Saiwa-bungaku (Words to Connect "Time"; Hearn's Literature of Re-telling)*, 2011.

fact that Hearn could write such stories so as to evoke nostalgia in Japanese readers is worthy of note. Hearn must have been well aware of what could be lost and found in the course of translation. With that in mind, he was also able to add or erase elements in his stories to effect. His multi-cultural background also made him seek a kind of narrative that could be shared by people of different ethnic and cultural orientations. Although he had been always enchanted by the ghostly wherever he went, in Japan especially, the ghostly elements in Japanese folktales served as the source for his literary imagination. He had thus formed the idea that the “ghostly” is a common human experience that bespeaks a fundamental and most ancient human experience of fear in the face of the mysteries of life and the soul; therefore, regardless of language and culture, a good narrative, Hearn believed, always renders a sense of the “ghostly,” and is not a mere fantasy of a distant fanciful dreamland. It has more to do with one’s everyday life experience. In the following excerpt from a lecture he gave at Tokyo University titled “The Value of the Supernatural in Fiction,” he emphasizes the significance of the ghostly in the contemporary world:

[t]he mystery of the universe is now weighing upon us, becoming heavier and heavier, more and more awful, as our knowledge expands, and it is especially a ghostly mystery. All great art reminds us in some way of this universal riddle; that is why I say that all great art has something ghostly in it. It touches something within us which relates to infinity.” (132)

Science and technology make great strides in Hearn’s time; as he contends, however, the presence of something invisible, unheard, and unknown, and yet felt, is even more prevailing, although humans tend to dismiss such presence as unscientific and illusionary. He further points out that “The ghostly always represents some shadow of truth. The ghost story has always happened in our dreams and reminds us of forgotten experiences, imaginative and emotional, and hence, thrills us” (133). In ghostly stories, whose main theme is to render a “thrill” of human experience that has been stored deep inside in the unconscious since time immemorial, Hearn finds possibilities of a new literary expression that is free from the particular locality of values. Although he needs to give a specific framework of time and place to his story, in his case a Japanese setting, he tailors his story, overlaying it with stories from other sources that he has known, so that he makes his stories accessible to his fellow global trotters. Hearn’s ghostly stories thus tether the world as a hybrid narrative: the “thrill” is the key to opening up the realms of what is forgotten and unnoticed, connecting here and there, and now and then, as a continuous whole in his narrative.

Hearn was charmed by Japanese folktales not only because they are exotic and unique; rather, being there in the Far East at the prime of his life as a well-traveled writer, they made him believe all the more in the universality of the ghostliness of human life and soul, be it Japanese, European, Creole or Chinese. Since Japanese legendary narratives, especially folkloric ones, were still unknown in the West, he was able to use them as a framework within which he could work out his own language into a composite transnational ghostly narrative. "Translation," or "re-telling," offered Hearn the means to create something new out of old material.

In 1890, just before he went to Japan, Hearn wrote an essay titled "A Ghost" for the *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. Its narrator is a wanderer who calls himself a "civilized nomad": he is "civilized" because he is no more an offspring of an ancient nomadic tribe, but of a nineteenth century European/American imperialistic and commercial expansion. What he is searching for is not material necessities such as food and shelter, but spiritual ones such as a home and even a homeland.

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)

Hearn's "civilized nomad" then sees, or unconsciously seeks, a "ghost," or the shadow of the "soul" of other "civilized nomads." They are all born wanderers, who do not find a home in any specific geographical place, but are a kind of people who can find home anywhere. When passing by other "civilized nomads," they know each other's presence because their movements, as it were, create a sympathetic code when passing. A mobile nomadic life makes them super-sensitive; they can perceive an innermost feeling, or the ghost of an ancient memory, that all humans equally inherit but have repressed, as it were, in the subconscious. That shared memory Hearn calls ghostly. The "civilized nomads," feeling such presence echoed within themselves, create, in turn, a sense of home, portable and mobile. That is the kind of story Hearn wants to tell. A wanderer, like Hearn himself, then becomes a fit storyteller in the new nomadic age, since he is the one who can re-create home as he travels the world in search of it through fiction.

Translation as Creative Work

Hearn's interest in ghostly stories is not the fruit of his Japanese experience but can instead be traced back to his apprenticeship years in America. In fact, translation, creative writing and ghostly themes are all closely related in his career as a writer and journalist. In order to polish one's language, Hearn maintained that translation is the best method; moreover, translating emotional experience, such as the ghostly, would be the most challenging and creative act of writing. Not surprisingly, his first book published in 1882 was a translation of Théophile Gautier's supernatural stories (*Out of Cleopatra's Nights, and other Fantastic Romance*).²⁰ Later in Japan, he gave a lecture about literature and writing at Tokyo University,²¹ and encouraged students to take advantage of translation, as it would improve their language skills not only in English but also, and most importantly, in their mother tongue, Japanese. Moreover, it would be the only means by which to enrich national literature with foreign influences.²² In fact, he disciplined his language by way of translating literary works during his apprentice years in America. His interest in translation sharpened his sense of language, and he became even more careful with his words because he knew what he could and could not do with them, and what could be lost or added by translation.

In his 1879 newspaper article titled "A Translation of Edgar Alan Poe," Hearn criticizes Charles Baudelaire's French translation of Poe's poems. Hearn admired Poe for his understanding of "the color-power of words" and his "knowledge of the intrinsic properties of words in their effect upon the imagination." Baudelaire's skillful "literary mosaic-work," therefore, Hearn argues, has no equivalent in French. He thus gives examples of inaccurately translated words that do not fully express the original qualities of Poe's language: "ghastly," "hideous," "shadow," and "duskily," to mention a few. Except for "hideous," as Hearn further examines, these words are etymologically of English origin, and yet Even Baudelaire's "*hideux*" for Poe's "hideous" is not the right word, as the French

²⁰ Hearn's contemporary Henry James also called Gautier an untranslatable writer. In his 1874 review of the English translation of Gautier's "Winter in Russia," he writes that Gautier's "curl and flutter of his phrase, as he unreels it in long bright-colored ribands" and "the air of spontaneity" soon disappear in the "rigid and awkward" English version. Thus, in order to enjoy the feel of Gautier's language, a good translation must be the product of the translator's "care, and taste, and imagination" (94).

²¹ Hearn taught at Tokyo Imperial University between 1896 and 1902.

²² See Hearn's essays collected in *Talks to Writers*, 1967.

word is too strong for its English cognate. He concludes that Baudelaire's translation lacks "the power of the original fantasy" (*American Miscellany* 63-9). What is worth pointing out in Hearn's criticism is that he especially looks at the words that convey a sense of something mysterious, invisible and uncanny. This is because he considers ghostly feelings of fear to be the human emotions that are the most ancient and thus at the core of all other emotional experiences. Poe's words that Hearn refers to in his article are, therefore, carriers of the ancestral emotions of the English-speaking race and thus are the most difficult, or almost impossible, elements to translate. Paul Murray points out that Hearn might have felt something congenial with Poe, who was also an orphaned child of Irish blood (31). Such affinity with Poe may have made Hearn insist on the untranslatability of certain words, even by the magic hand of Baudelaire.

In the article he wrote for the *Times Democrat* in 1892, "What a Translation of Daudet could not Henry James Give us?" Hearn voices the significance of the role of translator. He underlines the fact that different shades of meaning must be sought and "chiselled" by the translator.

. . . it is by no means sufficient to reproduce the general meaning of the sentence: --it is equally necessary to obtain a just equivalent for each word in regard to force, colour, and form; --and to preserve, so far as possible, the original construction of the phrase, the peculiarity of the rhetoric, the music of the style. And there is music in every master style, --a measured flow of words in every sentence; . . . there are tints, sonorities, luminosities, resonances . . . The sense, form, force, sonority, colour of every word must be studied; the shape of every phrase chiseled out, the beauty of every naked sentence polished like statuary marble. (qtd. in Tinker 159)

For Hearn, therefore, the work of translation was disciplinary training in which he tried to heighten the sense of words as rich malleable media for his writing. Moreover, he challengingly highlights the idea that the translation is an equally creative and imaginative literary practice as the original. The aim of translation is to render "the general meaning of the sentence," but words have more than just semantic and referential signification. They are also able to create suggestive and emotional effects that directly infiltrate into the senses. Hearn endeavors to produce a work that inspires both auditory and visual imagination. A translator must hear the "music" and see the "color" of words. He must "chisel" and "polish" words to draw out the potential of their "sense, form, force, sonority, colour" in order to reproduce the impression of "the original construction of the phrase, the peculiarity

of the rhetoric, the music of the style.” He must become, in other words, a performing artist of words.

In 1886, Hearn “translated” Chinese stories, *Some Chinese Ghosts*. In this case, what is interesting is that he did not read or speak Chinese, but via French translations and scholarship he presumed the essence of the stories, and “translated” them. In his “Preface,” he mentions names of Chinese scholars, and says that to them “the realm of Chinese story belongs by right of discovery and conquest”; Hearn, however, makes a point that “the humbler traveler who follows wonderingly after them into the vast and mysterious pleasure-grounds of Chinese fancy may surely be permitted to cull a few of the marvelous flowers there growing . . . as souvenirs of his curious voyage” (213). The “Discovery and conquest” of the materiality of text as well as the correctness of translation he lets the academics enjoy, but as to the recreation of the essential sensory experience of the source text in the target language, he privileges his own traveler’s, or “civilized nomad’s” imagination, which can freely cross cultural and national boundaries, and register sensuous experience anew for his contemporary readers. In Japan, like an archeologist and folklorist, he “collected” Japanese traditional narratives. For one thing, he did so because he feared that old Japan would soon disappear as a result of rapid modernization, but for another, he believed that it was he, a traveler and “civilized nomad,” who could “translate,” or “re-tell,” stories of disappearing Japan to his English speaking readers worldwide “as souvenirs of his curious voyage.”

Hearn’s “re-told” old Japanese stories, therefore, may be better called appropriations rather than translations;²³ however, the act of translation for Hearn, as is discussed above, first served as the means of discipline to polish his literary language, and in Japan, as he collected and researched old stories, he discovered a way to work with them in the form of “re-telling” and be creative with his own literary imagination. He incorporated his multi-cultural experience into his Japanese stories and wrote hybrid ghostly narratives.

