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著者	STARRS Roy
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Roy STARRS

University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand

During the fourteen years that Lafcadio Hearn alias Koizumi Yakumo lived in Japan (Meiji 23-37, 1890-1904), his attitude toward nationalism underwent a profound change. Before his arrival in Japan the only kind of nationalism evinced in his writings was in the gentle tradition of the old romantic Herderian school, a purely cultural nationalism—more specifically, a nostalgic attachment to “dying” folk cultures such as those of the American and Caribbean Creoles. But his encounter with Meiji Japan turned him into an aggressive modern state nationalist, to the extent even that he adopted the Japanese cause against China and Russia. How can we account for this dramatic transformation? On the one hand, it seems obvious that the atmosphere of rising nationalism in late Meiji Japan had a profound impact on Hearn. But I would also argue that Hearn’s pre-Japan immersion in the Herderian struggle to save or at least memorialize “dying cultures” laid the ground for his “conversion” to an aggressive form of modern state nationalism vis-à-vis Japan, which at that time, like the Creole nations writ large, seemed threatened with cultural extinction.

Keywords: LAFCADIO HEARN, KOIZUMI YAKUMO, MEIJI, J. G. HERDER, CULTURAL NATIONALISM, MODERN STATE NATIONALISM, FOLKLORE, NIHONJINRON

“Only man is in a contradiction with himself.”
—Johann Gottfried von Herder¹

Introduction

The centenary of Lafcadio Hearn’s death fell in 2004, and a number of conferences and other events to celebrate the man and his work were held worldwide, but especially in Japan and Ireland—although in Ireland the national newspaper referred to him as “the most fa-



Figure 1. Japanese stamp commemorating Lafcadio Hearn, 2004.

mous Irishman you've never heard of."² Even the Japanese Post Office entered the spirit of the occasion by issuing a commemorative stamp—a very attractive one, as can be seen in Figure 1. It shows Hearn in a demure, dreamy pose, appropriate for a writer of ghost stories, fairy tales, and romantic travelogues about exotic, faraway lands. But, as always with Hearn, things are not quite what they seem; the picture is a little deceptive. He always assumed this type of pose when photographed—either turning his face to the left or casting his eyes down—not because he was dreaming of faraway things but to hide a facial disfigurement: he had lost his left eye, possibly in a schoolyard fight, at the age of sixteen, and he was so sensitive about this that, even when he talked to people face-to-face, he would often cover his “dead eye” with his left hand.

The flower, I presume, despite its pinkish hue, is a shamrock, to represent his Irish background. At the bottom left of the stamp appears his Japanese name, Koizumi Yakumo 小泉八雲, above his English one. Koizumi was his wife's family name, and he chose the name Yakumo to represent Izumo, the area of Japan where he first lived and that he remained most fond of.

During his lifetime Hearn was relatively unknown in Japan but already a widely celebrated author in the West, not only for his books on Japan but for his colorful “regionalist” writings on the French West Indies and on the American cities of Cincinnati and New Orleans, as well as for his excellent translations of nineteenth-century French literature. Now the situation is more or less reversed—as the quote from the Irish newspaper indicates. In Japan his work has been accepted as an important part of the popular national literary canon, as the commemorative postage stamp shows, and there is a burgeoning industry of Hearn scholarship, led by the doyen of Japanese Hearn scholars, Hirakawa Sukehiro 平川祐弘, Emeritus Professor of the University of Tokyo, who has done more than anyone to ensure that Hearn's work receives serious scholarly attention.

The reasons for the precipitous decline of Hearn's reputation in the West are no doubt many and various, but if we look at the matter from a historical perspective I think we can summarize them as follows: in the period when especially the English-speaking world's attitude toward Japan took a negative turn—that is, in the 1930s and '40s—his view of Japan was regarded as naïve at best and as deceitfully propagandistic at worst. A further blow to his reputation was dealt by the post-colonial literary-critical movement that began in the late 1970s with Edward Said's book, *Orientalism*.³ Now Hearn, when his existence was acknowledged at all, was often dismissed as an arch-Orientalist, another exoticist like Pierre Loti—a

particularly unfair comparison, given that Loti's attitude toward Japan and his treatment of the Japanese was often openly contemptuous, especially in regard to women, whereas Hearn always treated Japan in general and Japanese women in particular with a gentlemanly respect and consideration.

But all this may have begun to change in the past few years: there have been several substantial and quite fascinating biographies written in English, a few scholarly essay collections, and selected anthologies of his writings.⁴ And, of course, travellers to Japan continue to discover the pleasure and insight to be had from his writings. In the present essay I have no intention of serving as an apologist for Hearn but, on the other hand, since much of what I say might sound fairly critical, I also don't want to give the impression that I'm dismissive of his work. Quite the contrary: I continue to take great pleasure in his writings on Japan, and I am still convinced that there is much to be learnt from them.

Hearn as Nationalist and Internationalist

It could be said of Lafcadio Hearn that he was an internationalist by birth and experience but a nationalist by conviction. Or, to put this another way, from the viewpoint of his personal history, he could be described as one of the first multinational or transnational "global citizens," a significant early example of a kind of person who is becoming increasingly common in the twenty-first century: in his particular case, a Greek-Anglo-Irish American deeply acquainted with French and Creole culture who ended up as an honored citizen of Japan. Also, of course, through the many popular books he wrote on Japan, he served as a kind of facilitator of international, cross-cultural understanding. And yet, paradoxically one would think, the worldview he espouses in these books seems to contradict the very internationalism that he himself so splendidly embodied.

To give one striking example: he includes as an appendix of *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*, his major theoretical work on Japan, a letter of advice to Japan from his intellectual hero, the nineteenth-century English philosopher of evolution, Herbert Spencer, in which Spencer warns the Japanese to keep "Americans and Europeans as much as possible at arm's length."⁵ Spencer even goes so far as to recommend that the Japanese government "peremptorily interdict marriages of Japanese with foreigners."⁶ Any child produced by such a union, he adds, will be "a bad hybrid."⁷ No doubt Spencer's advice was well-intentioned, but it was based on an unspoken and typically Victorian assumption of Western superiority: in his particular social-Darwinist terms, Japanese civilization was less evolved than its Western counterpart, and therefore, like a hothouse flower suddenly exposed to the outside world, it would inevitably wilt and wither if overexposed to the greater force and survival skill of the West. Its only chance of survival was to withdraw as far as possible back into the *sakoku* or national isolation it had imposed on itself in the Edo period. Needless to say, in the more than century since Spencer proffered his advice, Japan has proven time and again that she has nothing to fear from open competition with the West, and that, indeed, she is among the very fittest at surviving—if one wishes to view the world in those Darwinian and nationalist terms.

Of course, Spencer's racial views are not particularly surprising—in fact, they are quite typical of the age. But it does seem odd that Hearn, himself a “hybrid” or “mixed-race” Westerner (in those days, we must remember, Greeks were considered to be “Orientals” by West Europeans), for many years employed by the Japanese government, married to a Japanese, and the proud father of children from that union,⁸ should so heartily endorse Spencer's advice as the best way forward for Japan, and even express regret that his advice has not been followed



Figure 2: Hearn with his wife and first son in Matsue, 1891 (Photo courtesy of Toki Koizumi)

more closely—although he does note with approbation that “the law has wisely provided that the Japanese woman marrying a foreigner thereby becomes a foreigner, and that the children by such a marriage remain foreigners.”⁹ It certainly makes one wonder how a man could be so openly self-contradictory. At the same time, it also makes one wonder whether self-contradiction is not in some sense deeply characteristic of Hearn's thought and writing as a whole.

To take another major example: if the Japanese language and Japanese culture in general is so profoundly *sui generis* that it can be understood only by the Japanese themselves, as he often seemed to imply, then what business had he, as a foreigner, in claiming to write interpretations of even the “inner life,” the very *kokoro*, of the Japanese? In his position as a foreigner interpreting Japan, would he not have been better advised to emphasize those aspects of Japanese culture that are universally human and therefore recognizable even to a Greek-Anglo-Irish American such as himself? Before attempting to answer such questions, I think we must investigate more deeply the source of Hearn’s self-contradictions. And this source may be found, it seems to me, in the history of his changing “insider/outsider” relationship with nineteenth-century nations and nationalism.

