

Lafcadio Hearn's Unpublished Articles in the Kobe Chronicle

WILLIAMSON, Rodger Steele

*"You! — said a Jew to me long ago,
"you fight society. Oh you fly! The elephant's foot will crush you without feeling you."
—What matters! In those days being supremely an ass as well as a fly, I thought I could
overturn the universe.
—Lafcadio Hearn to Basil Hall Chamberlain, September 22, 1894*

Lafcadio Hearn reminisces to Chamberlain of his idealistic, yet impossible rebellion that put him at the mercy of an intolerant society. During the centennial of the founding of America's young democracy, Lafcadio Hearn authors *A Case of Lunacy*. He writes about the delusions of a drunken mulatto man who dreams of a place "wherein strangers from the four quarters of the earth might be quartered free of charge, and Civil Rights should be respected" (*The Cincinnati Commercial*, July 18 1876). At this time in history only a lunatic might imagine such a preposterous vision. Hearn's marriage to a mulatto woman damaged his reputation and eventually forced him to leave the city he had made his home for more than six years. Once Hearn became the editor of the Kobe Chronicle, he could tackle issues that had bothered him since his days in Cincinnati. Many of these would have been lost forever if not for the efforts of P.D. Perkins to make facsimiles that now belong to the University of Virginia. While Hearn had no difficulty publishing these articles in Japan, their highly controversial tone was probably viewed as unacceptable in the United States as they displayed Hearn's clear condemnation of predominate attitudes of racial prejudice and superiority.

In New Orleans, Hearn writes to Henry Watkin about his newfound success. Yet, his past in Cincinnati still hovers like a dark cloud. "I have succeeded in getting acquainted & being introduced into the best society. I see my way clear to a position here, — but then I feel sure some one will tell that story on me. sooner or later. Then I will have to go away" (Kuwabara 135). Hearn was nervous but still made friends with George Washington Cable who angered the south with his articles on the plight of African Americans and his advocacy for granting freed slaves equal rights. Hearn, on the other hand, became more careful in expressing his ideas at this time. His friend Cable was threatened bodily harm by newspaper journalists and editors. As suggested from Hearn's private letters to Watkin, Hearn was paranoid of his past catching up with him and ruining new career prospects.

In March of 1896 He writes a letter about his newly acquired position to his former editor in New

Orleans,

— About my name. Koizumi is a family name: I take my wife's name as her husband by adoption — the only way in which I could become a Japanese citizen. Koizumi means "Little spring" or "little source." The other name means "many clouds," and is an alternative poetical name for Izumo, the "Place of the Issuing of Clouds." for I become a citizen of the Province of Izumo where I am officially registered. The word is also the first word of the most ancient poem in the Japanese language — referring to a legend of the sacred records. Please do not publish this : it is a little private matter. and the whole explanation, though read at a glance by a Japanese, would require many pages to make clear. . . . I work when I can: and when I cannot I bury myself in studies — philosophical studies : you can scarcely believe how they interest me now, and I find worlds of inspiration in them — new perceptions of common-place fact. I try not to worry & let things take their course. Probably next year I shall be leading a busier life; but I don't know whether Japanese officialism can be endured for a great length of time. — I wonder, wonder, wonder whether I shall see you again, — and walk up and down that coca — nut matting, — and make noises through the speaking — tube leading to the composing room. Perhaps I could make some sketches of American life better now — after having looked back at it from this distance of eight thousand odd miles. (*Japanese Letters* 292-296)

Hearn had become tired of what he calls "government service" and wanted to return to a life by the pen to which he had always felt most comfortable. In a letter published by Paul Murray in his *A Fantastic Journey*, Hearn makes his position very clear to the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*.