²³ As to a creative use of “appropriations,” see Tatsumi’s discussion on Hearn and Kunio, Yanagita, who, possibly influenced by Hearn, became a pioneer in folklore studies in Japan. Tatsumi argues that their purpose was to “foreground the ghostly as a representation of the other, and in my view, the aesthetics of their resulting renderings of the intersection of two world cultures are far more attractive as subjects of critical inquiry than the imperialist or colonialist politics of their reappropriations” (84).

Hybrid Ghostly Story: a Case of “Yuki-Onna”

“Yuki-Onna” appeared in 1904 in *Kwaidan (Ghostly Stories)* and the stories collected there, including “The Story of Mimi-Nashi-Hōichi” and “Mujina,” are regarded as the best of Hearn’s “re-told” ghostly stories. “Yuki-Onna” arguably is not a simple Japanese old story, although it has been cherished as the most Japanese story. It, therefore, will serve as a perfect example of his craft of “re-telling” in which he overlaid multi-cultural issues of his time—cultural contacts and miscegenation.

“Yuki-Onna” is a story about a young boy’s encounter with a frightening but beautiful “Yuki-Onna,” or “Woman of the Snow.” It begins with two woodcutters, Mosaku, an old man, and Minokichi, a young boy, going into the forest to gather wood. They are met by a snowstorm and seek shelter in a ferryman’s hut for the night. There, Yuki-Onna appears. Feeling a chill on his cheek, Minokichi, the young boy, awakens, and sees Yuki-Onna blowing her cold and lethal breath at the old man. She looks at Minokichi, pities him for his youth, and spares his life on the condition that he never tells anyone about that night. A year later, he comes across a traveling young woman, O-Yuki, on his way home from the forest. She stays with him, takes care of his aging mother and bears him ten children. One snowy and stormy night, Minokichi is suddenly reminded of the fearful night of his youth, and casually tells O-Yuki about it. In fury, she immediately turns herself into Yuki-Onna. Yet, she again spares his life, but tells him to take care of their children and vanishes.

Although it has been believed that this story comes from an original Japanese story from which Hearn translated, there seems to be no trace of origin for this story. Yoko Makino makes a point that “Yuki-Onna” was Hearn’s own creation: “In his forward to *Kwaidan* (1904), Hearn says that he developed the tale from a legend which a peasant living in the district of Musashino had once told him” but that “we cannot retrieve the original legend, despite many attempts to do so” (1991, 234)²⁴ Assuming a Japanese old story, it is very likely that Hearn took the chance to experiment with his own creative work by putting together ghostly elements drawn from his past experience. “Yuki-Onna” is the eleventh story of the eighteen stories collected in the first section in *Kwaidan*. It is as if Hearn deliberately inserted his own fiction-à-la-Japanese in the midst of other stories of Japanese origin.²⁵ In “Peface” to *Kwaidan*, he makes a comment in an open ended manner

²⁴ See also Makino (2011) for more detailed discussion on the sources of Hearn’s “re-told” stories and the nature of his narrative. Also see “Yuki-Onna” in *Koizumi Yakumo Jiten*.

²⁵ The next to the last story in the first section, “Stories of Strange Things” is titled “*Hi-mawari*,” a story of “Robert and I” which is obviously not based on a Japanese folktale and is said to be based on his own childhood memory. Note that the title is Japanese, meaning “Sun-flower.” The stories in *Kwaidan*, therefore, are drawn

with ellipses, “Whether it has ever been written in Japanese I do not know; but the extraordinary belief which it records used certainly to exist in most parts of Japan, and in many curious forms. . . .” (11: 159) He perhaps regarded himself as one of the Japanese storytellers.

Border-Crossing

In order to interpret “Yuki-Onna” as Hearn’s “re-told” Japanese old ghostly story, three factors will be examined: first, the theme of border-crossing; second, the use of both Western and Oriental (Chinese) supernatural feminine images in the formation of Yuki-Onna; third, the significance of the role of father who is left behind with his children at the end of the story.

In the story, Minokichi, a woodcutter, border-crosses to go into the “forest” to gather wood on a daily basis. Hearn’s choice of the word “forest” here is apt as it etymologically means “outside woods”; the woodcutters go “outside” the realm of the human world to receive a gift (wood) from the other world. The “forest” represents nature, or an unknowable world for humans, and Yuki-Onna belongs to that world. It is also the world where nature unpredictability governs. When Mosaku and Minokichi are caught by a snowstorm, they cannot cross back over the river and have to stay on the other side and take shelter in the ferryman’s hut. The hut by the river serves as a passageway and meeting place where life and death intermingle. The windowless hut with one opening, therefore, may simultaneously stand for a coffin in which the old man will go into the other world, and also a womb in which the young man will begin a new life. The old man dies because Yuki-Onna breathes a cold breath, but the young one lives because Yuki-Onna pities him for his youth. Minokichi accordingly does not even tell his mother about Yuki-Onna.

Minokichi is a kind of traveler, and a year later meets another on his way home: “a girl who happened to be traveling by the same road” (11: 229).²⁶ He marries her, and the story eventually reveals that the girl, O-Yuki, is Yuki-Onna incarnate. Therefore, the story carries a theme of hetelogamy between a supernatural being (or animal) and a human being. In many Japanese folktales, as Hayao Kawai points out, hetelogamy happens between an

from different sources and make a hodge-podge garden of hybrid narratives.

²⁶ Quotations from *The Writings of Lafcadio Hearn* will be hereafter cited with the volume number followed by pagination in parentheses.

animal or inhuman being incarnated into a woman or a man (human), and the story has an unhappy ending with the woman, the supernatural being, going away; on the other hand, in Western stories, a man is turned into an animal or monstrous figure and marries a woman (human) but her love breaks the spell and the animal/monster husband is turned back into a man (human), and the story has a happy ending as in “Beauty and the Beast.” Kawai says that in Japanese stories, nature is revered and feared as something beyond human control and thus a woman incarnate, symbolizing the power of nature, disappears at the end, although leaving a mingling sense of awe, beauty, and pathos behind (171-202). Hearn voices such feelings in “Yuki-Onna,” which makes the story appeal to a Japanese sensibility. Yet, one might wonder why Hearn had to make Minokichi suddenly remember the forbidden night at the end, and Yuki-Onna leave him alone with a new promise to be kept.

As he crosses the river back home, young Minokichi has to forget what he has seen. The river thus may well serve as the Lethe of Greek mythology; by crossing it, Minokichi is metaphorically reborn with an erased memory. Yet, as can be easily imagined, the story is so structured that Minokichi at the end remembers and re-discovers the repressed part of his memory—his encounter with Yuki-Onna. Regaining a lost memory, Minokichi has to face the truth: he witnesses O-Yuki turning into Yuki-Onna, and must know whom he had married. The story thus ends, envisioning a new story to be told—a story about his children who are born out of the act of his border-crossing.

Formation of the Hybrid Woman-Goddess

Is Yuki-Onna a typical Japanese Snow-Woman, or a ghostly phantom? In his 1893 letter, Hearn writes about the Japanese “snow-woman,” or “Soul of Snow,” and points out that she is very different from western ones: “European art does not seem to me to have ever caught the Soul of Snow as the Japanese art has—with its fantasticalities, its wizardisms. And the Japanese Fancy has its 'Snow-woman' too—its white spectres and goblins, which do no harm and say nothing, only frighten and make one feel cold”(16: 57). As Hearn says, “the Soul of Snow” in Japanese folk tales does “no harm” and is just glimpsed on a snowy night. It is not gendered, either. In “Yuki-Onna,” however, Hearn projects a European sensibility of positing “nature” as feminine, and makes “the Soul of Snow” into a fearful and beautiful woman who casts a spell over a young boy.

Back in 1878, Hearn wrote an article, “Nightmare and Nightmare Legends,” where he introduces the Scandinavian origin of the word, “Nightmare”: “It would be more properly

written, Night-Mara; or Mara of the Night. . . Mara was a female spectre, not hideous or fantastic of aspect, like the hollow Ell-women or witch-wives, but fascinatingly beautiful. Nevertheless she took a malevolent pleasure in visiting sleepers and tormenting them in nameless ways. . . ” (*American Miscellany* 27-8). The recurrence of the image of a spellbinding “female spectre” in Western stories, Hearn assumes, has been imprinted on the Western mind. When he translated in 1882 Baudelaire’s poem “*Les Bienfaits de la Lune*” (“Moon’s Blessings”), he also wrote an essay titled “Spring Phantoms” and summarized what the Moon Goddess “whisper[s]” to “a newborn child”: “Thou shalt love all that loves me—the water that is formless and multiform, the vast green sea, the place where thou shalt never be, the woman thou shalt never know” (2: 312) The boy baby, at birth, without knowing it, is destined to love what he can never know, which as he grows up will be perceived as a ghostly sense of the unknown.²⁷

Trying to explain the significance of the missing memories of childhood, Hearn imagined that there must be a part of memory, especially that of childhood, that is registered but forgotten. In his 1893 letter, he calls such a blurred memory from childhood “ghostly”: “It seems to me these feelings of earliest childhood--so intense and yet so vague --are the weirdest in all human experience, and that for the best of reasons *they are really ghostly*.” Moreover, that ghostliness is created because one’s memory is loaded with that of “the vanished generations,” and “The real fear of nightmare is greater than any fear possible to experience in waking moments . . . The memories themselves are indeed gone, --only the sensations of them remain, stir into life at vague moments of sleep . . .” (16: 212-4). Hearn in this way was trying to work out his own theory of the unconscious. He imagined that the sensations of the past, or the most ancient emotional experience of one’s ancestors’ would resonate in sympathy and “stir” up one’s consciousness, which would then be perceived as an uncanny ghostly feeling. Thus, such a feeling would initiate a story told from a different perspective and create a new context.

In “Yuki-Onna,” although Minokichi is an eighteen-year-old lad and not a newborn child, the ferryman’s hut creates an atmosphere similar to that of a womb or cradle. The Snow-woman speaks to him, as the Moon-Goddess in Hearn’s previous story does to “a newborn child”:

“I intended to treat you like the other man. But I cannot help feeling some pity for you, – because you are so young.... You are a pretty boy, Minokichi; and I

²⁷ As to the comparative study of “*Les Bienfaits de la Lune*” and “Yuki-Onna,” see Makino (1991).

will not hurt you now. But, if you ever tell anybody – even your own mother about what you have seen this night, I shall know it; and then I will kill you.... Remember what I say!” (11: 227).