Foreign-born both geographically and ethnically, and feeling himself to be the eternal outsider wherever he went—in England, Ireland, and America as much as in the more exotic locales where he lived—Hearn no doubt easily identified with the “outsiders” he often wrote about as a journalist, such as the mixed-race slum dwellers of Cincinnati and the mulatto Creoles of Louisiana and the Caribbean. His early commitment to a romantic, Herderian cultural nationalism that championed the right of these groups to autonomous cultural existence—a theme strongly present in his writings before Japan and often expressed in terms of his opposition to the homogenizing, culturally imperialist power of the modern nation-state—is easily understandable in these personal psychological terms, although it is also true that this emotional identification was augmented by a typically late-romantic appreciation of “exotic” peoples and cultures. Today, of course, such “exoticism” is highly suspect from a political point of view, often regarded as condescending if not racist. On the other hand, we should remember that Hearn’s picturesque word-sketches of the beauty of Afro-Caribbeans and their lifestyle, for instance, were published at a time when few Caucasian writers would have agreed that “black is beautiful.” Although undoubtedly one can find a note of nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxon condescension in some of his comments on the Creoles, one can also find many passages in which he observes them purely with an artist’s eye, with a genuine aesthetic pleasure.¹⁰

Paradoxically, Hearn’s outsider status in the West, coupled of course with his acute natural sensitivity to the attractions of Japanese culture, enabled him to attain a level of insider status in Japan that has been accorded to few if any foreigners either before or since. But this unaccustomed insider status came at a cost: his gentle, romantic Herderian cultural nationalism underwent a significant metamorphosis (or should we say transmogrification?), being “co-opted” by the very unromantic, far from gentle, culturally imperialist political nationalism of the modern Meiji state. This immediately raises another question: why did Hearn allow this to happen? An analysis of the changing nature of his nationalism, and of the forces that produced that change, should provide us with a clearer understanding of the issues or factors involved, even if it does not yield any final or definitive answers to the questions raised. My analysis here will be guided by three broad questions. Firstly, what was Hearn’s position on nationalism and related issues before he came to Japan? Secondly, what was the

political and cultural background of nationalism and related issues in late Meiji Japan during the fourteen years that Hearn lived there? Thirdly, in what way, if any, did Hearn's position on nationalism and related issues change during his years in Japan?

Hearn's Position on Nationalism before Japan

In the years preceding his arrival in Japan Hearn had already made a considerable reputation for himself as a "muckraking" journalist (i.e., a reporter of lurid crimes) and as a kind of popular ethnologist, a writer on the "exotic," "colorful," and "quaint" lifestyles of various peripheral or minority groups in North American society: most famously, the ethnically diverse workers and assorted criminal types of Cincinnati's "low-life" slums, and the white and colored Creoles of New Orleans and of the French West Indies. Hearn's writings on this latter group in particular are still valued as a significant contribution to the preservation of a unique culture that, in the late nineteenth century, was already threatened with extinction. His works on Creole cuisine and on six different varieties of Creole patois, *La Cuisine Créole* (1885) and *"Gombo Zhèbes": Little Dictionary of Creole Proverbs* (1885), have recently been described as "two landmark contributions to the study of Creole culture."¹¹ As an editorial writer for two New Orleans newspapers, the *Times-Democrat* and the *Daily City Item*, between 1877 and 1888 Hearn consistently and vociferously advocated what we would now call "minority rights." For instance, he was a bitter critic of the police force's often violent and unjust treatment of non-white citizens; he advocated aid to enable the emigration to Louisiana of Russian Jews desperate to escape the pogroms then raging in tsarist Russia; and, not surprisingly, he also urged the Louisiana state government to support the survival of the French language and Creole culture—or what he described as "their pleasant old-fashioned manner of existence"—arguing that the "good old customs need encouragement...they make life in New Orleans more agreeable for strangers."¹² According to S. Frederick Starr, a recent editor of Hearn's New Orleans writings, Hearn was "fascinated with so-called 'Creoles of color' because he detected in their daily life evidence of ancient folkways extending deep into the Caribbean past to France and to Africa."¹³ Starr also points out that Hearn's "infatuation" with Creole culture, and his concomitant feeling of alienation from modern Western industrial civilization, places him squarely within the nineteenth-century tradition of what we might call the romantic resistance to modernity.

Needless to say, one's form of nationalism depends very much on one's concept of what constitutes a "nation." My own country, Canada, has recently taken to calling its Indian and Inuit or Eskimo tribes "first nations," thus implying that they merit a degree of political and cultural sovereignty. When Hearn wrote about American or Caribbean Creoles he was writing about "nations" in this old-fashioned sense, as distinctive ethno-cultures. This was the sense favored by Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), the German philosopher/historian who is credited with coining the term "nationalism." In fact, the pre-Japan Hearn might be justly described as a cultural nationalist of the old Herderian school, as opposed to a modern nation-state or political nationalist.¹⁴ That is, he was a kind of gentle, nostalgic,

romantic nationalist, or what we might call today a devoted regionalist or folklorist. Certainly he was far from being a Greek, Anglo-Irish, or American nationalist in the modern sense of the word. Rather he was a celebrant of alternate, peripheral, minority cultures, cultures that, in the late nineteenth century, were already disappearing before the homogenizing, hegemonic power of the modern nation-states. Hearn valued the special character of each of these cultures, and certainly would have shared Herder's sentiment when he wrote: "What depth there is in the character of a single nation which, even after repeated and probing observation manages to evade the word that would capture it and render it recognizable enough for general comprehension and empathy."¹⁵ Hearn's own life, much of it spent immersed in unfamiliar cultures and in interpreting them to the world at large, was a living demonstration of Herder's exhortation to "penetrate deeply into this century, this region, this entire history, plunge yourself into it all and feel it all inside yourself—then only will you be in a position to understand; then only will you give up the idea of comparing everything, in general or in particular, with yourself. For it would be manifest stupidity to consider yourself to be the quintessence of all times and all peoples."¹⁶ But one might ask: who is this "you" who is able to immerse himself so deeply in other cultures and understand them from the inside? Herder almost seems to be arguing here for a general cultural equivalent of the English romantic poet John Keats' "negative capability"—a universal void-self that reflects all things innocently, like a mirror. But this would seem to contradict his *Volksgeist* ("folk soul") philosophy: if all cultures and peoples have a unique and inalienable soul, then how can any individual human self, conditioned by its own culture, really achieve an insider's knowledge of any culture other than its own? This is a question that would come to haunt all Herderians, including, as we shall see, Lafcadio Hearn.

As Isaiah Berlin, a very eloquent writer on Herder and his influence, has pointed out, Herder's philosophy of national cultures was formed in opposition to the French Enlightenment ideal of a universally valid human culture based on the supposed laws of reason. For Herder cultural diversity rather than universality was the ideal; every culture was the unique product of a particular time and place and had its own unique values that could not be judged by any universal laws or standards. As he writes in "Yet Another Philosophy of History": "The general, philosophical, philanthropical tone of our century wishes to extend 'our own ideal' of virtue and happiness to each distant nation, to even the remotest age in history. But can one such single ideal act as an arbiter praising or condemning other nations or periods, their customs and laws; can it remake them after its own image?"¹⁷ Or, as Berlin wittily puts it:

For Herder everything is delightful. He is delighted by Babylon and he is delighted by Assyria, he is delighted by India and he is delighted by Egypt. He thinks well of the Greeks, he thinks well of the Middle Ages, he thinks well of the 18th century, he thinks well of almost everything except the immediate environment of his own time and place. If there is anything which Herder dislikes it is the elimination of one culture by another. He does not like Julius Caesar because Julius Caesar trampled

on a lot of Asiatic cultures, and we shall now not know what the Cappadocians were really after. He does not like the Crusades, because the Crusades damaged the Byzantines, or the Arabs, and these cultures have every right to the richest and fullest self-expression, without the trampling feet of a lot of imperialist knights.¹⁸

Berlin is equally witty in sketching a portrait of someone who, knowingly or not, is one of Herder's descendants—and certainly we can easily recognize Hearn's features here:

[Herder] is the originator all those antiquarians who want natives to remain as native as possible, who like arts and crafts, who detest standardisation—everyone who likes the quaint, people who wish to preserve the most exquisite forms of old provincialism without the impingement on it of some hideous metropolitan uniformity. Herder is the father, the ancestor, of all those travellers, all those amateurs, who go round the world ferreting out all kinds of forgotten forms of life, delighting in everything that is peculiar, everything that is odd, everything that is native, everything that is untouched. In that sense he did feed the streams of human sentimentality to a very high degree.¹⁹

One is reminded by Berlin's last witticism that Hearn too, true to form as a stereotypical Herderian as defined by Berlin, also had a pronounced tendency to sentimentalize Japanese culture. One can see this clearly, to give just one example, in his *Kokoro* story, "At a Railway Station," which purports to depict an actual event Hearn himself witnessed: the remorse, even emotional breakdown, of a criminal when confronted by the young son of a man he had murdered—an episode that Hearn presents as proof of "that potential love of children which is so large a part of the soul of every Japanese."²⁰ Yuzo Ota (Ōta Yūzō 太田雄三) has demonstrated convincingly that this moving display of remorseful sentiment is a pure fabrication, and that, in the real incident (which Hearn did not personally witness but read about in a newspaper), the murderer expressed only a perfunctory and indirect apology, and not to the boy but to the victim's wife and mother. Judging by the original newspaper account, in fact, the murderer was not a sentimentalist with a soft spot for children—he was plainly the kind of calculating, cold-blooded killer that can be found among criminals everywhere.²¹ The fact that Hearn felt the need to sentimentalize the incident says much about his general approach to the representation of Japanese society and culture for a Western readership.

