

The Multi-faceted Lafcadio Hearn

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Hearn is often described as “multi-faceted,” by which is usually meant that he was a man of diversified occupations and literary interests, a kind of Victorian-era version of the Renaissance man of letters. The variety of occupations he had held at one time or another would alone justify the use of the term: in addition to brief jobs in Henry Watkins’ printing shop and as the owner/waiter/manager of an eatery in New Orleans, he was first and always a journalist, writing for newspapers and magazines and doing a variety of jobs in that field: he was a reporter, illustrator, science editor, and general editor, both in the United States and in Japan. But he was also an educator who taught in several different academic environments in Japan and at several different academic levels: he was a private tutor, a junior-high-school and high-school English teacher, and a university professor of English literature. But above all, Hearn was, as he thought of himself, simply a “writer,” a man of letters, But there again his output was multiple: he wrote both fiction and non-fiction, original stories, re-told stories, translations, sketches, essays, newspaper articles, magazine features, travel pieces, a cookbook, anything that would interest an audience and provide enough money to enable him to continue writing.

The wide variety of topics in his non-fictional writings alone provides even more labels to pin on him and further justifies the use of the term “multifaceted” to describe him: e.g., he wrote as a folk-lorist/anthropologist, a travel writer, a literary critic, a popular scientist, and a Japanologist, to name a few. His non-fiction writing appeared in a variety of formats and places: in newspapers and in popular magazines such as *Harpers*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and an early issue of *National Geographic*. Encouraged by B. H. Chamberlain, he even published an article in the academic journal *Transactions of the Asiatic Society*. He also published several books of non-fiction, including *La Cuisine Creole*, *Gombo Zhèbes*, and his final non-fictional publication *Japan: An Interpretation*.

His fictional writings also show a similar variety and range, from American novellas to Japanese ghost stories. So many Hearn, it is no wonder there is such a wide variety of

“research” papers, essays, and personal interpretations being written about him every year, by an equally wide variety of reader-interpreters, both academic and non-academic, including literature professors, linguistics professors, cross-culture scholars, and interested people from quite unrelated fields. Such is the depth and breadth of Hearn’s multi-dimensional appeal that so many of his readers feel they have discovered something new or important to say about him.

Even prior to his working life, Hearn, it might be argued, was “multi-faceted” at birth. His racial makeup itself was pluralistic—a Greek who was also Irish. To this combination was added cultural pluralism when he studied in England and France. Later in life he became even more multi-cultural and multi-faceted when he became a European living and working in America and finally in Japan, each stage of his life adding a new layer to his increasingly complex identity. Adoption into a Japanese family and the taking of Japanese citizenship completed the cultural palimpsest.

But more than any list of occupations, writings, or nationalities can show, Hearn’s true multi-sidedness was, I believe, internal. Hearn’s most significant multi-faceted feature is to be found in his tastes and in his thinking. He loved beauty in a wide variety of forms—artistic, literary, natural, physical, spiritual. But he was nearly equally fascinated with the horrible and disgusting, expressed in writings such as his newspaper articles on the Tan-yard Murder and in some of the *Kwaidan*. These opposing facets of his multifarious curiosity, however, were unified by his one main interest: to write about the world in a way that thrilled and moved and charmed his readers, opened their minds to new ideas and sensations. He wanted to turn over the rocks in their mental gardens and surprise them with a vivid awareness of what had been lying hidden underneath. It was toward this single goal that his multi-faceted curiosity worked.

Not only his curiosity but also his thought-process was multi-dimensional. Born in an age when science was increasingly challenging religion as the dominant belief system in most of the civilized world, Hearn kept an open-minded attitude toward both sides. As his mind continually pondered, analyzed, and critiqued each set of values and tenets, he began to perceive an underlying compatibility. Where others saw an irreconcilable opposition between Eastern and Western religions, Hearn’s multi-faceted, open mind led him to conclude that they were fundamentally identical, simply different paths toward the same summit of the same mountain of truth. Science, religion, and philosophy—all were looking for answers to the same mystery, all were roads leading to the same exact place; they were simply different facets of the same human desire to understand the mystery and meaning of existence. It was Hearn’s mental diversity that enabled him to understand the underlying unity of these dichotomous truths. He was also able to see underlying dissimilarities in

places where others saw only uniformity.

Thus, I believe that Hearn's true multi-facetedness does not lie in the variety of his occupations or types of literary works, or in his varied accomplishments and interests. These were largely the results of his abiding multi-faceted curiosity. Rather, the deepest and most significant manifestation of his multi-facetedness is the versatility of his thought-process, i. e. in his usually (but not always) flexible mind, in his ability to suspend his judgment and to entertain any and all combinations of ideas. The result was his rare ability to discover the hidden unity and common values in seemingly opposite beliefs or systems, and the hidden differences in apparently similar ones. He did this time and time again. Science vs religion, science vs literature, fact vs fiction, beauty vs horror, East vs West, life vs death, Christianity vs Buddhism—to Hearn these were not dichotomies but poles of the same entity. Lafcadio Hearn was truly a man of many sides and talents, but the source of this diversity was his multi-faceted mind.

As we continue to probe into his works and thoughts, we are bound to discover even more sides of this multi-sided interpreter of Japan to the West.