Minokichi is half asleep and so her words are lost, although the chill of her being there before his eyes is registered in his memory unawares. The chill of a snow stormy night, therefore, brings back the same sensation he has experienced before. Facing Yuki-Onna, Minokichi only remembers the loss of his memory, and has to be awakened to his ignorance: he has forgotten the promise and he has never known his wife. At the end of the story he is only left with her words, about which he ruminates. The fearful and beautiful Yuki-Onna, moreover, reveals another aspect: she is turned into a generous and ethical figure who strongly urges Minokichi to become a good father.

Such an ethically oriented supernatural figure was not new for Hearn. In one of his translations of Chinese ghost stories, “The Legend of Tchi-Niu (Weaver Goddess),” the Goddess Tchi-Niu in the form of his wife is sent to Tong, a young boy of filial piety, to help him. When her work is done, she reveals her identity, tells him to take care of the child, and disappears.

“Lo! my beloved, the moment has come in which I must forsake thee; for I was never of mortal born, and the Invisible may incarnate themselves for a time only. Yet I leave with thee the pledge of our love, --this fair son, who shall ever be to thee as faithful and as fond as thou thyself hast been. Know, my beloved, that I was sent to thee even by the Master of Heaven, in reward of thy filial piety, and that I must now return to the glory of His house: I AM THE GODDESS TCHI-NIU.” (1: 252)

The greatness and beauty of the goddess make Tong humble and aware of his responsibility as a civic person and father. His awareness, or conscious objective view of himself, is for him the sign of maturity. In Hearn’s story, Yuki-Onna first appears as a European “Night-Mara” but when she comes to live with Minokichi, she is a Tchi-Nui, an ideal wife who helps her husband and bears him beautiful children. Yuki-Onna, just as Tchi-Nui is, is superhuman, representing the power of nature which humans can never take control of. When Minokichi breaks his promise to remember not to tell, she is no more a gentle wife and furiously reveals what she is:

“. . . 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!" (16: 231)

On hearing Minokichi start telling O-Yuki about the story of a stormy night when he was eighteen, she, who has proved herself an ideal wife and mother, transforms herself into the most fearful and beautiful Yuki-Onna. The story abruptly ends here, leaving Minokichi alone, awestruck. However, she also leaves a new commandment for Minokichi to pursue: he has to "take very, very good care" of his children. Hearn in this way overlays different views of the supernatural figure to the story of Japanese "Soul of Snow" that he possibly overheard and that had nothing to do with Baudelairean beauty or Chinese filial piety. "Yuki-Onna," with the images of the spellbinding beauty of both the Western and Eastern aesthetic and ethical ideals, becomes Minokichi's wife, but without his knowing it. Although he loses her, he remembers her because his body remembers the "thrill."²⁸ Her disappearance at the end of the story, nevertheless, is not the end of the story; rather, it creates a void to be filled in with a meaning. Minokichi must prove himself as a responsible father of his, or her, children.

Fathering a Hybrid Posterity

A new assignment for Minokichi is to remember his role in mothering and childcare. The story may appear rather odd to have the mother go away and the father left with children. It is not that Hearn slighted the role of "mother": rather, "mother" was the most spellbinding presence for him because he himself had no clear memory of his own Greek mother. Her lullaby and smile remained a lost memory. She, like Yuki-Onna, suddenly disappeared, and he, a hybrid child, was left behind, while his father left for India with a

²⁸ Hearn describes a kind of sharp vibrating experience, or the "thrill," also by using a French term "frisson." He believed that one remembers the ideal ultimate beauty existing in the immemorial past through a thrilling, or ghostly, moment: see "Frisson," *Exotics and Retrospectives* (9: 185-192). Yu states that the word "frisson" is one which Hearn fondly used all his life, its meaning drawn from his own experiences with onomatopoeia rather than from his poetic association with the Gautier-Baudelairean term, "*frisson nouveau*"; see *An Ape of Gods* 267. The word is also equivalent to "inspiration" for Hearn. In his letter to Chamberlain, Matsue, 1891, he mourns his passionless and eventless life in Japan and states: "Never a fine inspiration, a deep emotion, a profound joy or a profound pain—never a thrill, or, as the French say so much better than we, a frisson" (15: 34); or to Amenomori: "I get no thrill, no frisson, no sensation. I want new experiences, perhaps; and Tokyo is no place for them. . ." (qtd. in Bisland's "Introduction," 14: 139). "Frisson" is the "thrill" of emotional and sensuous experience related to tropical experience; in *Two Years in the French West Indies* (1890), for example, he uses the word: "More finely than any term in our tongue does the French word frisson express that faint shiver—as of a ghostly touch thrilling from hair to feet—which intense pleasure sometimes gives, and which is felt most often and most strongly in childhood, when the imagination is still so sensitive and so powerful that one's whole being trembles to the vibration of a fancy" (380).

new wife without fulfilling his responsibility to raise and take care of him. It is possible to read such biographical elements as being projected into the making of “Yuki-Onna.” Yet, the story does not end in a nostalgic tone; rather, the story is open-ended, anticipating Minokichi to begin his stories for his fellow travelers and “civilized nomads.” His new stories would be born out of his own experience—heterogametic marriage, hybrid children, and cultural and literary jumbles.

Minokichi’s awakening moment, therefore, triggers Minokichi to start telling his own story of the forgotten past. The chilly “thrill” of the snow stormy night makes him recall the snow stormy night of his past, and that sensation prompts him to speak: “To see you sewing there, with the light on your face, makes me think of a strange thing that happened when I was a lad of eighteen. I then saw somebody as beautiful and white as you are now – indeed, she was very like you” (16: 230). The “thrill” shakes up his dormant memory. Memory speaks, as it were, making him a storyteller. It is as if his unconscious takes over and, like a dream, unrolls the erased past memory before his eyes. He, though unconsciously, breaks his promise. Remembrance of his unconscious memory, however, releases him from Yuki-Onna’s spell and her managing power over his life. He is left with her (and his) children. Yuki-Onna once again spares his life, but this time commands him to, not to forget, but to remember: he has to take “very, very good care” of his children who are born out of their parents’ act of border-crossing. The responsibility of the father here projected includes his role of a storyteller; he has to make a story for his children (none of his ten children are given names) so that they will know who they are and where they are from.

“Composite Photograph” and “Re-told” Storytelling

Hearn’s ghostly narrative challenges one’s modern consciousness, whether it is of a Japanese or Western sensibility, by evoking a lost ghost, or a disinherited and denied past. And his wanderers, or “civilized nomads,” are ghost finders who are destined to become storytellers for their future children. Home for them is not a geographical place to which they can return, but an imaginary home, which they can relate to and re-create in the form of a story. As discussed in this paper, Hearn’s ghostly stories quicken, by way of the “thrill,” one’s unconscious, and urge one to make one’s own story. Sociologist Avery F. Gordon theorizes on the ghostly forces that control our social life in *Ghostly Matters*. She writes:

To be haunted in the name of a will to heal is to allow the ghost to help you imagine what was lost that never even existed, really. That is its utopian grace: to encourage a steely sorrow laced with delight for what we lost that we never had; to long for the insight of that moment in which we recognize, as in Benjamin's profane illumination, that it could have been and can be otherwise.
(57)

This is the kind of ghostly narrative that Hearn sought at the end of the nineteenth century. The ghost he ultimately re-created in his Japanese stories evokes a sense of the past, memory and nostalgia, by way of, to use Gordon's phrase, letting one "imagine what was lost that never even existed." In "Yuki-Onna," a sense of loss of the fearful and beautiful Yuki-Onna as a ghostly figure at the end of the story will trigger Minokichi to search for his story, complementing the loss with a new story and offering a space for his children to relate to.

"Yuki-Onna," therefore, is a composite story into which are interwoven stories from different sources. Hearn made use of stories that he had been charmed by, and seamlessly overlaid them with a new story. "Yuki-Onna" was translated into Japanese, and has been considered a very Japanese story. Hearn indeed could write stories that invite sympathy from Japanese readers; his aim, however, was to render a sense of ghostly, not necessarily "Japanese," "thrill" that he considered universal. Hearn's craft of "re-telling," therefore, is not a simple adaptation, or translation, of foreign literature, but a new folkloric narrative form to be shared by his fellow travelers in the globalizing age.

The current post-colonial and transnational age has opened up a way to tell different stories framed in a transnational setting. In Hearn's time, East and the West were considered as opposites and the latter was also been considered to be superior, technologically more advanced, and evolutionarily more developed. However, Hearn wrote against such preconceptions. In his essay, "Eternal Feminine," he insists that dichotomous values are complementary parts of the larger whole and points out that, when a Westerner learns about the "Oriental point of view," he "may begin to doubt whether the moral ideals of the West are really the highest." Through "comparative study" of culture, therefore, one would find "undreamed-of meanings" on top of one's "old familiar aspects" (7: 79). Such a comparative viewpoint is what he makes use of in his own narrative. In another essay, "The First Impressions," he talks about the "weird" phenomenon of a "Composite Photograph" and associates it with the impression of a human face: "Every human face is a living composite of countless faces—generations and generations of faces

superimposed upon the sensitive film of Life for the great cosmic developing process” (9: 139). The “Composite Photograph” may well illustrate Hearn’s comparative narrative: a traveler’s snap-shots, as it were, are “sensitized” on top of each other to make a transnational photograph, or a narrative, in which one would find “undreamed-of meanings,” or a life story, anew. A traveler, or the “civilized nomad” to use Hearn’s term, then, is a “Composite Photographer” and storyteller of the transnational age. The “Composite” story is overwritten and re-impressed, and yet without erasing the ghostly blurs of any previous impressions.

“Yuki-Onna” is an example of such a “Composite” story. Using the framework of a Japanese story, Hearn in a dialogic manner overwrote it in order to achieve an “undreamed-of” vision of an eclectic ghostly narrative—a new folklore for the age of “civilized nomads.”