The Meiji Context of Hearn's Writings on Japan

Hearn arrived in Japan in 1890 and stayed there until his death in 1904. What was the socio-political context of this particular period in Japan? The last decade of the nineteenth century is generally characterized as a reactionary or traditionalist period which saw the creation of the modern version of Japanese political and cultural nationalism. The Meiji Constitution of 1889 and the Sino-Japanese war of 1895 were the two defining events of this decade, and, needless to say, both of these bolstered conservatism and nationalism. The Meiji Constitution and civil code aimed to create a state system that recognized family rather than

individual rights, and that defined the family as a traditional patriarchal system in which the husband/father was all-powerful, a microcosmic version of the emperor—and, indeed, his power was seen to derive entirely from the state and to be sanctioned by the state. In this sense the Meiji Constitution aimed to create an anti-modern state that was rooted in Japanese tradition and that would foster a society that was more disciplined, unified, and loyal to the state than were its Western rivals.

Thus, when Hearn arrived in Japan in 1890, the movement towards nationalism and a return to tradition was already in full swing. After the popular liberal democratic movements of the Meiji tens (1877-1887), which had led to peasant riots and other forms of social disorder, the Meiji twenties (1887-1897) saw a conservative counter-reaction. The consolidation of power of the naturally conservative oligarchy in government and industry was accompanied by a promotion of nationalism and traditionalism in the socio-cultural realm. The rapid pace of modernization since 1868 had produced social and psychological tensions that seemed to threaten the stability not only of society as whole (as in the case of the peasant riots) but of individual human minds. Some turned to Christianity or other foreign religions or ideologies for answers, but many educated Japanese began to call upon the moral and spiritual resources of their own cultural and religious traditions in order to try to resolve their existential anxieties. There was a revived interest in Zen and in Shinto, in the Japanese literary classics, as well as in many other aspects of traditional culture. It might also be said that, for many, Japan itself, the new reconstructed nation with the emperor on high as sacred father figure, became a kind of substitute religion—and, of course, the new national Shinto encouraged this trend. A Japanist Association (*Nippon-shugi kyōkai* 日本主義協会) was established in 1897—very much as if *Nippon-shugi* or Japanism were itself a new religio-political ideology.

In the background of Meiji nationalist thought, of course, there was always an intense sense of rivalry with the West: a famous nationalist writer of the day, Tokutomi Sohō 徳富蘇峰, for instance, argued that the Japanese had to become more nationalistic in order to defend themselves against the West. Ishikawa Takuboku 石川啄木 wrote of the “awakening of the nation as a result of the Sino-Japanese war.”²² Another influential figure, Takayama Chogyū 高山樗牛, one of the major nationalist ideologues of the day, argued that the Sino-Japanese war, despite the Japanese victory in that war, had, paradoxically, heightened Japan’s awareness of its precarious peripheral position on the edge of a continent that was a great battleground for imperial rivalries. As Carol Gluck has pointed out, in 1897 Takayama also claimed, along with Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎, another “leading proponent of Japanism,” that “the war had transformed the people’s understanding of the Rescript on Education and changed the spirit of loyalty and patriotism from empty theory and half belief into concrete ‘national consciousness.’” It had also enhanced national confidence and pride of empire at the expense of an age-old cultural respect for China.²³

Indeed, the Japanese of this time created their own powerful ideology of imperialism—powerful enough to convince not only themselves but also some other Asian and Western sympathizers and Japanophiles. We must remember that this was long before the Imperial

Army began its 1930s rampage across Asia—it was an age when even liberal opinion could be in favor of imperialism as a “liberating” or “civilizing” force. Many so-called pan-Asianists argued that it was Japan’s mission to expand its rule to the continent to establish a Pax Japonica that would bring peace, freedom, and modernization to the other, more backward peoples of Asia—a classic imperialist argument, of course, and, needless to say, one that is still very much with us today.²⁴ It is a sign of the times that even the Christian leader Uchimura Kanzō 内村鑑三 justified Japan’s invasion of Korea in 1895 on these “civilizing” grounds—though he would later change his mind after he saw more of the reality of what was happening on the ground.²⁵

In short, the period when Hearn lived in Japan was a period when aggressive modern state nationalism was at its height.

The Change in Hearn’s Nationalism

It is perhaps not entirely surprising, then, that Hearn too, as someone who was very sympathetic to Japan, became infected with what was, for him, a new type of nationalism.

In letters to his friends he joked about his position as a hireling of the Japanese state, and some writers have suggested that, because he was an employee of the Meiji government, he felt obliged to toe the official line in his public pronouncements about Japan—as if he became no more than a mouthpiece of government propaganda.²⁶ But I think there is far more to it than that because, as I have said, he was a nationalist of sorts—that is, a defender of threatened peoples and cultures—before even coming to Japan. Somewhat paradoxically, it was only because he was that kind of Herderian nationalist that he was susceptible to the appeal of the Japanese version—and only the Japanese version—of modern state nationalism.

And what kind of Japanese nationalist did Hearn become? As it turns out, a very mainstream kind of nationalist in the context of turn-of-the-century Japan. For instance, in 1891 Hozumi Yatsuka 穂積八束, who along with Inoue Tetsujirō was a leading theorist of so-called “familial-state nationalist thought,” wrote: “Our country is an ancestor-religion country, a family institution country. Authority, power, and law originate in the family.”²⁷ This could stand as a neat summary of a good part of Hearn’s message in *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*, written more than a decade later. In other words, despite his rather elementary level of literacy in the Japanese language, Hearn somehow managed to absorb the mainstream nationalist thought, ideology and discourse of late Meiji Japan—no doubt partly at least because he taught in government schools. There is very little in *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*, in fact, that would seem out of place in the works of the leading Japanese nationalist writers of the day—or even in a Meiji-government-approved textbook. Certainly all the basic ingredients are there: a “national morality” based on filial piety; a patriarchal family system in which the husband/father is all-powerful, a microcosmic version of the emperor; ancestor worship leading, through the emperor, to a kind of state worship; Japan as a country whose unique virtue derives from its divine provenance; this myth presented to the nation by the state as a new state religion, belief in which is mandatory—in short, the major

principles of nationalist thought as they took shape in late Meiji and as they would later be enshrined in two books that assumed great importance for the militarists of the 1930s and '40s, the *Kokutai no hongi* 国体の本義 (Principles of the National Polity) and the *Shinmin no michi* 臣民の道 (The Way of the Subject). This is not to say, of course, that Hearn's understanding of the major components of Japanese culture was complete or always accurate from a native point of view. His emphasis on the Gothic, "ghostly" aspects of Shinto, for instance, has been questioned by Japanese scholars who have suggested that it has more to do with Irish than with Japanese mythology and folk tradition.²⁸

It might be added that Hearn's "revitalization" of Japanese folktales by an imaginative rewriting of them to appeal to modern taste—perhaps his greatest achievement as a creative writer—was also very much in the nationalist spirit of the day. As with earlier German romantic nationalists such as the Grimm brothers, turn-of-the-century Japanese romantic nationalists such as Shimazaki Tōson 島崎藤村 had begun to discover in folktales a popular expression of the "national soul." In a poetic manifesto written in 1904, the year of Hearn's death, Tōson proclaimed that: "Youthful imagination has awoken from its long slumber and adorns itself with the words of the common folk! Legends have come back to life!"²⁹

But it should also be pointed out that nationalism was not the only popular intellectual current in Hearn's Japan: indeed, the *native* Japanese nationalist writers, if I might call them that to distinguish them from Hearn, were very much aware, in shaping their new ideological construct of Japan, of being in contention with what they regarded as antithetical movements, such as socialism, Christianity, and Nietzschean individualism, which were also on the rise in late Meiji Japan. Was Hearn naively unaware of these ideological battles in the Japanese society that surrounded him? Not entirely, I suspect, but, judging from his writings, he would have agreed with his fellow nationalists that such Western-derived philosophies, ideologies and religions were fundamentally incompatible with Japanese culture and therefore posed a danger to its survival. (Christianity, for instance, he described with some hyperbole as "excepting, perhaps, the division of the imperial house against itself in the twelfth century, the greatest danger that ever threatened Japanese national integrity. . . ." ³⁰ A greater danger than even the Mongol invasions!?) Thus he chose to side with the conservatives or, it could be said, the reactionaries of the Meiji political establishment.

What was it about Japan—as opposed to, say, Ireland, England or America—that changed Hearn from an old-fashioned romantic Herderian nationalist into a more aggressive or militant modern state nationalist? On the one hand, Japan's culture seemed threatened with extinction—he agreed with Spencer that this was the threat posed by the West. On the other hand, in contrast to the Creoles and the Afro-Caribbeans he had written about earlier with such nostalgia—so that he was often described in the American media as an "elegist of dying cultures"—the Japanese were just strong enough to have a chance of escaping the fate of other non-Western peoples. (We must remember the extraordinary fact that, of all non-Western nations at that time, Japan alone seemed capable of preserving its independence.) In other words, in Japan he found a non-Western civilization that actually seemed to have a chance of surviving, but, in his view, it could survive only by outdoing the West

as an imperialist nation-state. Needless to say, this was also the view of many of his Japanese contemporaries.