The difference between myself and other writers on Japan is simply that I have become practically a Japanese — in all but knowledge of language; while other writers remain foreigners, looking from outside at riddles which cannot be read except from the inside. There is no one competent to criticize me from the point of view you suggest, because there is no one who has been able to assume the point of view among writers on Japan . . . You can see how conceited I am; but my conceit is based on facts. (Murray 186)

He had become a Japanese citizen and as the editor of the *Kobe Chronicle*, Hearn could tackle issues that had bothered him since his days in Cincinnati. As a Japanese, he no longer felt the constraints of voicing opinions about racial tensions. In an editorial of October 20, 1894 he establishes his unique perspective to readers of the *Kobe Chronicle* in that "by long residence in the Southern States of America" he was "familiar with the abnormal social conditions there existing . . . Rarely can one open an American newspaper without reading of lynchings and killings of negroes: . . . It would be impossible to contradict that conditions in certain parts of the South are not the conditions of civilization" (*Kobe Chronicle*, October 20, 1894).

In a letter dated March 4, 1894 he tells Chamberlain that:

. . . I wonder whether Japanese life has not spoiled me . . . The freedom of it, the laissez-faire, the softness of things, the indifference, the lonesomeness, really constitute a sort of psychological tropics. . . this psychological tropic of Japanese life may have already unfitted me to endure anything resembling conventions and unpleasant contracts . . . Is not the truth also that we English or Americans hate our awful orderliness. . . and all the shams and conventions that we perforce obey . . . (Life and Letters 134)

Chamberlain's response to this letter is almost one of a scolding fashion. He writes in a letter to Hearn of March 9, 1894 as follows:

With regard to the social conventionalities of various countries, do you not think that the natural tendency is to imagine alien societies freer than they are, merely because, on the one hand, we cannot fully appreciate the nature of their conventions, and on the other because we are not bound by them even if we live among them. We English people talk of the free, unconventional life of the Continent, they utter a half-truth. The life is free to them, because they are out of the atmosphere of their own conventions, and neither choose nor are expected to follow those of the place of their temporary sojourn. (Koizumi 82)

Professor Ernest Foxwell, author of *Reminiscences of Lafcadio Hearn*, who knew Hearn from 1897-1900, describes the life of a foreigner as of being unchained from conventions as Hearn and Chamberlain. He describes as follows:

. . . in Japan we are "unchained." When at home in any country, men live chained by convention. We go about in chains everyday. We do not know it until we are transported . . . But to live in Japan is a unique experience for this reason. The Japanese leave us alone. . . so that each European who lives in Japan is in a sense an unsocial independent unit. . . untied by opinion or tradition, a law to himself. . . To live in Japan is like being born again, only with this difference - there is no one to mold us and teach us the way - of thought and action - in which we should go. (Foxwell 88-89)

The isolation as an "unsocial independent unit" gives Hearn a kind of freedom that he describes to Chamberlain in a letter from Matsue of July 25, 1891 after a year and a half as "of escaping from an almost unbearable atmospheric pressure into a rarefied, highly oxygenated medium." It is this "medium" that Hearn would feel "unchained" and lead to some of the most provoking commentary in his lifetime from the pages of the *Kobe Chronicle*.

Hearn's overall worldview, especially the impact of his experiences in Cincinnati can be clearly seen

in a number of articles that were never published. The articles appeared once in commentary, but were lost by the destruction of the Kobe Chronicle building during World War II. It is interesting how these particular articles were not originally chosen for publication by Merle Johnson who collected a number of articles for publication in 1913. A great deal of gratitude is owed to P.D. Perkins for traveling to Japan in 1941 to collect those ignored in 1913. Perkins was unable to publish these letters in book form. After reading their commentary it could be the fact while Hearn had no difficulty as editor publishing these articles in Japan, their highly controversial tone was probably viewed as unacceptable in 1913 and later in 1941. The title of one such article from December 6, 1894 is highly controversial in itself. In *Prejudice Versus Unity*, Hearn tackles the issue of racial prejudice in the schools, an issue festering in his mind since his early days in Cincinnati. He angrily writes to his readers,

The history of schools there is like the history of newspapers. Many schools are half-supported, and many newspapers contrive to exist because the public will not unite in maintaining one good school or newspaper not conducted in the interests of some party, some prejudice, or some narrow policy. Treaty revision first, and personal feeling subsequently growing out of the discussion, created a multitude of newspapers. The raising of the Eurasian question created a number of schools. And those who refused to send their children to the Victoria School because the school admitted Eurasians, will probably have to send them to the Tokyo schools, where Eurasians are freely admitted, and where such small and cruel prejudices of race are totally ignored. But all honour to the men who stuck to their guns to the last, and strove against those prejudices so generously and unselfishly! Their very defeat is a moral victory.