2. Wandering Ghosts: “Ingwa-Banashi” and “Oshidori”

“Ingwa-Banashi”

Hearn is known as a Japanologist who wrote essays on Japanese culture and stories based on Japanese legends. His specialty lies in the telling of ghost stories. Though his ghost stories may represent Japan as being exotic, or as the Other, they also serve as gothic allegories for the modern world from the viewpoint of a Western observer. Hearn’s ghosts, women in most cases, assert their presence, blurring the boundaries between the dead and the living, the inhuman and the human, and the spiritual and the material. They transgress time and space and challenge different values. These stories then offer an allegorical space for a new kind of gothic where a multitude of modern concerns, such as gender, class, and East-West relations, are examined together. They open up new dimensions, where opposing elements coexist without undermining each other. Hearn’s “Ingwa-Banashi,” a re-telling of a Buddhist parable about karma included in *In Ghostly Japan* (1899), serves an example of Hearn’s attempt to demonstrate the possibilities of a new narrative for the civilized nomad like himself.

“Ingwa-Banashi” is said to be a true story that took place in the 1830s during the late Edo period. In this story, the wife of a samurai, who had suffered from an illness for three years, requests from her deathbed that she wants her husband’s young and beautiful concubine,²⁹ a nineteen-year-old young woman Yukiko, to carry her on her back to the garden. It is spring, the cherry blossoms are in full bloom, and the wife wants to view them. From Yukiko’s back, she admires the blossoms, while slipping her hands through the openings of Yukiko’s sleeves and gripping her breasts. The wife then dies, her hands clinging fast to Yukiko’s breasts. Horrifically, the hands remain attached to Yukiko’s breasts and come to life again every night at the hour of the Ox (2 am). As if rooted to Yukiko’s breasts, the hands cannot be removed. The husband

²⁹ In the past, concubines were considered semi-official family members and lived in the family home. Although a concubine never possessed the same power as the wife of the house, if she gave birth to a boy, he would be considered a candidate to inherit family wealth and a title.

summons a Dutch doctor from Edo to have his wife's hands cut off in order to properly bury her. The horror, however, does not end there. Though withered and detached from the body of the dead wife, these hands still move every night at the hour of the Ox and torture the young concubine. After that, Yukiko abandons the secular world and becomes a wandering nun. Thereafter no one knows what has become of her. The narrator only heard this part of the story from the owner of the inn where he is lodging.

Hearn re-tells a karmic tale through "Ingwa-Banashi." Although Hearn basically follows the same storyline, he adds a new twist to his version. He gives voice to the Lady, the wife of the samurai, whose personal view is not expressed in the original. Yukiko, the samurai's concubine, realizes her own power to overcome and transcend her fate. A self-acknowledged storyteller of ancient tales as he was, Hearn exorcises karma from the original story, drawing instead on the potential for mythological power reaching back to Kamiyo, or ancient Japan, to flow into Yukiko via the Lady and change her fate.

Transformations of "Ingwa-Banashi"

"Ingwa-Banashi" is more closely a retranslation of a popular horror story based on a Buddhist parable. The story was compiled in a collection of horror stories called *Shinsen hyaku monogatari* (One hundred ghost stories),³⁰ which Hearn owned. Although his Japanese language skills were limited, he liked to listen to his wife read these Japanese stories aloud to him. His practice was then to write them down in English from memory as he imagined them. Just like the dancing girls in his stories, Hearn believed Setsu's voice echoed a primordial voice harkening back to ancient Japan, or Kamiyo. For him, a storyteller was an artist, a genius, or a medium who could revive memory of the ancient past. And Hearn was a modern storyteller who re-told tales in his mother tongue of English. "Ingwa-Banashi" is one such example.

³⁰ *One Hundred Ghost Stories* published in the Edo period was a popular book. Originally intended for entertainment, the book was organized around a practice in which a group of people lit 100 candles and one candle was blown out as each story was told, and when all hundred stories were told and the candles blown out, a ghost was said to appear. The origin of the tale is not known. The book is included in Hearn's library at Herun Bunko (Hearn Library), Toyama U. Library. The book Hearn owned is open to public on Herun Bunko website: <<http://hdl.handle.net/10110/2544>>.

Hearn's ghost story, however, is not merely a sensational horror story. It is also an allegorical critique of Japanese society. In Japanese ghost stories, women especially appear as ghosts when they die without being able to vent to their repressed desires. Hearn allows these ghosts to take the foreground in his stories and give them voice. Although a ghost does not appear, in "Inga-banashi," a ghostly phenomenon occurs, and Hearn highlights the women's inner thoughts, or more specifically, what resides in her innermost unconscious. He believes this incident reveals the soul of Japan symbolized in cherry blossoms. The original story was told in *kodan*, a traditional form of professional storytelling on stage. Opening with a long account to gain credibility with his audience and assure them of the story's authenticity, the storyteller begins the narrative by saying that he had heard the story personally from a respectable and reliable source. Hakuen, the actual storyteller on stage, explains that he had once stayed at the house of his sister who was married to a nobleman in Nikko. The same night, a fair-looking traveling *bikuni* (nun) came to ask for one night's lodging and during the evening told her story. Hakuen piqued the curiosity of his audience by delving into the grotesque scene when the nun, to prove her story, bared her breasts only to reveal the hands, resembling a "slim white radish," attached. The *bikuni* is thus introduced as a monster, a freak, and an example of perverse eroticism—she is both a nun and concubine.³¹ The story that the *bikuni* tells is told in first person narrative by Hakuen, who thereby conveys a confessional tone when she deplores her "karma which cannot be purged even by death" (*Kaidan, Kidan* 412). The story climaxes when the *bikuni* shows her grotesque body and concludes with the realization that the woman's unalterable fate is beyond salvation. In Buddhist teaching, it must be remembered that women are believed to be impure because of their carnality, which effectively is their karma, or fate. Thus, the nun's disfigured body is nothing but proof of the shameful karma of women.

In Hearn's version, however, the third person point-of-view recounts neither this confessional scene nor the sensational exposure of the breasts. In other words, he does

³¹ Matsubayashi Hakuen's story is reprinted in *Kaidan-Kidan* (Ghost and Strange Stories), ed. Sukehiro Hirakawa, Kodansha (1990) 406-415. The following is the original *kodan* scene in which the nun slips off her kimono to reveal her breasts: 是の通りのものなりと、尼が諸肌押し脱げば、コハそもいかに、尼が乳房の左右の上より干しかためたるごとくに見ゆる二本の腕、白骨にもならず肉皮もそのまま、つめも生えたる形さながら、細大根のごとく、その色青黒にして死物のごとく、活物（かんぶつ）のごとく野口伝御座右衛門始め倅も嫁即ち伯圖の実姉もただ傍線と見つめたり尼ハやうやう涙を払いサ是よりは此腕のお嘶し事長くとも聞いてたべと語り出します物語は左の通りでございます（409）。

not let the nun or anyone else in his story determine karma, and in so doing, does not presume that a woman's life is pre-determined. Rather, he asks whether or not other factors, such as social conditions, personal desires and freewill, intervene in the course of a woman's life. In other words, he permits women to control their own inner world. Instead of focusing on the nun's confession and lamentations, which reflect a preconditioned value system, he begins his story with the inner thoughts of the wife of the samurai. She had to quietly accept her role in this patriarchal household where she lost her youthful beauty and her husband took in a young woman as a concubine. As a female in Japanese feudal society, she had to repress her own will. She plays the good wife and considers the young concubine as the successor to her position. Unlike the original *kodan* that dives into a grotesque scene of the hands on the nun's breasts, Hearn begins with a concise sentence that establishes that the subject has her own agency:

The daimyo's wife was dying, and knew that she was dying" (9: 345).

This first sentence is not only significant as it foregrounds the Lady's mental awareness on her deathbed, but the syntax of the first half of the sentence describing her fatal condition and the latter half showing that she is aware is also revealing. The verb "knew" opens up the narrative to her inner world, to what she "knew" about her life. She then dwells on the current spring season and her family as well as thinks over her husband's "various concubines" and particularly the young concubine, Yukiko. As if her strong control of her conscience is liberated to speak her desires in this dying moment, she tells her husband that she loves Yukiko "like a sister" and wishes to be carried on her back to see the cherry blossoms in their garden. Having her wish fulfilled under the blossoms, however, she suddenly transforms into a monstrous woman:

[A]s she stood erect, she quickly slipped her thin hands down over the shoulders, under the robe, and clutched the breasts of the girl, and burst into a wicked laugh.

"I have my wish!" she cried—"I have my wish for the cherry-bloom, — but not the cherry-bloom of the garden! . . . I could not die before I got my wish Now I have it!—oh, what a delight."

And with these words she fell forward upon the crouching girl, and died.
(9: 348-349)

On Yukiko's back, the Lady grips the source of life, or a mother's milk, by clutching her youthful blooming breasts like "a child." The Lady in this scene is at once Yukiko's sister, her predecessor, her child, and her mistress who, like the master of the house, appropriates her breasts, her body. Through her contact with Yukiko, the Lady regains her youth, beauty, and the regenerative power of life symbolized by Yukiko's breast. Under the traditional Japanese patriarchal family system, it was natural that the Master had concubines not only to sexually please him, but also to secure a male offspring to carry on his power. In a sense, the Lady usurps her husband's power, taking possession of Yukiko for herself. She gains all the power she desires at her death and never lets it go. Her hands, which were "[w]ithered and bloodless" but not "dead," "stir—stealthily, like great great spiders" but were not removed from Yukiko's breasts even after her death (9: 350).³² When the master summons the Dutch doctor to separate Yukiko's breasts from his wife's hands and eventually cut them off, Western medicine seems temporarily to have resolved the problem. But the clutching fingers remain, and moving in the small hours every night to torture Yukiko.

The regular twitching of the hands not surprisingly cause Yukiko pain. The daily recurrence is a clear manifestation of the Lady's repressed desire. In a way, Yukiko even becomes a freak hybrid with her Lady's hands planted on her body. The hands work like antennae responding to waves emanating from the other side of human experience, the world of *yin* or the dead, the Lady's unconscious. The last desire of the Lady is thus transmitted via these antennae to keep Yukiko conscious of her presence, or more specifically, her unconscious. The Lady's jealousy of Yukiko's youth and beauty, once repressed beneath her respectable veneer, is then released in her dying agony, and her conscious control of herself gives way to the free play of her unconscious desires. That desire, I would argue, is so intense that it impacts Yukiko's future course of life. Such a turn, from a Buddhist view, would be called *karmic*: since women are born with sin, they must suffer, and there is no way that to change their fate. However, starting the story with the lady's inner thoughts, her struggles and her tears, Hearn rewrites a story of *karma* into a

³² In a story entitled "The Hand" by Guy de Maupassant, which Hearn translated, in a character's dream there appears a dead hand that moves by itself and kills the man who has murdered its owner. In Hearn's translation it is described this way: "I thought I saw the Hand—the horrible Hand—running like a scorpion or a spider along the curtains and up and down the walls of my room. See *The Tales of Guy de Maupassant: the Translations by Lafcadio Hearn and others chosen & with an Introduction by Justin O'Brien* (1964).

psychological drama. He thus probes the flexible areas of one's life, asking whether or not one's life may be changed, or may evolve, through inner spiritual experience. By redressing the view of pre-ordained karma into simple cause-and-effect, he frees the story from its fixed interpretation of the woman suffering from a karmic bind hinged on Buddhist misogyny and a patriarchal society.