There is another possibility that I can only briefly adumbrate here, a more personally psychological explanation for Hearn's passionate attraction to Japan and other non-Anglo nations and cultures: as has been suggested by some of his biographers, it could be seen in classic Oedipal terms as a rejection of the world and values of his Anglo-Saxon father, who had cruelly rejected and abandoned him when he was still a boy, and as a concomitant search for and embrace of the "exotic world" of his lost Greek mother. Though this theory may now seem too patly Freudian, it is actually lent credence by one of Hearn's favorite themes: that Japan is a kind of ancient Greece in modern form. Waxing patriotic about his adopted nation's military successes over Russia in 1904, for instance, he claimed that: "The faith and courage which helped the Greeks to repel the Persian invasion were of precisely the same quality as that religious heroism which now helps the Japanese to challenge the power of Russia."³¹ Indeed, there are so many such associations of Japan with Greece in Hearn's last book, *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*, that one cannot help but suspect that these enabled him to feel that he was in some sense going home to his mother's country in embracing Japan—although, at the same time, he might be turning his back on his father's country.

Hearn's Final Manifesto as a Japanese Nationalist

To return now to the apparent paradox we started with, the seemingly contradictory coexistence of nationalism and internationalism in Hearn's life and thought, we might first question whether our sense of paradox about this is not, in fact, anachronistic. As Hans Kohn has pointed out, the present-day conviction that nationalism and internationalism are antithetical is actually of fairly recent historical origin:

The "fathers" of modern nationalism, Jean Jacques Rousseau and Johann Gottfried von Herder, were at the same time cosmopolitans or internationalists. Deeply attached to their *patrie*, or their native language and tradition, and to their *amour de la patrie*, they regarded at the same time the whole of mankind as a greater and higher fatherland and thus were attached also to *l'amour de la liberté* and *de la paix*.³²

Early nationalist movements, whether inspired by the American and French revolutions or by German romanticism, had as their primary political goal the liberation of peoples from oppressive rule—the rule either of their own king or of some foreign imperialist power. Nationalism could thus be presented by the post-1789 revolutionaries as an international movement that united all peoples into a common humanity fighting against tyranny. But, as Kohn points out further: "The concept of nationalism as it changed between 1840 and 1890 is striking: by 1890 nationalism ceased to be regarded as a democratic-revolutionary movement of the people; it had become a predominantly conservative or reactionary movement, frequently representing the upper classes against the people, and it was strongly opposed to all internationalism. Its ideal was, by the end of the century, an exclusive, self-centered, closed

society.”³³ Any student of Japanese history will immediately be struck by the aptness of Kohn’s words in the nineteenth century Japanese context, except that in Japan the transformation of open, “democratic” nationalism into closed, elitist, arch-conservative nationalism occurred in a much shorter time-span than in Europe: between about 1870 and 1890.

1890, we might recall, was precisely the year Hearn arrived in Japan. And we can now see that the transformation in his nationalism after his encounter with Japan mirrored, on a personal, microcosmic scale, the transformation that occurred in nineteenth-century nationalism at large. In Hearn’s case too, there was originally no contradiction between his nationalism and his internationalism. As already mentioned, his early nationalism, being of the romantic Herderian school, may in fact be seen as a natural product of his international origins. As an “outsider” by birth and life history—that is, as someone with a stake in several different cultures but a secure home in none of them—it was quite natural for Hearn to identify with peripheral or minority cultures and to espouse their right to their own autonomous existence and identity. Hearn, in fact, quite accurately fits the profile of that type of cultural nationalist who suffers from what Judson Lyon calls the “Herder syndrome”: a capable, highly literate man who feels himself to be an outsider, excluded or alienated, for one reason or another, from the elite power centers of his society.³⁴

In a suggestive cross-cultural comparison of three such historical figures—Herder himself, the Chinese cultural nationalist Wang T’ao 王韜 (1828-1897) and the Liberian pan-Africanist Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912)—Lyon shows how each of them responded to their sense of isolation and powerlessness by identifying themselves with the underprivileged people at large and by taking on the role of spokesman for the “authentic cultural traditions” of the people—as opposed to the Frenchified culture of the Prussian court in the case of Herder, the Westernized culture of the Chinese elite in the case of Wang, and the Americanized culture of the Liberian elite in the case of Blyden. By reviving or inventing national traditions in this way, each of these writers exerted a profound influence on the shaping of an “imagined community,” which, as Benedict Anderson has famously argued, was the first necessary stage in laying the foundation of the modern nation-state.³⁵ In other words, their cultural nationalism, born out of their sense of not belonging, created a new, less elitist, more democratic sense of belonging that formed, in ways none of these men anticipated or desired, the underlying dynamic of modern political nationalism.

If we apply this model briefly to the Japanese historical context, certainly we could argue that many of the *kokugakusha* 国学者, the Tokugawa cultural nationalists who created the prototypical version of the ideology on which the Meiji nation-state was ultimately built, perfectly fit the “Herder syndrome” profile: feeling alienated from the sinified neo-Confucian power structure of the Tokugawa regime, they sought to revive—or, if necessary, invent—a “purely Japanese” moral/aesthetic value system that would reform Japanese society from top to bottom.

But, to return to Hearn, the temptation to transform or “transmogrify” was inherent in his nationalism as it was in the Herderian cultural nationalism of Europe at large. Where did that temptation come from? In short, although Herder himself always insisted on the

equal value and equal right to independent existence and self-expression of all cultures, his concomitant insistence on the uniqueness and necessary exclusivity of those cultures, and thus on a kind of cultural apartheid, quite easily led to a far less tolerant attitude among his disciples. To less generous and less open minds, “unique” and “exclusive” easily came to mean “superior” and “dominant,” and all manner of aggression toward neighboring cultures, as well as terrible domestic attempts at “ethnic cleansing,” were justified in the name of defending the Herderian ideal of a pure, essentialist *Volksgeist*. All this occurred, of course, after the politicization of Herderian cultural nationalism (a move Herder himself had never advocated; he always proudly declared himself to be apolitical); that is, after a particular culture came to be “represented” by a particular nation-state and, worse yet, by a particular ethnicity. We are all familiar with the horrors of the resultant historical process that began in central, eastern, and southern Europe in the latter half of the nineteenth century and that was still causing mayhem in the Balkans as recently as the 1990s: the conversion of a tolerant cultural nationalism into an aggressive political nationalism intolerant of the claims to self-realization, or even simple existence, of other nations and cultures.

How then did Hearn’s cultural nationalism become “politicized” in this sense? How did the historical transformation that was occurring in the late nineteenth-century world at large come to be reenacted in Hearn’s own personal intellectual history? Obviously not in any “conventional” way, since Hearn was no “conventional” nationalist but an unusual kind of “convert” to the political nationalism of a country on the opposite side of the globe to where he was born. The crucial difference between Hearn and the other cultural nationalist “founders” of “imagined communities,” of course, was that, although all were outsiders of sorts, Hearn was far more radically an outsider than any of the others—he had absolutely no claim to being a “native.” Herder was, after all, a German, Wang a Chinese, the Tokugawa national scholars were Japanese, and the pan-Africanist Blyden, although not born in Africa, was at least of African descent. Indeed, as noted above, this would seem to be a fundamental requirement, a *sine qua non*, according to Herderian cultural nationalist theory itself: surely one must be a native in order to have an insider’s understanding of the *Volksgeist*? But, as we also saw, Herder himself seemed to think otherwise. Indeed, this apparent paradox might be called the “Herderian problematic”—a belief in the possibility of profound cross-cultural understanding seemingly contradicted by an equal belief in the essential difference and uniqueness of each culture, including, presumably, the culture that conditions the mind of the person trying to understand another culture. To put this another way: for the universalist, internationalist Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century, it was easy to argue optimistically about the possibility of universal human understanding and universal agreement on common “rational” values; but for romantic nationalist thinkers like Herder it was hard to do so without seeming to contradict their own philosophy of culture. Hearn’s “self-contradictions” too must be seen within this larger intellectual-historical context. And this contradictoriness extends also to his readers: the fact is that he has been accepted as a great interpreter of Japan not only in the West but in Japan itself, in a culture that has long had a passionate belief in Herderian cultural nationalism (albeit under another name): that is, in its own absolutely

unique and exclusive *Volksgeist*. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that the foreign-born Hearn—or, at least, his nativized persona, Koizumi Yakumo—is one of the principal fathers of nihonjinron, the national discourse, now incalculably voluminous, devoted to an analysis of the unique qualities of the “Japanese soul.”

Foreigner or not, outsider or insider, the Herderian cultural nationalist Hearn developed such a strong attachment to Japan that he came to identify deeply with its struggle to survive and prosper in the modern world. For the first time in his life, he found himself lending intellectual and emotional support to a modern nation-state. But this new-found state nationalism did not involve a clean break with his erstwhile cultural nationalism; rather his cultural nationalism was gradually politicized. Because Hearn’s cultural nationalism, like that of all Herderians, was essentially traditionalist and conservative, he found much that appealed to him in the post-1889 nationalist ideology of the Meiji nation-state, and thus was quite easily tempted into full support of that state, its ideology, and its domestic and international policies. But, in his case as in so many others, the combination of cultural with political nationalism turned out to be a dangerous one—morally and psychologically if not physically. Indeed, a self-contradictory and irreconcilable opposition now opened up between his internationalism and his nationalism. The most obvious and unsavory manifestation of this was his wholehearted support for the aggressive imperialistic wars Japan initiated against China in 1894 and Russia in 1904.