〈要旨〉

ラフカディオ・ハーンの多面性

ハーンが「多面的」であったということは、彼は様々なものに関心をもち、多様な職業を経験し、文学的関心も多様であったことを意味する。いわばヴィクトリア時代のルネッサンス的文人とも言えようか。事実ヘンリー・ワトキンの印刷屋での仕事、ニューオーリンズでの食堂経営などの経験に加えて彼は何と言っても新聞や雑誌に記事を書くジャーナリストであった。しかし彼はまた日本では個人教授、尋常中学校、高等中学校、大学とさまざまなレベルで教育者でもあった。ハーン自身は本職は「作家 (writer)」と思っていたが、その産み出したものは驚くほど多様であった。

例えば彼の書いたノンフィクションは多岐にわたる。民俗学、紀行、文藝批評、科学愛好文、ジャパノロジーなどの文章を書き綴った。また彼は『クレオール料理』や『ゴンボ・ゼーブ』など最後の著書『日本——一つの試論』に至るまで種々の書物を著している。

フィクションとしてはアメリカ時代の中・短編小説から日本の怪談ものまでである。そして毎年文学研究者、言語学者、異文化理解の専門家、一見ハーンとは関係なさそうな領域の人々によってハーンの学術的あるいは非学術的研究書や評論などが広範に出版されている。

ハーンはその出生において多面的であったと言える。人種的にはギリシャとアイルランドが混じり、イングランドとフランスで学び、後になってアメリカと日本在住のヨーロッパ人と

いうスタンスをとる。最後は日本人の家族に入り、日本国籍を取ることによってそれまで異文化を繰り返し渡り歩いたことに終止符を打った。

仕事や作品や国籍の多面性はともかく、それ以上にハーンの多面性の心髄は彼の内面にあると思われる。つまり彼の多面性の一番大切な部分は彼の趣向と思考のなかにある。彼は様々な形で美を愛したが、同様に「皮革製作所殺人事件」や『怪談』のようなおどろおどろしいものにも魅了された。ハーンのこの相反する特徴が統合されるのはただ一つ：読者を戦慄させ、感動させ、魅了して読者の心を開いて新しい考えや感覚に導くこと、であった。

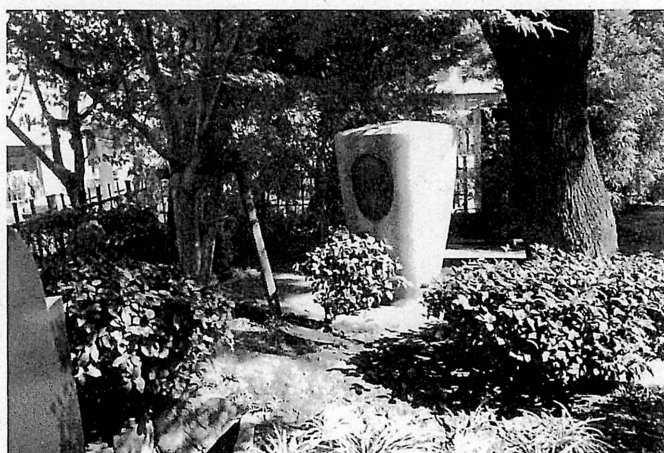
好奇心だけでなく思考のプロセスも多次的であった。ハーンは文明社会の中にあって科学が宗教にチャレンジする時代に生まれたが、彼は両者に心を開いていた。ハーンの心はこの両者の基底にあるものを理解しようとしていたのである。人々が東洋と西洋の間に相容れない宗教的相違をみるとき、ハーンは基本的には両者は同じで、同じ山の頂きに登るのに異なったルートでしかないことを見て取っていた。科学、宗教、哲学はすべて同じ謎を解くための答えを見出そうとするもので、すべての道は同じ場所に繋がっており、これらは人間存在の神秘や意味を理解したいと願う欲求の異なった側面でしかない、とするのである。ハーンの多面性はこのように二又に分かれた真実の根底にあるものの理解を可能にする。またハーンは他人が同じと見ているものの背後にある相違点を見出すことも出来たのであった。

このように考えてくるとハーンのもっとも重要な多面性の証は彼の思考プロセスの柔軟性にあると言えよう。その柔軟性とは彼のしなやかな心、判断を保留しておく力、種々の考え方の組み合わせを楽しむ力である。その結果としてハーンは一見異なった信念や体系の背後に隠されたある一致あるいは共通の価値観を見つけ出す稀に見る能力をもつに至った。科学と宗教、科学と文学、美と恐怖、東洋と西洋、生と死など——ハーンにとってはこれらは二つの別々のものではなく、同じものの両極なのである。頭と心の弾力性の高いラフカディオ・ハーンは真に多面的な精神をもつ多彩な人であった。ハーンの商品や思想を探ることによって私達は西洋に対する日本の解釈者として彼の多面性をもっと見つけ出すことができるに違いない。

(西川：略訳)

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1945年、アメリカ、ニュージャージー州生まれ。ペンシルヴァニア大学文学部英文学科卒。プリン・マー大学文学博士。元熊本大学教授。著書に『ロックの心』（大修館）、『停車場で』における芸術的技巧（恒文社）、『ラフカディオ・ハーンの英作文教育』（弦書房）など。



ハーン旧居の庭先