The scene of the Lady referring to Yukiko as her "sister," and wanting her to carry her to view the cherry blossoms in the garden is also worth exploring further. The Lady's desire for Yukiko's beauty and youth surfaces in spring just at the moment when the cherry blossoms are in full bloom. As we have seen in chapter four with Hearn's stories about dancing girls, he sees the enduring spirit of the ancient mythology of "Kamiyo" (Shinto) housed within a woman's unconscious. Therefore, women can naturally rise to the dual roles of sacred maiden at the shrine or woman in the home. While the Lady dies, her desire lives on, transplanted to Yukiko's breasts and reawakening each night. These two women come to share their lives, wandering through the mountains where the Lady's cherry tree grows. The original *kodan* calls attention to the grotesque in the disfigured body and the karmic end, but Hearn's story instead highlights these women in the context of a flowering spring.

Hearn succinctly summarizes what has happened to the Lady in a single paragraph at the end of the story. Yukiko receives a Buddhist name "*Dassetu*." Her name Yukiko, a combination of "snow" (*yuki*) and "child" (*ko*) transforms into "*Dassetu*," meaning "escape from" (*datsu* or *das*) and an alternate reading of the Chinese character for "snow" (*setsu*). She now travels the earth, bearing a name that denotes "she has grown out of her secular part of her life as Yukiko." She also bears her Lady's mortuary tablet upon which is carved her *kaimyo*, or posthumous Buddhist name, "Myo-ko-in-den-chi-zan-ryo-fu-dai-shi" (9: 350). The narrator does not translate the meaning of the Lady's *kaimyo*, which English-speaking readers would have found exotic and mysterious in its lengthy Romanized rendering. In the original *kodan* text, her *kaimyo* is conveyed by ten Chinese characters which together create a beautiful image of a mountain scene: "妙香院殿知山涼風大姉," meaning "a sister who resembles a fragrant mountain where a cool breeze blows." In fact, in the last paragraph, this name and Yukiko's Buddhist name are introduced together, forming a pair which taken together suggest spring. "*Dassetu*" (脱雪), literally meaning "shedding of snow," brings the spring when the mountains are suffused with fragrance. Ending the story with these images creates a fresh, rejuvenating image, despite the fact that Yukiko continues to suffer from her pain. Her pain functions as the drive to move her forward

and strengthen her will to live life that is at once dark and bright, both *yin* and *yang*, where spring can only come after the snow is shed.

Readers might puzzle over the meanings of fragrance and the mountain in the Lady's *kaimyo*. In fact, there is no reference in the story to her ever living in the mountains; she has lived her life indoors in the house of a samurai. However, the first thought that comes to her in her dying state is "spring":

"You know that in the garden there is a *yaë-zakura*, which was brought here, the year before last, from Mount Yoshino in Yamato. I have been told that it is now in full bloom;—and I wanted so much to see it in flower!" (9: 347)

Hearn adds a note about this particular kind of cherry blossom: "*Yaë-zakura or yaë-no-sakura*, a variety of Japanese cherry tree that bears double-blossoms" (9: 347). The ninth century poetess Ono no Komachi has a famous poem about cherry blossoms in which she sings about the transience of cherry blossoms and compares them to her own youth and beauty. Cherry blossoms, in fact, are commonly associated with the aesthetics of ephemerality in a Japanese context. The dying Lady, however, does not wish to see the cherry blossoms only to lament her lost youth and beauty, but to regain the power of life, beauty, and youth symbolized by the cherry tree as well.

The cherry tree in the garden, the Lady explains, had been transplanted from Mount Yoshino and is now in full bloom in the garden. Mount Yoshino is located in the Yamato region of Nara, the place of the ancient Japanese capital in the seventh and eighth centuries. This was also the era when the nation flourished under the reign of an Empress and Buddhism was first introduced to Japan. The Empress pursued a golden mean between Japan's native religion of Shinto and incoming Buddhism, merging them as a hybrid in order to unite all people under one nation. The cherry blossom of Yamato might symbolize that burgeoning era when Shinto and Buddhism coexisted in supreme balance. This tree of Yamato, the multi-petaled *yaë-zakura*, is a different species from the now popular cherry tree varieties was cultivated by a gardener in Somei, Tokyo in 1885. They became known for the beautiful way the blossoms fall in a flurry and came to symbolize the aesthetic samurai spirit. Curiously, since they are hybrids, or clones, their seeds are sterile. The cherry trees of Yamato are, on the other hand, an original, wild species. They are strong and naturally reproductive. The tree in the garden transplanted from Yamato is the progeny of the original cherry tree in ancient Yamato

before the introduction of Buddhism and the established samurai patriarchy.

Cherry blossoms, or *sakura* in Japanese, are a prevalent symbol of spring, rebirth, and fertility. Etymologically, “sakura” is said to have derived from “sa,” meaning the mountain of God, and “kura,” the seat of God. The Goddess of the cherry tree is known as *Konohananosakuyahime* (=Goddess as beautiful as blooming cherry blossoms) and she is the one who is enshrined on Mount Fuji—the mountain of “fuji,” or eternal life. The cherry tree transplanted from Yoshino, therefore, broadly symbolizes life, rebirth and longevity (Fig. 1)³³. The tree is planted in the inner garden of the patriarchal samurai house, enclosed and hidden. Yet, it blooms in the spring, striking a sympathetic chord within the Lady. She literally embraces both life and death in a moment of ecstasy. Yukiko, the Lady’s acclaimed “sister,” must share the moment with her as her counterpart. Though the Lady dies, her desire remains in communication with Yukiko on whose breasts her hands, or her antennae-like or root-like fingers, are transplanted, waiting to bloom again in spring while fertilizing the barren soil of Yukiko who is covered with snow. The recurrent pain serves to stimulate the mind and body. Yukiko has to moan through the pain, unable to die.

Yukiko lives on as a Buddhist nun who carries her Lady’s mortuary tablet and prays for her soul. She, however, might also be called a *miko* who is dedicated to the dead souls of ancient Japanese mythology. If cherry blossoms represent the ancient mythological goddess of earth and mountains, the Lady and Yukiko are her descendants. Deep underneath the foundation of the patriarchal samurai social system, Hearn saw a basis for conscious ethics and Buddhist philosophy. He also imagined



Fig. 1 From *Mugendai* (Summer, 1991). Back page.

³³ The back page of *Mugendai*, a journal published by IBM ran a Special issue in Summer 1991, “Tokushu: Hahn, Hyakunen-go no Kaishaku” [Special Issue: Hearn and His Interpretations a Hundred Years Later], and included this scroll painting on the back page. Hearn bought it at Ueno for 2. 6 yen and had it hung in the guest room where Amenomori and others slept, telling them, “The Spirit of the Cherry-tree will embrace you in your sleep.” See also under “Sakura” in *Koizumi Yakumo Jiten*, 254.

that deeper underneath the psychological stratum of the Japanese race must lay the world of mythology of Kamiyo where the power of the woman was revered and feared. Using the framework of a Buddhist parable in “Ingwa-Banashi,” Hearn deconstructs the Japanese patriarchal social structure and Buddhist misogyny, and turns a woman’s desire into an act of devotion and appreciation of the cycle life in nature. In this way, he pinpoints the heritage of women that exists in the ancient spirit of Kamiyo, or the Shinto practice to revere the power and beauty of nature.

One might wonder why Yukiko has to suffer from pain every night, which could be interpreted as no other than the effect of karma or the woman’s fate as an unclean being from the Buddhist perspective. This condition could not have been treated even by a doctor who had learned the most advanced Dutch or Western medicine of the time. The best he could do was to amputate the hands, but the hands had become part of Yukiko’s breasts, moving about in the wee hours of the night to torture Yukiko. This pain in fact plays a significant role in this story as it affects Yukiko’s inner mind. In a way, Yukiko becomes a freakish hybrid with her Lady’s hands implanted on her body, and the pain becomes the embodiment of the Lady’s eternal desires. It is as if the hands respond like antennae to exterior signals issuing from the world of *yin*, or the dead, the unconscious and the feminine. The last desire for youth and beauty of the Lady is thus transmitted via these antennae to waken Yukiko’s consciousness at night when it would normally sleep and make it forever aware of its presence. What the Lady imposes on Yukiko, her “sister,” I would argue, is the spirit of the ancient goddess of Kamiyo. *Yin* energy, moreover, is said to be active, accumulative, and preparing for the essential power of life as is symbolized by the winter season. *Yin* power, which has much to do with feminine or generative power, has been considered dangerous and thus evil in male dominated societies not only in Japan but also in the West. Particularly in Japan, in times past in the ancient “Kamiyo” era, Buddhism and Confucius philosophy imported from China were used as the foundation for a patriarchal feudal society, prioritizing the male power of *yang* over *yin*. It is symbolic that the cherry tree the Lady asked to have transplanted from Yamato is planted in the inner garden surrounded by the walls of the samurai mansion. In her near-death semi-unconscious state, the Lady knows that she is connected with the power of the cherry tree, whose goddess is of the ancient “Kamiyo,” and her repressed desire is given a vent. Her desire is such that her hands are, as it were, transplanted in the youthful flesh of Yukiko’s. This grotesque turn in the story, which the original *kodan* spotlights, sheds light on the polar side of its

reproductive power. And the “pain” is a vehicle to remind Yukiko of unconscious memory that she herself has never known, but has inherited from the Lady and the ancient goddess of life giving “cherry blossoms.”