But, to attempt a clearer understanding of the interaction between cultural and political nationalism in Hearn’s late thought, I would like now to more closely analyze the arguments of his final book, *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*. Published in 1904, at the end of his fourteen-year stay in the country—and, of course, in the year of his death—this work is quite different to any of Hearn’s previous Japan-centered books. Neither a picturesque travelogue like *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* (1894) nor a collection of retold stories like *Kokoro: Hints and Echoes of Japanese Inner Life* (1896), this is Hearn’s only book-length attempt at a scholarly, purely non-fictional study of Japan, and at a general overview of Japanese history and culture. Thus it may be regarded as the summation of everything he thought and felt about his adopted country, the most explicit statement of his views on Japan’s past as well as on its present and even future. Indeed, the work could be described, without exaggeration, as Hearn’s final manifesto as a Japanese nationalist.

Although the words “nationalism” and “nationalist” do not appear anywhere in the book (these words were not as current a century ago as they are today), the word “national” is omnipresent, and Herderian concepts such as “national character,” “national beliefs,” “national moral experience,” “national mythology,” as well as related essentialist ethno-national concepts such as the “Japanese soul,” “the heart of a nation,” “the old moral discipline of the race,” “race-feeling,” “race-experience,” “the race-genius,” “the unconscious heroism of the race,” “national or race-instinct,” and “The Soul of Old Japan” (as a translation of *Yamato-damashii* 大和魂), are frequently used and, indeed, are central to Hearn’s argument. His commitment to such essentialist concepts of nationality leads him, like many later writers

of nihonjinron, to continually emphasize—and no doubt over-emphasize—the difference between Japanese culture and psychology and that of the West. At one point, for instance, he writes:

Something of race-sentiment there certainly is; it were impossible that there should not be. No inexperienced foreigner can converse for one half hour with any Japanese—at least with any Japanese who has not sojourned abroad—and avoid saying something that jars upon Japanese good taste or sentiment; and few—perhaps, none—among untravelled Japanese can maintain a brief conversation in any European tongue without making some startling impression upon the foreign listener. Sympathetic understanding, between minds so differently constructed, is next to impossible.³⁶

But it is also important to note the appearance in this last Hearn work of post-Herderian concepts of the nation too—that is, concepts predicated on a modern political rather than on a traditional ethno-cultural idea of the nation—in phrases such as “national duty,” “the national cult,” “militant state,” “national danger,” “hour of national peril,” “the future international struggle,” “the national attitude toward foreign policy and foreign pressure.” The use of such phrases is clear proof that Hearn, in his new identity as a Japanese, has finally felt himself obliged to join the early twentieth-century world of aggressively competitive nation-states each with their own brand of modern political nationalism. No more “sentimental mooning” over “dying cultures” or oppressed minorities; the erstwhile romantic Herderian has joined the modern world with a vengeance and become a nation-state nationalist and a cheerleader for his adopted country as it enters the ruthless game of turn-of-the-century international power politics with a double salvo: the war of 1894-1895 against China and of 1904-1905 against Russia.

Much of the conservative tone and message of the book is neatly encapsulated in the epigraph from Walter Bagehot that Hearn places at its beginning: “Perhaps all very marked national characters can be traced back to a time of rigid and pervading discipline.”³⁷ In the case of Japan, this “rigid and pervading discipline” was provided by the severe militaristic rule of the Tokugawa samurai class. Although Hearn admits that the exacting laws of that age “must appear to modern minds tyrannical; and some of the regulations seem to us strangely cruel,” nonetheless “the ethical effects of this iron discipline were unquestionably excellent.”³⁸ After noting with some approbation the claims of famous *kokugaku* (nativist) scholars such as Kamo no Mabuchi 賀茂真淵 (1697–1769) and Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801) that the Japanese “national character,” because of the divine origins of the race, was uniquely virtuous—especially in contrast to the Chinese—Hearn writes:

Though the sociologist may smile at these declarations of moral superiority (especially as based on the assumption that the race had been better in primeval times, when yet fresh from the hands of the gods), there was in them a grain of truth. When Mabuchi and Motowori wrote, the nation had been long subjected to a

discipline of almost incredible minuteness in detail, and of extraordinary rigour in application. And this discipline had actually brought into existence a wonderful average of character,—a character of surprising patience, unselfishness, honesty, kindness, and docility combined with high courage.³⁹

And yet, somewhat contradictorily, Hearn also seems to agree with the national scholars in assigning a central place to the native religious tradition of Shinto in shaping the Japanese national character—as opposed to Tokugawa law, which was largely inspired by neo-Confucianism and therefore Chinese in origin:

[T]he influence of Shinto accomplished wonderful things,—evolved a national type of character worthy, in many ways, of earnest admiration. The ethical sentiment developed in that character differed widely from our own; but it was exactly adapted to the social requirements. For this national type of moral character was invented the name Yamato-damashi [sic] (or Yamato-gokoro),—the Soul of Yamato (or Heart of Yamato),—the appellation of the old province of Yamato, seat of the early emperors, being figuratively used for the entire country. We might correctly, though less literally, interpret the expression Yamato-damashi as “The Soul of Old Japan.”

It was in reference to this “Soul of Old Japan” that the great Shinto scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries put forth their bold assertion that conscience alone was a sufficient ethical guide. They declared the high quality of the Japanese conscience a proof of the divine origin of the race.⁴⁰

But obviously one might ask: if the Japanese were naturally virtuous children of the gods, then why did they need the severe neo-Confucian Tokugawa legal system to shape their “national character?” Hearn does not directly address this question or confront this apparent contradiction in his thinking, but, judging from other of his strongly-expressed views in this book, he might well have argued that the severe laws were necessary to “purify” the Japanese and return them to their “original nature” after about a century (1540s-1630s) of “cultural corruption” by Christianity!

If Hearn has one supreme *bête noir* as a Japanese nationalist, one enemy he regards as more threatening than any other, it is not, as one might expect, Russia or China or any of the other potential opponents of Meiji Japan in warfare; it is Christianity. I have already quoted his rather hyperbolic claim that Christianity was “the greatest danger that ever threatened Japanese national integrity.” In this, again, we can see evidence of his continuing Herderianism: since culture remained for him the supreme value, a cultural threat weighed heavier than, say, a military or political threat. And because he was convinced of the central role of religion in the shaping and preserving of cultural identity (“the value of a religion, from the sociological standpoint, lies in its conservatism”⁴¹), he was equally convinced of the dangers of foreign religious influence. His Herderianism rises to passionate heights when he inveighs against the evils of Christian influence in Japan (little wonder that the Christian mis-

sionaries of his day viewed him with a jaundiced eye, as if he were Judas himself!) Although he sympathizes with the brave Japanese martyrs, he pours scorn on the Spanish and Portuguese missionaries, some of whom apostatized, lacking the courage of their martyred converts:

Yet this religion, for which thousands vainly died, had brought to Japan nothing but evil disorders, persecutions, revolts, political troubles, and war. Even those virtues of the people which had been evolved at unutterable cost for the protection and conservation of society,—their self-denial, their faith, their loyalty, their constancy and courage,—were by this black creed distorted, diverted, and transformed into forces directed to the destruction of that society.... Well may we pity the victims of this pitiless faith, and justly admire their useless courage: yet who can regret that their cause was lost? . . . Viewed from another standpoint than that of religious bias, and simply judged by its results, the Jesuit effort to Christianize Japan must be regarded as a crime against humanity, a labour of devastation, a calamity comparable only,—by reason of the misery and destruction which it wrought,—to an earthquake, a tidal-wave, a volcanic eruption.⁴²

Thus, for Hearn as Herderian, the Tokugawa suppression of Christianity, though ruthless and cruel, was ultimately justifiable on cultural grounds:

Neither the artist nor the sociologist, at least, can regret the failure of the missions. Their extirpation, which enabled Japanese society to evolve to its type-limit, preserved for modern eyes the marvellous world of Japanese art, and the yet more marvellous world of its traditions, beliefs, and customs. Roman Catholicism, triumphant, would have swept all this out of existence.⁴³

Especially, again, because of the religious inspiration of so much art and culture, Hearn argues that the exclusivist religion of Christianity would have found it necessary to extirpate not only the native religion but also the native art and culture. But, fortunately from his perspective, the great early modern Japanese nation-builders were also Herderians of sorts, especially Tokugawa Ieyasu, whom Hearn calls “one of the shrewdest, and also one of the most humane statesmen that ever lived”:⁴⁴

Why Iyeyasu should have termed [Christianity] a “false and corrupt religion,” both in his *Legacy* and elsewhere, remains to be considered. From the Far-Eastern point of view he could scarcely have judged it otherwise, after an impartial investigation. It was essentially opposed to all the beliefs and traditions upon which Japanese society had been founded. The Japanese State was an aggregate of religious communities, with a God-King at its head;—the customs of all these communities had the force of religious laws, and ethics were identified with obedience to custom; filial piety was the basis of social order, and loyalty itself was derived from filial piety. But this Western creed, which taught that a husband should leave his parents and cleave to his wife, held filial piety to be at best an inferior virtue. It proclaimed that duty

to parents, lords, and rulers remained duty only when obedience involved no action opposed to Roman teaching, and that the supreme duty of obedience was not to the Heavenly Sovereign at Kyoto, but to the Pope at Rome. Had not the Gods and the Buddhas been called devils by these missionaries from Portugal and Spain? Assuredly such doctrines were subversive, no matter how astutely they might be interpreted by their apologists.⁴⁵