It is impossible, however, not to regret that neither large newspapers nor satisfactory schools in the open ports can be conducted—independently of personal feeling, race-prejudice, or religious bigotry of some kind, —for the sole benefit of the community at large. Institutions which ought to be public advantages are converted in public burdens. The time is approaching, we fear, when this weakness of division on small questions of prejudice may prove highly detrimental to foreign interests in Japan as a whole. For such oppositions are not superficial merely, —the personal feeling behind them reaches into matters of commerce and trade, and affects more or less the history of many a success and many a failure. And it seems to us that at no time since the opening of the ports has there ever been so much a need of a spirit of unity, — of a pooling of moral and material issues among foreign residents, —as there is likely to be at no very distant day. (*Kobe Chronicle*, December 6, 1894)

In an editorial of December 18, 1894, Hearn comments on a recent book *National Character*, that brings forth the issue of racial superiority. Hearn uses the theory set forth by the author to question fundamental flaws about the expansion of western civilization.

Perhaps, as been recently averred by Dr. Pearson, the long history of Western expansion and aggression is even now approaching a close. Perhaps our civilization has girdled the earth only to force the study of our arts of destruction and our arts of industrial competition upon races much more inclined to use them against us than for us. Even to do this we had to place most of the world under tribute, —so colossal were the powers needed. Perhaps we could not have attempted less, because the tremendous social machinery we have created, threatens, like the Demon of the old legend, to devour us in the same hour that we can find no more tasks for it. (*Kobe Chronicle*, December 16. 1894)

Hearn uses this theory, not to agree with Pearson, but to enter into a debate on the feeling of supposed superiority of western governments. Hearn's early writings demonstrate that he was always ready to investigate and bring out those features of modern civilization that poisoned and victimized other cultures. Surprisingly Hearn's commentary almost sounds similar to remarks by many of today's Environmental lobbies. Hearn, in his criticism of the excesses of western governments, highlights issues similarly spotlighted in his reports on the abuse and horrid conditions of laborers in Cincinnati.

To the query, "Are we not the Superior Race?"—we may emphatically answer "Yes." But his affirmative will not satisfactorily answer a still more important question, "Are we 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 the simple power of living, our so called higher races are immensely inferior to the races of the Far east. Though the physical energies and the intellectual resources of the Occidental exceed those of the Oriental, they can be maintained only at the expense totally incommensurate with the racial advantage. For the Oriental has proved his ability to study and to master the results of our science upon a diet of rice, and on as simple a diet can learn to manufacture and to utilize our most complicated inventions. But the Occidental cannot even live except as the cost sufficient for the maintenance of twenty Oriental lives. In our very superiority lies the secret of our fatal weakness. Or physical machinery require a fuel too costly to pay for the running of it in a perfectly conceivable future period of race-competition and pressure of population.

Before, and very probably since, the apparition of man, various races of huge and wonderful creatures, now extinct, lived on this planet. They were not all exterminated by the attacks of natural enemies: many seem to have perished simply by reason of the enormous costliness of their structures at a time when the earth was forced to become less prodigal of her gifts. Even so it may be that the Western Races will perish—because of the cost of their existence. Having accomplished their uttermost, they may vanish from the face of the world, supplanted by peoples

better fitted for survival. (*Kobe Chronicle* December 18, 1894)