It is important to remember that Hearn was fascinated with how Shinto and Buddhist had merged, co-existed and were observed in daily life in Japan. “Ingwa-Banashi” originally is used as a Buddhist parable to instruct on karma, and Hearn transplanted, in effect, the Shinto spirit in the Buddhist soil of the story. As to the understanding of “pain,” he adapts the Buddhist interpretation of pain as a way of enhancing one’s moral life. He also surmised that Buddhist philosophy could be explained from the point of view of Western science and therefore would serve as a universal guideline for moral development for his readers. In his essay “The Idea of Preëxistence” (*Kokoro*, 1896), he seeks a common ground between Western science and Buddhism. He states that a “force center” of “an ultimate atom” might be “a vortex, an emptiness, as in Buddhist concept.” He believes, however, that the Buddhist faith answers the questions of “Whence?” and “Whither?” better than Western science

—and predicts in every great cycle of evolutions a period of spiritual expansion in which the memory of former births returns, and all the future simultaneously opens before the vision unveils, —even to the heaven of heavens. Science here remains dumb. (7: 454)

For Hearn, evolution meant not only the metamorphosis of biological features, but of the conscience, spirit, and soul as well.³⁴ What then triggers moral and mental evolution? The answer he finds lies in the pain inflicted on humans. In “At Hakata” (*Out of the East*, 1895), the narrator imagines being swayed by the motion of a *jinrikisha*. He asks why all living things must suffer pain. And he answers himself that it is because pain is necessary for moral and mental evolution: “Under the pressure of pain alone was our being shaped; and even so long as pain lives, so long must continue the ceaseless toil of self-change.” He also refers to Spencer by adding to his own note that the passage derives from “*First Principle*”:

³⁴ Hearn interpreted Japanese culture through his eclectic reading of Spencer’s philosophy and Buddhist works, especially Spencer’s idea of Space as an organic whole. For more on Hearn’s philosophical ideas, see Shunichi Daito, *Lafcadio Hearn no shiso to bungaku (Lafcadio Hearn’s Philosophy and Literature)*, 2004. Regarding a dispute Hearn had with Basil Hall Chamberlain over Spencer, see Sukehiro Hirakawa, *Yaburareta Yujo: Hearn to Chamberlain no Nihon rikai (A Broken Friendship; Ideas of Japan in Hearn and Chamberlain)*, 1987.

The world's greatest thinker—he who has told us why the Riddle cannot be read—has told us also how the longing to solve it must endure, and grow with the growing of man. (7:57).

The “greatest thinker” here is Spencer, and his philosophy helps Hearn to answer “the Riddle.” Pain, Hearn concludes, triggers moral and evolution.

Hearn's idea about the relationship between pain and moral evolution, therefore, explains the significance of pain that Yukiko perpetually suffers. Yukiko's shameful karma works as a positive force to enhance her morality and the evolution of her character. From this point of view, Yukiko is not caught in the vicious circle of karma; she leaves the Master's house according to her own will, becomes a traveling nun, and continues her life-long journey which though never without pain will be always accompanied by her companion, the Lady, dark and yet with a flagrant desire for life.

“Oshidori”

“Oshidori” might be called Hearn's swan song since it was collected in *Kwaidan*, published posthumously in 1904, the year in which he suddenly passed away. The story is based on a thirteenth-century Buddhist narrative.³⁵ *Oshidori*, or a mandarin duck, symbolizes “conjugal affection” as the *oshidori* is said to mate faithfully for life. In Hearn's story, a hunter named Sonjo sees a brace of *oshidoris*, shoots the male bird, takes it home, and consumes it. That night, the female *oshidori* appears in his dream and makes an appeal: “Why, --oh! why did you kill him?--of what wrong was he guilty? (. . .) What harm did he ever do you?” (24). The following morning he goes back to the pond, and the female *oshidori* “swam straight towards him, looking at him all 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 (. . .)” (25-26).

The original Buddhist parable may well idealize the voluntary immolation of the faithful wife, as the name *oshidori* suggests. The female *oshidori* appears in Sonjo's dream and sings a song of her deserted state. This touches Sonjo. And when he goes back to the

³⁵ The original story was collected in *Kokonchomonju*, 20 vols. About 700 stories were collected. The story is introduced in Chapter Two, Section Two, “Oshidori,” *Yaburareta Yujo (Friendship that was Broken)* by Sukehiro Hirakawa, 123-125.

pond in the morning, he finds the female *oshidori* dead beside the corpse of the male *oshidori*. Sonjo feels pity, realizes life's mutability, abandons the world, and becomes a priest. In Hearn's version, the female *oshidori* also appears in the hunter's dream, but as cited above, she does not stop at her song. She speaks up, looks him in the eye, accuses the hunter, and complains of the undeserved deprivation. She then commits suicide before his eyes.

Comparing Hearn's story with the original Buddhist parable, Sukehiro Hirakawa observes that "a modest and piteous Japanese woman is transformed via Hearn's pen into a Western type woman who can vehemently accuse the man and complain of her misery," and that her final act is done "out of spite" (1987: 127-128).³⁶ I question, however, what good it might have been for Hearn to use a Western female type as a character in his story given he had already gone to lengths to depict a traditional Japanese woman. The female bird's aggressive accusation might be shocking, but all the more so to read of the *oshidori*'s suicide. It indeed bewilders Sonjo who unthinkingly killed and ate the bird, a "husband" himself. The female *oshidori* voices her anger, claiming her right to suffer, and then kills herself. Hearn's story terminates with an open ending. After the suicide scene, he inserts a linebreak, and a brief sentence ends the story—"Sonjo shaved his head, and became a priest." Readers must imagine what made him abandon the secular world, which seems to be the overall aim of his story. Sonjo could have simply been threatened by the ghostly appeal of the bird, but what makes him afraid?

Using the framework of a Buddhist parable and the subject of female sacrifice, Hearn rewrites the original Buddhist lesson—"Thou shall not kill"—in a modern context. He asks how the law of survival-of-the-fittest in civil society can be justified in a parallel world of imperialistic expansion and aggression. He does not just let Sonjo "feel" the mutability of life and abandon the secular world as in the original story. He must somehow enable his readers to imagine Sonjo's consciousness being awakened. Hearn uses the dream scene to let the female bird speak her mind, serving as a manifestation of the unconscious. This forces the dreamer to metaphorically wake up. His dream makes him see an unknown aspect of himself—his cannibalistic nature. The awakening is effectively triggered by a female character, whose presence Sonjo had not even noticed before.

³⁶ In his chapter "*Oshidori*," Hirakawa also refers to Gustav Flaubert's "St. Julien" in which a stag comes straight to the hunter, speaks to him, and once shot, dies. Incorporating such foreign scenes in his story, Hirakawa argues, he wrote his own original story as a "re-told story" which is not a simple translation of a story. See *Yaburareta Yujo*, 131-134. The scene might have given Hearn stylistic hints, but the use of a female animal and making her commit suicide are astounding turns in Hearn's own story.

The point of the hunter's self-awareness in "*Oshidori*" may be read differently again, if readers consider the story in a historical context. In 1904, Japan entered the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), and though Hearn died just before the war broke out, he was well aware of the military campaign that Japan was launching. He had witnessed the high-spirited Japanese after their victory in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). In his essay "After the War" (*Kokoro*, 1896), he describes how war songs are heard everywhere and how toy Chinese soldiers are sold to boys to play war games. He adds that the news about Russia "securing the help of France and Germany to gully Japan" has spurred the Japanese navy to feel "a furious desire to battle with the three hostile powers at once" (96, 97). To Hearn, the elated Japanese appear like children playing with toy soldiers, bragging about their military superiority. In "*Oshidori*," Hearn makes Sonjo listen to the victimized female *oshidori* in a dream, since such a scene could neither occur in daylight nor in public. The dream state in which the wronged *oshidori* makes her appeal to Sonjo also ensures fundamental change to his *unconscious* mind. Sonjo must remember his dream, her words, her suicide, and his unthinking, sporadic act of killing. Furthermore, the Japanese word *oshidori* that Hearn opts to use in his story is significant. Although it translates as "mandarin duck," had he used the English term, his story might easily have been interpreted as a critique of Japan's imperialism with its aggressive build-up of military forces at the time. Hearn's sociopolitical critique is subtle and insightful. Although the act of the female *oshidori* is rendered as a dream, her suicide condemns Sonjo as a guilty figure and he is unable to free himself from the events of his dream. Meanwhile, the female bird carries on the spirit of old Japan as both a good wife and sacred maiden of the home—a Miko figure. She is both aesthetic and ethical; she simultaneously sings a song of beauty and cites wrongs in society.

Though originally based on a Buddhist narrative, "*Oshidori*" is a fascinating story that Hearn recreated out of his experience of living in Japan. Like Christopher Benfey in *The Great Wave* who views Hearn as one of the "gilded age misfits" that contributed to the "cultural opening of Japan" (2003: 15), Hearn indeed was an exceptional Western figure who was able to write about Japanese emotional life from a native perspective, and who, most importantly, knew that the Japanese, the object of his gaze, affected his own perspective in turn. Writing about culture, he knew, had to involve a bilateral process of transforming both the Japanese and himself.

Kwaidan, the collection in which "*Oshidori*," and "Mimi-Nashi-Hōichi," and "Yuki-Onna" all appear, received favorable reviews on its publication. The *Atlantic*

Monthly called it “dainty, wistful, beautiful” and *The Athenæum* wrote, “These tiny drops of poesy have often a peculiar charm—faint, slight and evanescent, yet real, like a perfume wafted swiftly by.” The adjectives used in these American reviews reinforce a romantic exoticism for Japan that American readers surely expected. Hearn and writers like him proliferated such watercolor beauty of Japan that the Japanese nevertheless also appreciated. Yone Noguchi, the Japanese poet who crossed the Pacific at the age of 19 and became a recognized poet among fellow American and British modernists, confirmed the authenticity of Hearn's Japanese stories. He argued that Hearn had been totally assimilated into a Japanese way of thinking: “[Hearn's] writing is about one third Japanese and two thirds Hearn. Fortunately his two thirds Hearn is also Japanese. At least in *Kwaidan* he is Japanese through and through, in his writing is nothing foreign about the book. His art is nothing but the best Japanese art” (Qtd. Murray 1973: 299). Throughout the twentieth century, Hearn was remembered as a sympathetic Japanologist who understood spiritual and aesthetic aspects of Japan. However, his ideas may have been even more complex. He knew that the Japan he loved was a Japan of old, and he expressed bitter criticism toward the modernized Japan of his day. As quoted from his 1892 letter, he witnessed that Japan's modernization was not only changing its materialistic view toward life but also its spiritual one. As “*Oshidori*” exemplifies, his later stories shifted more consciously toward a dual narrative: one half of Hearn fondly looks back on old Japan, while the other half frowns critically at modern Japan. He also criticizes himself as a failed witness who could not entirely free himself of his Western way of thinking. Nor was he able to offer a new perspective on critical world situations in which both the Japanese and he himself were equally involved.