And Hearn quotes with approval the fifty-second article of Ieyasu's "Legacy," in which the first Tokugawa shogun declares that a Japanese must owe his first loyalty to Shinto rather than to any foreign religion:

"My body, and the bodies of others, being born in the Empire of the Gods, to accept unreservedly the teachings of other countries,—such as Confucian, Buddhist, or Taoist doctrines,—and to apply one's whole and undivided attention to them, would be, in short, to desert one's own master, and transfer one's loyalty to another. Is not this to forget the origin of one's being?"⁴⁶

Indeed, it could well be said that in some important respects Tokugawa Japan was a model Herderian state, not only isolationist but also decentralized: that is, not only did it seek political/cultural autonomy for the country as a whole by its policy of "national seclusion" (*sakoku* 鎖国), but also, domestically, it allowed a remarkably high degree of local political/cultural autonomy for its numerous and diverse provinces, villages, and social classes. As David Howell has pointed out in a recent comparative study of Tokugawa and Meiji societies, the Tokugawa state exercised far less control over the everyday lives of its subjects than did its modern counterpart. The new Meiji nation-state, argues Howell, necessarily sought for a far more absolute control over the lives of its citizens, even to the extent of controlling their thoughts: "With the development of schools, the modern military, and the modern imperial institution, the state turned its attention from the active policing of physical appearance to problems of moral suasion and outright indoctrination: this project . . . was central to the creation of Western-style modernity in Japan."⁴⁷

Although the achievement of "modernity" in some sense was undoubtedly the Meiji state's ultimate goal, the extent to which this was a "Western-style modernity" is actually open to argument. The irony or paradox is that, central to the project of "moral suasion" and national "indoctrination" that Howell mentions, was an arch-conservative ideology that favored a revival or "reinvention" of court Shinto and the emperor system as a means of transforming Japan into a unified, highly centralized modern nation-state. Ironical and paradoxical as this use of "ancient tradition" as an ideological catalyst for "modern transformation" might seem, the fact is, of course, that it worked, and worked very well indeed—at least until the end of the Meiji period in 1912.

Not surprisingly, in *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*, Hearn expresses his complete approbation for this tradition-based approach to modernity, for this Meiji revival or reinvention of "national Shinto" and the emperor system and for all that it implies. He lauds Shinto

as “the Religion of the Fatherland, a religion of heroes and patriots”⁴⁸ (obviously meaning Meiji national Shinto), and claims that: “Shinto remained all the while so very much alive that it was able not only to dispossess its rival [Buddhism] at last, but to save the country from foreign domination.”⁴⁹ Not only Christianity, then, but Buddhism and all other things “foreign” are ultimately anathema to the Herderian cultural purist. Harking back again to the Tokugawa nativist scholars, Hearn writes:

Three among these—the greatest scholars that Japan ever produced—especially prepared the way, by their intellectual labours, for the abolition of the Shogunate. They were Shinto scholars; and they represented the not unnatural reaction of native conservatism against the long tyranny of alien ideas and alien beliefs,—against the literature and philosophy and bureaucracy of China,—against the preponderant influence upon education of the foreign religion of Buddhism. To all this they opposed the old native literature of Japan, the ancient poetry, the ancient cult, the early traditions and rites of Shinto. The names of these three remarkable men were Mabuchi (1697-1769), Motowori (1730-1801), and Hirata (1776-1843). Their efforts actually resulted in the disestablishment of Buddhism, and in the great Shinto revival of 1871.⁵⁰

. . . The study of the ancient records, the study of Japanese literature, the study of the early political and religious conditions, naturally led men to consider the history of those foreign literary influences which had well-nigh stifled native learning, and to consider also the history of the foreign creed which had overwhelmed the religion of the ancestral gods. Chinese ethics, Chinese ceremonial, and Chinese Buddhism had reduced the ancient faith to the state of a minor belief—almost to the state of a superstition. “The Shinto gods,” exclaimed one of the scholars of the new school, “have become the servants of the Buddhas!” But those Shinto gods were the ancestors of the race,—the fathers of its emperors and princes,—and their degradation could not but involve the degradation of the imperial tradition.⁵¹

So much then for more than a thousand years of Japanese borrowings from the rich treasure-store of Chinese civilization, and for all of the immense cultural benefits Japan gained from these! In this dismissive attitude toward China, of course, Hearn is very much a man of his age—or, more precisely, a post-1895 Japanese nationalist. As Donald Keene has shown, the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 caused a catastrophic downturn in China’s status in Japan, and a resultant contempt towards everything Chinese that pervaded the whole of Japanese society and culture.⁵² At any rate, Hearn seems determined to adopt a late Meiji nationalist view of the Meiji Restoration and of all that followed, putting Shinto and the emperor system at the core of its historical meaning:

In 1867 [sic] the entire administration was reorganized; the supreme power, both military and civil, being restored to the Mikado. Soon afterward the Shinto cult,

officially revived in its primal simplicity, was declared the Religion of State; and Buddhism was disendowed. Thus the Empire was reestablished upon the ancient lines. . . .⁵³

[W]hen Japan at last found herself face to face with the unexpected peril of Western aggression, the abolition of the daimiates was felt to be a matter of paramount importance. The supreme danger required that the social units should be fused into one coherent mass, capable of uniform action,—that the clan and tribal groupings should be permanently dissolved,—that all authority should immediately be centred in the representative of the national religion,—that the duty of obedience to the Heavenly Sovereign should replace, at once and forever, the feudal duty of obedience to the territorial lord. The religion of loyalty, evolved by a thousand years of war, could not be cast away—properly utilized, it would prove a national heritage of incalculable worth,—a moral power capable of miracles if directed by one wise will to a single wise end. Destroyed by reconstruction it could not be; but it could be diverted and transformed. Diverted, therefore, to nobler ends—expanded to larger needs,—it became the new national sentiment of trust and duty: the modern sense of patriotism. What wonders it has wrought, within the space of thirty years, the world is now obliged to confess: what more it may be able to accomplish remains to be seen. One thing at least is certain,—that the future of Japan must depend upon the maintenance of this new religion of loyalty. . . .⁵⁴

Hearn even explicitly argues against the “constructed” or “top-down” view of the genesis of the “Shinto revival”:

To assert that the Shinto revival signified no more than a stroke of policy imagined by a group of statesmen, is to ignore all the antecedents of the event. No such change could have been wrought by mere decree had not the national sentiment welcomed it.⁵⁵

Hearn’s nativism, conservatism, and belief in the continuing value of tradition extends beyond Shinto to every other area of Japanese society and culture, as is neatly summed up by him in the following statement of principle:

Where Japan has remained true to her old moral ideals she has done nobly and well: where she has needlessly departed from them, sorrow and trouble have been the natural consequences.⁵⁶

In the social realm, this means, as mentioned earlier, that he defends the paternalistic and patriarchal values and practices that the Meiji government had recently enshrined in its 1889 Constitution:

The patriarchal conditions . . . helped to make existence easy and happy. Only from a modern point of view is it possible to criticise them. The worst that can be said

about them is that their moral value was chiefly conservative, and that they tended to repress effort in new directions. But where they still endure, Japanese life keeps something of its ancient charm; and where they have disappeared, that charm has vanished forever.⁵⁷

Finally, Hearn's impassioned defense of everything he sees as "Japanese tradition" extends also to the more aggressive side of the culture, to the sword as well as the chrysanthemum. Indeed, looking from within the turn-of-the-century context of great power imperial rivalries, he advocates a revival of martial traditions, and thereby provides a fine justification, if ever one were needed, for the Japanese militarism that was then on the rise:

Old Japan came nearer to the achievement of the highest moral ideal than our far more evolved societies can hope to do for many a hundred years. And but for those ten centuries of war which followed upon the rise of the military power, the ethical end to which all social discipline tended might have been much more closely approached. Yet if the better side of this human nature had been further developed at the cost of darker and sterner qualities, the consequence might have proved unfortunate for the nation. No people so ruled by altruism as to lose its capacities for aggression and cunning could hold their own, in the present state of the world, against races hardened by the discipline of competition as well as by the discipline of war. The future Japan must rely upon the least amiable qualities of her character for success in the universal struggle; and she will need to develop them strongly.⁵⁸

And sure enough, to drive his point home further, Hearn fairly bursts with patriotic pride as he describes Japan's performance to date (he did not live to witness the final victory) in the Russo-Japanese War, which, he makes clear, has more to do with "Japanese spirit," the superior moral qualities of the Japanese national character, particularly as shaped by Shinto, than with superior weapons or military strategy:

How strongly she has been able to develop [her "capacities for aggression and cunning"] in one direction, the present war with Russia bears startling witness. But it is certainly to the long discipline of the past that she owes the moral strength behind this unexpected display of aggressive power. . . . The veritable strength of Japan still lies in the moral nature of her common people,—her farmers and fishers, artisans and labourers,—the patient quiet folk one sees toiling in the rice-fields, or occupied with the humblest of crafts and callings in city by-ways. All the unconscious heroism of the race is in these, and all its splendid courage,—a courage that does not mean indifference to life, but the desire to sacrifice life at the bidding of the Imperial Master who raises the rank of the dead. From the thousands of young men now being summoned to the war, one hears no expression of hope to return to their homes with glory;—the common wish uttered is only to win remembrance at the Shokonsha—that "Spirit-Invoking Temple," where the souls of all who die for Emperor and fatherland are believed to gather. At no time was the ancient faith

stronger than in this hour of struggle; and Russian power will have very much more to fear from that faith than from repeating rifles or Whitehead torpedoes. Shinto, as a religion of patriotism, is a force that should suffice, if permitted fair-play, to affect not only the destinies of the whole Far East, but the future of civilization.... And the qualities especially developed by it are just those qualities which have startled Russia, and may yet cause her many a painful surprise. She has discovered alarming force where she imagined childish weakness; she has encountered heroism where she expected to find timidity and helplessness.⁵⁹

Although he expresses a conventional regret over “this terrible war,” Hearn also goes so far as to suggest that the war may do Japan some good by reviving its old martial spirit and by serving the cause of conservatism and traditionalism in general:

Yet, in the extraordinary case of this extraordinary people, it is possible that the social effects of the contest will prove to some degree beneficial. Prior to hostilities, there had been a visible tendency to the premature dissolution of institutions founded upon centuries of experience,—a serious likelihood of moral disintegration. . . . A war for independence,—a war that obliges the race to stake its all upon the issue,—must bring about a tightening of the old social bonds, a strong quickening of the ancient sentiments of loyalty and duty, a reinforcement of conservatism. . . . Before the Russian menace, the Soul of Yamato revives again. Out of the contest Japan will come, if successful, morally stronger than before; and a new sense of self-confidence, a new spirit of independence, might then reveal itself in the national attitude toward foreign policy and foreign pressure.⁶⁰

If these hawkish sentiments seem incongruous in the erstwhile Herderian romantic, the gentle singer of folk songs and defender of oppressed and threatened minorities, then his subsequent embrace of late nineteenth-century social Darwinism must come as a hair-raising shock to our postmodern sensibilities:

Needless to say that the aggressions of race upon race are fully in accord with the universal law of struggle,—that perpetual struggle in which only the more capable survive. Inferior races must become subservient to higher races, or disappear before them; and ancient types of civilization, too rigid for progress, must yield to the pressure of more efficient and more complex civilizations. The law is pitiless and plain: its operations may be mercifully modified, but never prevented, by humane consideration.⁶¹

If any final proof were needed of the radical transformation of Hearn’s nationalism by Japan, then this is certainly it. It is almost as if, like the gentle socialist pigs in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, who turn into ruthless fascist tyrants once they gain power, Hearn was willing to jettison all his previous anti-establishment Herderian ideals and his advocacy of the right to survival of minority cultures once he had found a powerful nation-state he could identify

with. But surely there is more to it than that? The fact that Hearn was far from being the only “turncoat Herderian” of his age, that actually we might speak of a “mass conversion” of Herderians into modern state nationalists in the post-Napoleonic nineteenth century, should certainly make us pause to reflect on whether there was not some larger historical process at work here.

In becoming a modern state nationalist, then, Hearn parted company with Herder, but not with all of Herder’s followers: many later German romantics, in response to Napoleon’s conquest of their divided lands, also became fervent state nationalists. But Herder himself was strongly opposed to the newly emerging modern nation-states, even in his native Germany (although that obviously would have made Germany more able to resist French cultural imperialism). He feared that, in a unified Germany that would inevitably be dominated by Prussia and Berlin, all of the smaller German “nations” and city-states would lose their autonomous cultural identities. And, of course, that is exactly what was to happen—ultimately with all the disastrous consequences that Herder had predicted.

Nonetheless, the fact that so many of Herder’s disciples did become modern state nationalists is a significant one, and I think helps us to understand why Hearn also ultimately was “converted” to the same kind of nationalist ideology. If, as Kevin Doak has pointed out, there were basically two kinds of modern state nationalism—the Franco-American kind based on citizenship, and the German kind based on ethnic identity—then Herder’s ideas of the “folk soul,” “folk culture,” etc., obviously fed into the latter kind, whose ultimate outcome was Bismarck’s and then Hitler’s Germany (ironically, of course, since both would have been anathema to Herder).⁶² Herder’s ideas, selectively adapted and popularized through nineteenth-century German Romantic culture, proved highly useful both to Prussian unifiers and Nazi racists. The key point, it seems to me, is that Herder, despite or perhaps because of his great appreciation of cultural diversity, was not what we would call today a multiculturalist. As already mentioned, he believed in a kind of cultural apartheid: cultures should not be freely mixed; they should be kept separate in order to maintain their uniqueness, the pure originality of each “folk soul.” He elaborated this view originally, of course, in defense of the cultural independence of small German states that seemed in danger of being overwhelmed by the hegemonic power first of France, then of Prussia. But, as it turned out, the vicissitudes of history over the following two centuries twisted his ideas to far more sinister uses.

Of course, I am not trying to suggest any kind of exact equivalence between Hearn’s brand of Romantic nationalism and that of the Nazis (for one thing, it would be anachronistic to do so), but he did subscribe, more or less, to the Bismarckian ideology of the late Meiji state, and, just as the Second Reich, Imperial Germany, paved the way for the Third Reich, Nazi Germany, Meiji Japan may be said to have paved the way for the militarist Japan of the 1930s and ’40s. Indeed, Hearn lived to see and rejoice in at least the opening phase of the proudest moment of the Meiji nation-state, its David-and-Goliath victory over the Russian empire in 1905 (with a little help from its British friends). As with Japan’s surprise victory over China ten years earlier, this only seemed to confirm the rightness of the Meiji state’s conservative, militaristic, and nationalistic policies—and the rightness of Hearn’s support of

these. But, of course, he did not live to see the ultimate outcome of the Meiji state's legacy in the 1930s and '40s. Although it may be true, as Yuzo Ota has suggested, that Hearn's writings provided ideological support to the early Shōwa Japanese militarists, it would be too much to claim that Hearn himself would have approved of their actions and policies.⁶³

One wonders what Hearn's position would be if he were alive today, in this age when even modern nation-states and national cultures seem under threat from the forces of globalization? Since his advocacy of Japanese state nationalism was based mainly on a desire to preserve Japan's cultural autonomy, and since nation-states no longer seem able to do so, I suspect that he might have changed back again, as many who value diversity over homogeneity have done, into an Herderian regionalist, advocating the cultural autonomy of areas such as Tsugaru, Okinawa, or perhaps even his beloved Izumo, areas both geographically and culturally remote from contemporary Japan's metropolitan mainstream.

Concluding Thoughts on Hearn as Japanese Nationalist

The Herderian kind of romantic cultural nationalism, because it took cultural uniqueness as its supreme value, and understood this to be rooted in an ethnically defined nation, was not compatible with the modern ideal of multiculturalism. Rather it mandated that national cultures each be allowed to develop in their own discrete place, while retaining their own discrete ethnic identity. As someone deeply imbued with this nineteenth-century nationalist ideology, it was natural for Hearn to endorse Spencer's "isolationist" advice to Japan, even though this contradicted his own internationalist, multicultural, "twenty-first-century" lifestyle.

It should be acknowledged, however, that, just as Hearn was far from being the only Herderian turned state nationalist among his contemporaries, he was also by no means the only Westerner with a "positive" attitude towards Japanese nationalism. In fact, this was a fairly common attitude among late Victorians, who often favored the "patriotic," "aggressive," and "energetic" Japanese over other Asians, who supposedly lacked these martial virtues and were incapable of stirring themselves from their millennial lethargy. This was one reason why Britain, for instance, was happy to enlist Japan as its ally against Russia. If we look at the popular British press at the time, it is full of images of "plucky," stalwart, samurai-warrior Japan as the "Great Britain of the Far East," a worthy ally of the British Empire.⁶⁴ Needless to say, this was a very different attitude towards Japanese "militarism" than would prevail in the English-speaking countries a few decades later, after that militarism had begun to threaten not only Russia, Korea, and China but the British and American empires themselves. But, to return to the nineteenth century, on a more elevated social level, as Ian Nish has pointed out, the veteran British diplomat, Sir Ernest Satow, "like others of the Victorian era, admired Japan as the country in Asia which exhibited patriotism and efficiency. If the prevailing global philosophy was Darwinism, Japan was seen as the symbol of the survival of the fittest. It was a country that appeared to have the potential for survival in a hostile expansionist world."⁶⁵ To some extent, then, Hearn's Japanophilism was as typical of the English-speaking peoples

of his age as was his Darwinism. But, of course, he carried it much further in that he wanted to be not just a distant admirer but, as he implied, an “insider” or, at least, one who had an insider’s view of Japanese culture.