Hearn writes to Chamberlain that he is an "agnostic, atheist" but holds high regards for religious beliefs. However, he had always been a critic of the religious bias of organizations such as the Jesuits. His love of pantheism with roots from his childhood and then his overt questioning of the conservative elements of religious bias in Cincinnati are essential in these commentaries. As a young reporter he criticized the use of "shot and shell" to bring Christianity to other cultures. His feelings in this regard would strengthen in Japan and he used his post in Kobe to voice what he felt as foul. In an article entitled *Anti-Foreigner Anti Missionary?* of August 16, 1895 Hearn criticizes the actions of missionaries for their collisions with Chinese culture. He starts his editorial with a history relating violence against foreigners with the incursions of missionaries into China.

But almost from the earliest times of foreign intercourse with China there was an intense feeling of opposition, particularly in the literary class, to the teaching of Christianity in the empire. The Jesuit missionaries who began to preach in 1692 were expelled thirty years later, their doctrines being considered subversive of Chinese institutions, and when another attempt at introducing the Western religion was made there came the Edict against Christianity in 1812. Outrages against foreigners began soon after missionaries established themselves in the country, and have been especially frequent during the last twenty-five years, the period of greatest missionary activity. As long ago as 1870, at the time of the Tientsin riots, when the French Consul, Catholic priests, and sisters of mercy (twenty-two persons in all) were killed, besides thirty children in the orphanage, the anger of the populace appears to have been roused by stories of children kidnapped by missionaries, exactly as the populace is roused to-day. (*Kobe Chronicle*, August 16, 1895)

This issue of Christian collisions with other native cultures was born of his early days in Cincinnati. His earliest, unpublished articles, show his criticism of Church leaders who showed little respect for those individuals who were not Christian or outcast of the church. Hearn once again reminds missionaries that they were once persecuted and it is hypocritical for them to use the force of their governments to persecute non-Christian lands. He continues.

If never, is it not a fair inference that foreign merchants could live in the interior with impunity where missionaries by their attempts to supplant the religions and customs of the country would be liable to attack? A man who is in the country for the purpose of buying its products and selling those of his country does not come into collision with its customs or religions, and his presence is therefore not likely to rouse opposition to anything like the same extent as that of the propagandist. And it must be remembered that many of the missionaries have exhibited very little tact in dealing with problems of propaganda. . . . The more the circumstances are

- Kuwabara, Shunzo. *Veiled Letters from Lafcadio Hearn*. Tokyo: Yushodo Press, 1991.
- Mordell, Albert. *Miscellanies*. London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1924.
- Murray, Paul. *A Fantastic Journey: The Life and Literature of Lafcadio Hearn*. Sundate, Folkestone, KentCT20 3EE: Japan Library, 1993.
- Perkins, P. D. and Iona Perkins. *Lafcadio Hearn: A Bibliography of His Writings*. Introduction by Sanki Ichikawa. 1934.
- Tinker, Edward Larocque. *Lafcadio Hearn's American Days*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1924.
- Sangu, Makoto. *Lafcadio Hearn: Editorials From The Kobe Chronicle*. Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1960.
- Zenimoto, Kenji. *Lafcadio Hearn Letters I*. Hearn Society, 2001.

神戸時代のラフカディオ・ハーンの未出版論説

ウィリアムソン、ロジャー・スティール

1895年にラフカディオ・ハーンは日本で帰化し、神戸クロニクルの編集者となって、シンシナティ時代に、日々以来彼を悩ませていた問題にも取り組むことができた。日本人として、彼は意見を声に出すことに何の制約もなくなった。ハーンはアメリカ合衆国の人種問題の緊張に対しても声をあげた。ハーンの全体的世界観、とりわけシンシナティにおける経験は、今まで本として出版されることがなかった神戸時代の新聞記事にも多くに見られた。それらの記事は、一度は論説として出たが、第二次世界大戦中に神戸クロニクルの建物が倒壊して失われてしまった。1913年に収集、出版された記事のなかに掲載されなかった解説記事が、ヴァージニア大学の資料のなかに多くあった。ハーンが編集者として日本で書いたその物議を醸す論調は、アメリカの当時の社会背景ではおそらく受け入れられないであろうと思われた。そして、その記事を日本で出版するということには何の困難もなかったという事実があった。