By the time he gathered his writings for the publication of *Out of the East*, the Sino-Japanese War ended with Japan's victory. Hearn added a postscript to his proof of “Jujutsu” to comment on the astonishing fact that “*Japan has won in her jiu-jutsu.*” Here he seems to welcome Japan's military victory, since he sees the spirit of *jiujutsu* at the core of “the old samurai art of fighting without weapons,” and of “relying victory solely upon the strength of your opponent.” The essence, Hearn italicizes, is “*to conquer by yielding*” (7: 143, 144). He praises *jiujutsu*, as it does not resort to aggressive force or acts of meaningless murder. He places himself on the side of Japan and proposes that the world arm itself with “our arts of war in self-defense” (7: 181). He asks further what makes “the Superior Race,” answering “the fittest to survive:”

Wherein consists the fitness for survival? In the capacity of self-adaptation to

any and every environment; in the instantaneous ability to face the unforeseen; in the inherent power to meet and to master all opposing natural influences. And surely not in the mere capacity to adapt ourselves to factitious environments of our own invention or to abnormal influences of our own manufacture—but only in the simple power to live. Now in this simple power of living, our so-called higher races are immensely inferior to the races of the Far East. (. . .) Just as we have exterminated feebler races by merely *overliving* them—by monopolizing and absorbing, almost without conscious effort, everything necessary to their happiness—so may we ourselves be exterminated at last by races capable of *underliving* us, of monopolizing all our necessities; races more patient, more self-denying, more fertile, and much less expensive for Nature to support. (7: 184, 185)

Analysis of Hearn's oceanic survival stories in chapters two and three established that Hearn was much concerned about the survival of "the Race." His conceptualization of "the Race" is not necessarily a concept determined by blood, ethnicity, or homeland. The boundaries of such categories would have been blurred by constant encounters with people in the modern world. His prototypical "philosophical romance" reflects such a reality and goes further to offer a way for survival. Through the eclectic perspectives of the West and the East as well as of religion and science, he attempted a kind of narrative in which he could represent the reality of the transforming world, and ultimately, the wisdom that could be shared globally. If the new Race was to be fit for survival, it would have to be equipped with Eastern wisdom of "self-defense" and "more patient, more self-denying, more fertile, and much less expensive." Hearn seems to have foreseen upcoming conflict and desolation over the course of the twentieth century and continued writing modern cautionary tales for the future hybrid Race.

It must not be forgotten that Hearn's dream was to become a prose-poet and storyteller. His wished to write fantastic stories that would entertain and enlighten his readers, and his life-long fascination with ghosts culminated in a simple form of old Japanese ghost stories. They provided him with a useful narrative frame within which he could overlay other contrasting dimensions of reality—life and death, here and there, and East and West. His stories are indeed "ghostly" not because they are about ghosts or monsters, but because they seek out the "ghost" (*geist*), or "spirit." They are also about past memory that endures in the human mind despite the passage of millions of years. Hearn patiently tightened his

narrative to maintain simple, terse language. In his Japanese stories, we can find his aesthetics of hybrid narrative—of his journalistic realism and literary idealism. His apprenticeship in Cincinnati and his editorial experiences in New Orleans taught him to be true to the journalist's commitment of giving and telling the truth to common people. Japanese tales taught him the value of an ancient spirit and wisdom. His role as a teacher also enhanced his moral stance as he faced students who were in conflict over Japanese and Western values.

Hearn firmly believed that an artist, singer, or storyteller could feel and respond to vibrations emanating from past memory. These figures were the ones who could revive past memory for the present. The image of the *miko* that he saw projected in Japanese women, be it a samurai wife or a street singer, was his ideal muse because these women were of a consciousness that could bring back old wisdom in an appealing way. He did not exclusively praise Japanese muses since he also saw similarities in muses in ancient Greek mythology. He praised the ancient muse as an archetype which all humans, Europeans or Japanese, share. His muse, moreover, represented the ultimate in disinterested ethical beauty—or his idea of “*to conquer by yielding.*” Lastly, what we should remember is that Hearn was also a journalist at heart. He could not help but historicize and politicize Japanese stories in order to turn his own interpretations of them into a valid modern allegory. The legitimacy of Western capitalism and military power politics at the turn of the twentieth century heavily afflicted his sensibility. His muse, or the spirit of the place, was not found in any particular place, but sought out in the realm of past memory, enabling him to revive this memory through the act of storytelling.

Conclusion

The Spirit of No Place

At the end of the nineteenth century, Hearn had an insightful view with his ideas on creolization and hybridization. He firmly believed that finding ways to maintain harmony with mixed races, languages and cultures was key to the future evolution of the human species that would eventually evolve into a hybrid. He, however, could not voice his ideals in America where the race issue persisted as a sensitive subject. When he settled in Martinique after departing from New Orleans in 1888, he assumed that he could write on his ideal theme of creolization in the context of this unindustrialized, mixed-race, tropical island. Yet, the second, and the last, novella he wrote, *Youma: a Story of a West-Indian Slave* (1890), only ended with a disastrous riot scene in which the black Creoles attack the white Creole mansion.¹ He saw the race conflict worsening, and Americans too busy building up their material wealth and expanding their territories abroad. He wrote to George Gould from Anse, Martinique in 1888 that he found “an unutterable weariness of the aggressive characteristics of existence in a highly organized society. The higher the social development, the sharper the struggle,” and called America “the nervous centre of the world’s activity” (14: 49). For a few months while he was in Kobe, he wrote for *The Kobe Chronicle*. Taking up editorial work, he covered international issues. Once again, he was reminded of racial issues in the US. In “The Race-Problem in America” (20 October 1894), he discussed topics that he probably could not have written while in America.² For him, creolization, or the issue of race, brought about harsh, unending conflicts that he declared made white Americans “most terrible types of men existing in any civilized

¹ See my discussion in “Kureoru no Yume—Rafukadio Hahn no Futsuryo Indo Shotou no Ninennkann to Yuma [Creole Dreams: Lafcadio Hearn’s Two Years in the French-west Indies and Youma],” 2010.

² See Simon J. Bronner, *Lafcadio Hearn’s America: Ethnographic Sketches and Editorials* (2002) 214-216. After teaching at Government Junior High School in Izumo from 1890 to 1891, and the Fifth High School in Kumamoto from 1891 to 1894, Hearn lived in Kobe from 1894 to 1896. He wrote for *The Kobe Chronicle* from October to December, 1894. Away from his heavy teaching load, he was able to write in Kobe, where he published *Out of the East* (1895) and *Kokoro* (1896).

country” with “savagely hardened hearts.” Hearn’s voice is at once strong and mournful, differing from the tone in his retellings of Japanese stories. He offers a diagnosis of America’s fatal condition:

Nevertheless the race-problem remained unsettled. (. . .) the great question shall be the question not of race-supremacy, but of race-existence. And the fierce hate of such a feeling is manifesting itself in the atrocities committed by Southern mobs, --by the lowest classes of Southern whites. Besides these evils directly due to the old folly of Republican legislators, certain indirect moral evils of a very grave nature have been developed in the South. The necessity of aggression has made aggression habitual, has savagely hardened hearts, has developed some of the most terrible types of men existing in any civilized country. All such conditions react upon character. It is impossible now to predict what evils the next twenty-five years may bring to the South But it is sadly evident that the worst ultimate consequences of slavery are yet to come; and that the enormous error of it will furnish legislators yet unborn with the host of Sphinx-riddles to solve (*Lafcadio Hearn’s America* 215-216)³

Hearn’s dream of racial co-existence in Creole society seemed to him simply impossible—at least in America. As Simon J. Bronner points out in his introduction to *Lafcadio Hearn’s America*, Hearn “located America’s earthiness” and makes the readers “interrogate the muse of folk cultures, and ultimately, in Hearn’s words, it questions America’s ‘vast whirl and striving’” (33). One-eyed wanderer as he was, he kept detecting overlooked aspects of life that most people found irrelevant and useless. These aspects for him were to the contrary because in them linger the traces of a collective human race. In Japan he believed that they were still accessible in old stories that circulated and in habits and customs through religious rituals practiced by women at home. Finding similarities in ancestor worship and burial ceremonies between Greece and Japan, he felt confident using Japanese stories as his literary material. He was a true liberal in a sense that he dreamed of a shared space for all the Creoles of the world, including himself and his hybrid children. That space was what he could articulate in literature. Fortunately, some heard his voice overseas when he died. Hugo von Hofmannsthal acknowledged his journalistic spirit as well as his ethics:

³ Simon J. Bronner, the editor of *Lafcadio Hearn’s America* refers to this article in “Gombo” Folkloristics: Lafcadio Hearn’s Creolization and Hybridization in the Formative Period of Folklore Studies” (2005).

. . . things both profound and difficult of apprehension are brought to the surface from the deepest depths and set out for our inspection. It is, if I am not mistaken, philosophy. But it does not leave us cold, it does not invite us into a desert of barren concepts. Thus it is also religion. But it does not threaten us, it does not pretend to be the one religion in all the world, it does not weigh upon the soul. I should prefer to call it communication, the friendly communication of one soul with another, journalism beyond the realms of the daily press, art without pretension and without humbug, knowledge without pomposity and full of life—letters written to unknown friends. (“Hugo von Hofmannsthal on Lafcadio Hearn” 69)⁴

Hearn died just before the victory of Japan over Russia. International tensions in Europe were on the increase. Hearn’s voice that transcended the boundaries of race, culture and nation, offering friendly exchange such as “the friendly communication of one soul with another,” must have spoken to Hofmannsthal. Indeed, Hearn’s narratives are like letters sent to his friends overseas. He wanted to tell them about his unique experiences in Japan, but also that his Japanese experiences were linked to prototypical experiences of the human race, whose wisdom he believed were key to the future evolution of ethics and aesthetics for the new hybrid race. Hearn’s characteristic shift in viewpoints, from close-ups on Japanese objects to distant glimpses of the realm beyond the material world and history and then back again to commonplace reality, constantly asked readers to refocus or defocus upon the subject in question. Hearn thus excited readers’ minds, creating an oscillating reading experience which expands the reader’s visionary scope, while still anchoring readers in a world of familiar objects and practices. In this way, he provided not only sensational excitement, but also enhancement of moral development through a broadening of one’s worldview and heightening self-awareness.