We should probably not make too much of the fact that Hearn became a Japanese citizen in 1895, as apparently he did it more for practical than for patriotic reasons: namely, to ensure that his Japanese wife and children would inherit his property after his death. (Had he remained a British citizen, his property could have been claimed by his British relatives or by his former American wife—another legacy of the unequal treaties that had been imposed on Japan by the Western powers.) Nonetheless, the fact that Hearn was a Japanese citizen and adopted a Japanese name must certainly have had some psychological effect on him over the years, enabling him all the more to feel like an insider.

Furthermore, the fact that Hearn wrote his books in English by no means disqualifies him from belonging to the mainstream of late Meiji nationalist writing. Indeed, in this first period of modern Japanese nationalist writing this almost became a norm, even for native Japanese writers. It is an interesting and ostensibly odd fact that a good number of the most influential nationalist works—influential in shaping the Japanese sense of national identity as well as in shaping the Western image of Japan—were written in English first (and therefore directed at an international readership) and only later translated into Japanese. Writers such as Okakura Tenshin 岡倉天心, Nitobe Inazō 新渡戸稲造, and Uchimura Kanzō belonged to the generation of what Yuzo Ota has called the *eigo meijin* 英語名人, whose mastery of English was a result of their having attended university in Japan at a time when most of the education was conducted in that language. Conversely, there was also a good deal of laudatory, Japanophile work written by Westerners at this time. In the recent ten-volume collection of what the editors call “Japanese propaganda,” works by “Anglo-Saxon” authors actually outnumber those by native Japanese.⁶⁶ These people at least had the virtue of consistency: since they believed in the “civilizing mission” of the British and American empires, they also believed that the Japanese empire could perform a similar historical function.

As for Hearn’s own influence on mainstream Japanese nationalism, one could, in summary form, point to the following main areas:

Firstly: he helped to revive academic interest in Japanese folklore and folk culture. As Yoko Makino (Makino Yōko 牧野陽子) has convincingly shown, Hearn was a major early influence on Yanagita Kunio 柳田國男, the undisputed doyen of Japanese folklore studies.⁶⁷

Secondly: translated back into Japanese, his renditions of Japanese folktales became a much-loved part of the modern literary canon, familiar to every schoolchild (as, for instance, the former Prime Minister, Nakasone Yasuhiro 中曾根康弘, has testified⁶⁸). And, of course, Hearn’s retellings of Japanese folktales also became the basis of one of the masterpieces of the golden age of Japanese cinema, Kobayashi Masaki’s *Kwaidan* (1965).

Thirdly: his lyrical essays on the Japanese “*kokoro*” and other aspects of Japanese culture have had a considerable, if incalculable, influence on nihonjinron writers (writers of a vast literature, in Japanese, English, and other languages, devoted to defining the “Japanese national character”).

Fourthly: Hearn generally gets high marks from Japanese readers for his intuitive understanding and keen appreciation of the “national religion,” Shinto—at a time when most of his Western contemporaries viewed it through jaundiced Victorian Christian or scientific eyes, as a primitive form of pagan worship. (Although, as already mentioned, some Japanese scholars have also pointed out the limitations of Hearn’s understanding: for instance, that his emphasis on ghosts and faeries seems more redolent of Irish folklore.)

Finally, and more generally speaking, it could be said that, along with Ernest Fenellosa (but on a more popular level than Fenellosa, who was read mainly by intellectuals), Hearn encouraged the Japanese to reevaluate their own culture at a time when many held it in rather low esteem (and equated “civilization and enlightenment” with the West).

Whatever one’s feelings about nationalism *per se*, then, it must be acknowledged that Hearn’s achievements as a Japanese nationalist have proved to be considerable, indeed remarkable for someone of foreign birth. We can see this all the more clearly now, looking back over a full century of his influence, first in the West and then in Japan itself. Influence is, of course, a notoriously difficult thing to measure, but, as noted above, we can point to several major dimensions of Hearn’s influence, each of which has helped shape the Japanese sense of national identity over the past century.

I doubt that many of us latter-day foreign writers on Japan can expect to have our faces on Japanese postage stamps a century after our death, but the fact that Hearn has received this ultimate accolade does not, after all, seem all that surprising. Indeed, one wonders what might be next—Hearn as the first “foreign face” on a thousand-yen note? Or would that be going too far?

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NOTES

¹ Herder 1877, vol. 9, p. 540. Quoted in Clark 1955, p. 246.

² John Moran, "The Most Famous Irishman You've Never Heard Of," *The Irish Times*, Dublin, 20 September 2004.

³ Said 1978.

⁴ See, for instance, Cott 1991, Dawson 1992, Murray 1993, Hirakawa 1997, and Ronan 1997.

⁵ Hearn 2001, p. 414.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 416.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 416.

⁸ See Figure 2.

⁹ Hearn 2001, p. 418.

¹⁰ Not to mention an erotic pleasure. Plainly there was a Gauguinesque erotic dimension to Hearn's attraction to non-whites and non-white cultures, as evident for instance in his choice of sexual partners—a source of trouble for him in nineteenth century America—but this is a subject for another paper.

¹¹ Starr 2001, p. xvii.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 161.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. xvii.

¹⁴ There are, of course, a number of other ways of describing the dichotomy between these “two basic types of nationalism.” Historically, for instance, one could speak of French civic/political nationalism, a product of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, as opposed to German cultural/ethnic nationalism, a product of the anti-Enlightenment romantic movement. One could also borrow Ferdinand Tönnies' terms and speak of *Gesellschaft* versus *Gemeinschaft* nationalism, or borrow Herder's own term and speak of *Volksgeist* or *völkisch* as opposed to state nationalism. But we should also be aware that these “two varieties” of nationalism are not necessarily discrete or mutually exclusive; historically, in fact, they have often had more of a symbiotic than an antagonistic relationship, although there have also been cases when one form of nationalism opposed the other (as in Bohemia after 1848 when Czech *völkisch* nationalists turned against their erstwhile allies, the Bohemian Germans).

¹⁵ Herder 1969, p. 181.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

¹⁸ Berlin 1999, p. 64.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

²⁰ Hearn 1906, p. 6.

²¹ Ota 1998, pp. 186-89

²² Quoted in Kōsaka 1958, p. 360. For a reprint of the Japanese original, see Kōsaka 1999.

²³ Gluck 1985, p. 136. Gluck is quoting from *Chogyū zenshū*, vol. 4, pp. 434-35. Along with Gluck's work, another excellent study of late Meiji intellectual history is Pyle 1969.

²⁴ For a nuanced and balanced analysis of Japanese pan-Asianism that takes into account both the idealistic and cynical uses made of it, see Duara 2002. See also Han 2004.

²⁵ See Kōsaka 1958, p. 347.

²⁶ See Ota's discussion of this issue in Ota 1998, pp. 162-163.

²⁷ Quoted in Kōsaka 1958, p. 379.

²⁸ For instance, Toda 2004.

²⁹ Quoted in Bourdaghs 2003, p. 4.

³⁰ Hearn 2001, p. 261.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 398, n.1.

³² Kohn 1973, p. 326.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

³⁴ Lyon 1994.

³⁵ Anderson 1991.

³⁶ Hearn 2001, pp. 371-372.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. viii.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 281-282.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 274-275.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

⁴⁷ Howell 2005, p. 17

⁴⁸ Hearn 2001, p. 404.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 325.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

⁵² Keene 1971.

⁵³ Hearn 2001, p. 321.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 325.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 350-351.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 396-397.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 397-399.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 399-400.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 409.

⁶² Doak 2002, pp. 127-147.

⁶³ Ota 1997, pp. 214-217.

⁶⁴ See, for instance, the articles reprinted in Mutsu 2001.

⁶⁵ Nish 2000, pp. 83-84.

⁶⁶ O'Connor 2004.

⁶⁷ Makino 2004.

⁶⁸ In a conversation of 1988, Nakasone told Tony O'Reilly that Hearn "made my childhood, and that of almost every other child in the Japan I grew up in." See O'Reilly 1997, p. xi. No less a personage than Emperor Hirohito said something similar in a speech welcoming the Irish President in 1980.

要旨

日本国家主義者としての小泉八雲

ロイ・スターズ

明治二十三年から明治三十七年（1890-1904）まで十四年間に及ぶ日本滞在中に小泉八雲（ラフカディオ・ハーン）のナショナリズムの思想には大きな変化が見られた。来日以前、ハーンの著作に表れたのは純粹に文化的なヘルダー（Johann Gottfried Herder）風ナショナリズムの伝統を引くものであった。それは特にアメリカやマルティニクのクレオール民族文化のような滅び行く民族文化への郷愁的な愛着であった。しかし来日後は次第に攻撃的で近代的な国家主義的なナショナリズムに変貌してゆく。この大きな変化の一因は、明治後期に高まったナショナリズムがハーンに多大な影響を及ぼしたからである。しかし他方では来日前のハーンのヘルダー風ナショナリズムも轉換の重要な布石になったと考えられる。なぜならハーンの間から見れば、明治時代の日本はアメリカやマルティニクのクレオール民族のように文化的絶滅の危機に瀕していたからである。