This recently discovered letter authored by Hearn to a book dealer in England, was the first clear evidence showing how Hearn felt he was definitely isolated from the foreign community resulting from his open criticisms of foreign organizations. Most importantly, the roots of these appeals to his readers come from Cincinnati. Hearn's overall worldview, especially the impact of his experiences in Cincinnati can be clearly seen in a number of articles that were never published. The articles appeared once in commentary, but were lost by the destruction of the Kobe Chronicle building during World War II. It is interesting how these particular articles were not originally chosen for publication by Merle Johnson who collected a number of articles for publication in 1913. After reading their commentary it could be the fact while Hearn had no difficulty as editor publishing these articles in Japan, their highly controversial tone was probably viewed as unacceptable. The young, idealistic reporter of the early 1870's was still an important element in his call for some consideration for the victimization of other cultures at the expense of the advancement of western civilization with its religious and cultural biases.

References

- Bisland, Elizabeth. *The Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923.
- . *The Japanese Letters of Lafcadio Hearn*. Boston and New York: The Riverside Press Cambridge, 1910.
- Cable, George W. "The Freedman's Case of Equity." *New Century Magazine* January, 1885. The University of Virginia. <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/>.
- Chamberlain, Basil Hall. *Things Japanese: Being Notes on Various Subjects Connected with Japan*. London: J. Murray, 1905.
- Barrett, Clifton Waller. *Collection of Lafcadio Hearn Manuscripts*, ts., Special Collections, University of Virginia.
- Foxwell, Professor Ernest. *Reminiscences of Lafcadio Hearn*, Japan Society Transactions and Procedures Session 17, Vol 8, (1908)
- Hearn, Lafcadio. "A Case of Lunacy" *Cincinnati Commercial*. Cincinnati, Ohio: July 18, 1876.
- . "A Curious Orientalism," *The Cincinnati Enquirer*. Cincinnati, Ohio: May 2, 1873.
- . "Epidemic in Embryo." *The Cincinnati Enquirer*. Cincinnati, Ohio: June 8, 1873.
- . "The English and the Anthropophagi" *Cincinnati Enquirer*. Cincinnati, Ohio: November 27, 1873.
- . *Gleanings in Buddha Fields*. Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1898.
- . "A Hebrew College" *Cincinnati Enquirer*. Cincinnati, Ohio: May 23, 1873.
- . "A Human Exposition." *The Cincinnati Enquirer*. Cincinnati, Ohio: September 23, 1875.
- . *Kokoro*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1896.
- . "A Marquesan Incident" *Cincinnati Enquirer*. Cincinnati, Ohio: December 17, 1873.
- . "A Mild and Just Government" *Cincinnati Enquirer*. Cincinnati, Ohio: January 10, 1874.
- . "A Nasty Nest" *Cincinnati Enquirer*. Cincinnati, Ohio: July 27, 1873.
- . "Pagan Piety" *Cincinnati Enquirer*. Cincinnati, Ohio: November 15, 1873.
- Ichikawa, Sanki. *Some New Letters and Writings of Lafcadio Hearn*. Tokyo: Kenkyusha Publishers, 1925.
- Koizumi, Kazuo. *Letters from Basil Hall Chamberlain to Lafcadio Hearn*. Tokyo: Hokuseido Press. 1936.
- . *More Letters from Basil Hall Chamberlain to Lafcadio Hearn*. Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1937.