“My First Day in the Orient,” collected in his first book on Japan *Glimpses of the Unfamiliar Japan* (1894), is a prime example of Hearn’s dialectical method. He first

⁴ The essay originally appeared as an obituary written for *Wiener Neue Freie Presse* and is reprinted as “Forwort” to *Kokoro*, trans. Berta Franzos (Frankfurt am Main: Rütten & Loening, 1905). Hearn met a German ophthalmologist Dr. Papellier in Kobe who had been a great admirer of Hearn and translated *Chita* for a Nuremberg paper. See Kennard, 244).

⁴ See William Butler Yeats, “Coole Park And Ballylee” (1931).

makes use of the stereotypical reactions of a Western traveler who has just arrived in exotic Japan. Hearn mythologizes the experience, and then, quite suddenly, demythologizes it as a false preconception by creating a critical moment of disorientation. The narrative moves from descriptions of curious objects observed in town to the excitement of the narrator's experience of a world that is morally and spiritually strange. In this essay, the mystery is especially enhanced by the "ideographs" which the narrator-traveler sees in public areas. They even haunt him in his dreams: "I see Chinese texts—multitudinous, weird, mysterious—fleeing by me, all in one direction; ideographs white and dark, upon sign-boards, upon paper screens, upon the backs of sandaled men" (5: 34). They overwhelm him like a living thing hiding some esoteric secret that the narrator is unable to comprehend. He arrives at "a revelation" that these Chinese characters are not ominous after all, but merely part of the picturesque landscape as "picture" symbols. They do not ask him to engage his intellect to decode their meaning, and he can simply enjoy them with his sense of sight:

And finally, while you are still puzzling over the mystery of things, there will come to you like a revelation the knowledge that most of the amazing picturesqueness of these streets is simply due to the profusion of Chinese and Japanese characters in white, black, blue or gold, decorating everything—even surfaces of doorposts and paper screens. (. . .)

An ideograph does not make upon the Japanese brain any impression similar to that created in the Occidental brain by a letter or combination of letters—dull, inanimate symbol of vocal sounds. To the Japanese brain an ideograph is a vivid picture: it lives; it speaks; it gesticulates. And the whole space of a Japanese street is full of such living characters—figures that cry out to the eyes, words that smile or grimace like faces. (5: 6, 7)

While Occidental writing systems stands for "dull, inanimate symbols of vocal sounds," a Japanese ideograph represents "a vivid picture" that directly affects the narrator's senses and leaves an impression. Hearn's commentary on "ideographs" may resemble what Roland Barthes saw in Japan in the 1960s. In his *The Empire of Signs* (1970), he is delighted with all the representational signs that he saw. He also remarks on the proximity of calligraphic ideograms and painting, musing, "Where does the writing begin? Where does the painting begin?" (21) In Barthes's case, the discovery of "pure significance" in Japan liberates him from "fulfilled meaning" and the traditional Western need to describe it in "speech" (9). He celebrates the pure æsthetic joy of

floating signifiers. Hearn, a pioneering modernist, so to speak, at the turn of the century, enjoyed the signs, but still strongly maintained the desire to interpret and discover the essential meaning hidden from view. As Rolf J. Goebel points out, “Hearn's hermeneutics construes the written language, people, streets, gardens, and temples around him as symbolic signifiers referring beyond their mysterious appearance to underlying levels of social, political, and historical meaning” (199). Differing from Barthes, who regards the act of interpretation as a violent act of deconstructive reading, Hearn believes in a concentric reading that will lead him to the essential reconstruction of essential forms of culture.

In constant dialogue with foreign cultures meant that Hearn's ideal *genius loci* was forever re-written and re-placed. He himself wavered between two opposite values, and yet he knew that he could make them co-exist in his stories by way of layering different voices. On arriving in Yokohama from Kobe, he wrote to Basil Chamberlain about his rediscovery of the West and his love of Western civilization. He wrote about W. B. Mason who he described as “what Goethe would have called ‘a beautiful soul,’” and confessed to his five years of “isolation” in Japan. Encountering the signs of Western civilization again made him cry, “What a great thing is the West!”. The pendulum of his inner heart had swung back and he immediately added: “Then I stopped thinking. For I saw my home—and the lights of its household Gods—and my boy reaching out his little hands to me –and all the simple charm and love of old Japan. And the fairy-world seized my soul again, very softly and sweetly –as a child might catch a butterfly” (*Yokohama* 15 July 1894; 16: 216. 127). In the next letter to Chamberlain written two days later, Hearn remembers his “ugly experiences with American business men and American tricksters” when he was “a journalist of long standing” in the US and how his misanthropy was eased by the “hospitable openness, the sympathies, and the abnegations” of the people in Izumo. But Japan did not remain “the fairy-world” all the time as he wavered between the West and Japan. Nevertheless, he found germination for new themes through his wavering impressions and dialogic thinking: “The jiu-jutsu paper must be remodeled; and my ideas of the open ports reconstructed, repaired, renovated, and decorated. I have received from the Gods inspiration for a paper—the Romance of the Open Ports—or, perhaps, the morality of the open ports” (16:219). He further states that the question of morality is front and center and how people of “the Open Ports” develop their goodness to live together despite differences in nationality, language and race:

(. . .) there is a beautiful subject—requiring very delicate handling—that has never been touched. What of the numbers who have given up England, France, Italy—all the large Western life—all that made them, and all that must in silent hours pull at their heart-strings as the sea pulls at the soul of a boy—for pure love of duty? Never again will they dwell with their kindred—never visit the scenes they dream of in sick hours—when the Past floats back to say, hand in hand with the Shadow of Death—“We are waiting, Come!” They have wealth; they have no obstacles or laws to hinder them. Only moral obligations they need not perforce obey. But even these have little to do with the matter. It is simply love—the purified affection, from which every atom of selfishness has been sifted out ages ago. (16: 221)

Hearn’s fiction of “the Romance of the Open Port” was never written, but he seems to have considered the favorable side of the Western presence in Japan, which was in opposition to the loud Western imperialist attitude and acquisitive desire. He perhaps found in the life of “the Open Ports” something ennobling that makes Western sojourners living on foreign shores broadminded and morally empathic. Hearn imagined that “with help of thoughts and illustrations from evolutionary philosophy,” “exiled Western life” would shed light on the evolutionary development of a moral life. He might have wavered in his thoughts and feelings, but never in his literary goal of becoming a “prose-poet” and writing a “philosophical romance.” A new theme of his perhaps would have been to seek a common ground in his literature, where the goodness of Japanese life and “exiled Western life” could affect each other toward one society of higher morality. Yet, when Japan went to war against Russia, the time was not ripe for a romance. Hearn’s death just before the news of Japan’s victory over Russia in 1904 might have been fortuitous, as his peaceful “old Japan” was slowly but surely disappearing. In *Das Japan Buch* (1911), Stefen Zweig comments on the news of Hearn’s death. He was one of the few contemporaries that understood Hearn’s cosmopolitan and hybrid mind:

[W]hat . . . makes his books so unique and unusual is the amazing fact that they are no longer the works of a European. To be sure, they are not the works of a true Japanese either, because then we would not understand them, could not live with them so intimately. They are something totally unique in the world of art, a

miracle of transplantation, of artificial grafting: the works of an Occidental, yet written by an Oriental. (72, 81)

Zweig also predicted that such a hybrid voice as Hearn's would be silenced not only upon his death, but also on account of Japan's alignment with Western powers.

The prophet of old Nippon died in the year that the Japanese defeated Russia, when they carried out that deed which burst open the gate of world history for them. Now this mysterious land stood in the blinding light of curiosity, now fate no longer required one such as him. A wise, pre-ordained meaning seems to lie in the fact that he did not live to see Japan's victory over Russia, that deceptive victory, by which the old tradition tore a knife through its own body. Lafcadio Hearn died in the same hour as did old Nippon, as did Japanese culture. (83).

Japan's absorption into the world of Western powers must have been the last thing that Hearn wanted to see. When he resumed his correspondence with Mrs. Wetmore in 1903 in order to ask her about the possibility of his giving a series of lectures in America, he might have truly wanted to leave Japan given how it was becoming more like a Western nation. Nonetheless, in Tokyo, Hearn had his own study at home where he could give free play to his imagination, and metaphorically speaking, sing like his favorite Mimi-Nashi-Hōichi with the accompaniment of insect music outdoors. These circumstances endured even though he was well aware that at the same time the actual outside world was in political turmoil and marked by brute commercialism. He knew that a loss of religious faith in the modern world had made all souls/ghosts homeless thereby creating conflicts, and that a materialistic society would not tolerate poets and artists voicing ancient wisdom and "ghostly" aspects of life.

Hearn loved to fancy himself as Mimi-Nashi-Hōichi because he knew how difficult it was to have a poet's inner voice heard by common readers. Such difficulty spurred him on with his literary project. Hearn was, to borrow a phrase from a modernist poet Hearn admired, one of "the last romantics"⁵ who believed in the power of poets, their visions, and their words. Hearn's lifelong attempt to bring together his experiences of reportage, translation, and retelling of old stories into "a philosophical romance," though a hundred years past, provides us with insight. The ideal moral

⁵ See William Butler Yeats, "Coole Park And Ballylee" (1931).

evolution of the peoples of the world he conceived of could transcend differences of race, ethnicity, language, religion, and nationality seems to be the topmost concern of our day when we are all becoming more or less “exiles” of the globalizing world, itself becoming a large-scale open port. Hearn searched for the muse of “the civilized nomad” in his literary imagination since it no longer belonged to a specific geographical place or tradition, and hence, I call this muse “the spirit of no place.” Hearn’s ideal spirit, or muse of hybridity and creolization, combined with his fluid dialogic thinking in his writings are still valid and useful in looking at our globalizing world in which differences tend to be undermined.

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