Hearn's plea for the rights of the minority is a product of his time in Cincinnati. His anguish over his relationship with his first wife and the loss of his first job will haunt him for the rest of his life. In another editorial, He pleads for the "elimination of race hatreds." In this editorial of October 4, 1885 entitled *The Latest Word on International Morality*, he laments over the continual use of violence in relentless wars. He sarcastically remarks,

If nations are to be continually at daggers drawn, and to regard each other as foes because strife is the law of nature, why not carry the thesis a little further, and denounce all law within the State because it tends to the preservation of peace and order and frustrates "natural" law? (*The Kobe Chronicle*, October 4, 1895)

At the conclusion of this essay, Hearn attacks "Jingoism" or the excessive nationalism that results in the belief of one nation's complete superiority over all others. Then, Hearn probably makes one of the most profound statements of his career as a journalist that definitely has its roots as a young journalist.

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

Hearn's strong opinions in these commentaries did not sit well with many of his readers. However, he stood his ground for the rest of his time in Japan even though he came to feel a sense of alienation from the foreign community. A recent discovery explicitly shows his anger yet resolve to stand up for his beliefs.

I have long been a subject of persecution in Japan—inconstant persecution and intrigue. The object has been religion; but the work has always been masked when possible, and explained by social reasons when it could not be masked. The reasons, of course, were never openly stated—but only suggested. For many years I have been isolated—unable to meet or to have friends, other than Japanese; and their work of ostracism was intensified by strangers as a result of [personal] eccentricity. The matter appears to have been managed by a humble clique of English officials, with the aid of the religious bodies. A great many attempts (some of a very shameful kind) were made at various times to force me to resign my chair in the university—Jesuit influences being especially used. But I continue to mind my own business, to write my books and to deliver my lectures, —and as my students stand by me, —it did not prove easy to drive me out of the service. (Zenimoto)

considered, the more complete appears the proof that these outrages are anti-missionary rather than anti-foreign. . . . that the official class in China and the literati are opposed to Christianity is doubtless true enough: the official class of any country are as a rule opposed to new ideas, - and it may be remarked parenthetically that there have been many massacres and outrages in Christian countries, particularly against the Jews, of quite as shocking a character as any of the recent outrages in China,- but we believe that the anti-foreign feeling involved is in no small degree kept alive by the missionary movement in China, opposition to which gives the officials a hold upon the populace they would not otherwise obtain if their efforts were directed simply against the foreign merchant. (*Kobe Chronicle*, August 16, 1895)

Hearn cannot resist the issue of religious minorities after reports of outrage that Christ had been compared to Caesar. Just as he did in his days of the *Enquirer* he quickly comes to the side of religious minorities as well as criticizes the Christians who once suffered the same kind of persecution.

And it certainly would be remarkable if it were otherwise when it is considered that a not inconsiderable part of the foreign community in this country is engaged in an attempt to change the existing beliefs of the population of Japan. If it is an outrage for an article to appear gauging the respective influence of CHRIST and CEASAR on the world, surely it is just as great an outrage for the missionaries to print in Japanese magazines articles extolling the influence exercised by CHRIST and Christianity about that of BUDDHA and Buddhism. But the absurd charge that it is an "outrage" for the minority to express an opinion in opposition to that held by the majority is by no means an invention of these latter days. -rather it maybe said to be a survival. According to the Gospels, Christ appears to have been attacked on exactly the same grounds, and defended himself by saying that he came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill — from which, perhaps, we may gather that the founders of Christianity in the beginning regarded their doctrines as merely new renderings of old truths. Similarly PAUL was attacked for criticizing the older creeds of his days; and almost every new explanation of things, whether right or wrong, has had to run the gauntlet of similar charges. To assert that the world moved round the sun was an outrage on the previously held belief that our earth was the centre of the system of things; to advance reasons for believing that existing types of animals and developed gradually instead of being instantaneously created received similar condemnation until proof piled on proof rendered further opposition impossible, so that the doctrine once denounced as irreligious has been claimed by one clergyman as a "godsend" to religion. . . . The majority have no more right to say that the minority shall be voiceless than the minority have the right to compel the majority to accept their view. It is indeed a proof of how very little the civilization of the nineteenth century has advanced in certain respects beyond that of the middle ages that it should be necessary still to urge this as though there were any question about it whatever. (*Kobe Chronicle* August 28, 1895)