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An Anatomy of Loneliness: Hearn as Foreign Teacher

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French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre once said that during all the years that he was thinking about and writing philosophy, one other thing had also been constantly occupying his thoughts: his relationships with women. While living in and writing about Japan for fourteen years, one issue was always present in the back of Lafcadio Hearn's mind, too, sometimes coming to the fore and sometimes diminishing in prominence but continually nagging at his peace of mind－the issue of his relationship as a foreigner to Japanese society. For the last quarter of his life, Hearn confronted the relationship between himself and his surroundings as never before. The more he saw, the less comfortable he became.

He began his sojourn with the assumption that the people, customs, even the government of Japan were of the highest morality imaginable, certainly far superior to that of the West in general. He began prejudiced in favor of nearly all things Japanese, romanticizing, elevating, and exaggerating the value of nearly everything he came across. The tea, the baths, the morality of the people－all were enthusiastically described as being the best in the world. The government was wise and generous, the curriculum splendid, the women angels. Teaching at a middle school in Matsue was gentle, congenial, and satisfying. Hearn felt needed and useful, even loved.

But careful examination of his writings, especially the private correspondence, reveals a nearly uninterrupted undercurrent of anxiety about two interconnected issues: loneliness and job security. The sense of isolation from living on foreign soil was much more than physical, of course, and he combated it almost daily with the only weapon he had－his pen. Writing was therapy. He wrote a wealth of long letters to Chamberlain, Nishida, and Mason in Japan, later adding Page Baker and Ellwood Hendrick from the United States as regular correspondents. Through the act of writing, both literary writing and an astounding amount of personal correspondence, Hearn found that he could use his loneliness to spur creation, while at the same time he was consciously trying to assuage it with the friendships that letters enabled. The "epistulatory [sic] acquaintance" of people like "Friend Dening," he wrote to Mason from Kumamoto, "is another relief to the utter isolation of the Japanese exile."[1] "Utter isolation" was the price of immersion in the real Japan, and Hearn was willing to pay it, but it was a condition that he knew he could not bear without help from his friends.

His feelings of loneliness, a recurrent topic in the letters, were aggravated by certain colleagues and by the impersonal treatment he received from the Japanese officials in charge of his employment as Foreign Lecturer, or *gaikokujin kyoushi*, a newly established teacher category in government schools.[2] Over time the impression that to Japanese officials he was simply "a foreigner," without personality or individuality, intensified; this in turn deepened his fear of losing his job and leaving his family without financial support, which exacerbated his sense of being alone. A foreigner's loneliness became a subject he felt he knew enough about to advise the venerable Basil Hall Chamberlain: "You should really live among [the common people of Japan] alone for a year－and you would not feel lonely. It is only after a long time that the loneliness comes."[3] Despite these words, Hearn's feelings of loneliness began in Matsue, matured in Kumamoto, and mellowed into eccentricity in Tokyo. In this paper I wish to

investigate the issues of Hearn's loneliness and insecurity in Japan, showing the details of their development over the course of his pedagogical career and their importance to understanding the mind of the most famous *gaikokujin kyoushi* in Japan's history.

Part I

It was not as if Hearn in Japan had been in the position of a foreign resident for the first time in his life. In fact, he is one of the few writers about whom it may be said that he was right from birth a foreigner in nearly every place he ever lived. Yet, more so than in any other place, it was in Japan that the consciousness of being a foreigner seemed at times to loom almost paranoically large in his mind. He was both attracted by it and tormented by it, occasionally venting his frustration in cathartic epistolary outbursts. Some of these outbursts were so vituperative that they were omitted from his published correspondence, but I cite them here to help give a truer picture of Hearn's mental state and intellectual position with regard to his adopted country.

As early as the Matsue period, hints of loneliness started to appear. He began to grumble that he could not seem to get close enough to Japanese friends and colleagues, even to those that he loved, like Sentaro Nishida. To his American friend Ellwood Hendrick he confided that there always seemed to remain a certain "far-offness" that he attributed to cultural difference, and he lamented the fact that he could not seem to establish a Western-style, back-slapping friendliness with any Japanese. This lack of "skinship" made his soul long for home.[4)] At the same time, however, he clearly enjoyed his unique position as the only foreign teacher. Almost immediately upon his arrival in Kumamoto he wrote to Nishida of his delight in finding himself to be the only foreign teacher at the Fifth High School: "There are twenty-eight teachers, and, I am glad to say, no other foreigner." To borrow a term from the biological sciences, Hearn at this point desired an environment that was axenic; that is, a "pure culture" completely uncontaminated by the presence of other organisms — in this case, foreigners.

Though he did not want another foreign teacher in his school, he did seem to want another Nishida. Fortunately, he felt an immediate rapport with the new president, Jigoro Kano, who met him at the station and dined with him the first night in Kumamoto. With typical enthusiasm for a new discovery, Hearn quickly wrote to Nishida in praise of his potential new friend:

> He is one of the finest men I ever met — one of those men whom — like Governor Koteda, — you love at first sight.... Mr. Kano himself speaks English better than any Japanese I met before;... He has offered whenever here to go every where, and show me anything I want to know; and I feel already as if I had known him for ten years.[5)]

However, a close personal friendship like the one he had with Nishida did not develop. If anything, it soured. Their relationship ended with Hearn bitterly suspicious that Kano was "all cunning," that his final house-visit had been merely a pretext to get information, and that he had not supported Hearn against his detractors.[6)]

Seven months after his arrival in Kumamoto, again to Nishida, Hearn described his feelings of

isolation from the other members of staff, but he attributed this mainly to the school's large physical size:

> I don't know many of the teachers yet.... We never meet, scarcely, outside of the schoolroom; —all of us live at great distances from the school.... Somehow this big school seems like a sort of factory, to which we all go regularly to work at fixed hours and leave at fixed hours,—without feeling intimate either with each other or with the students. There is no time. Everything is far away, and barrack-like, and matter of fact.[7]

Gradually, however, he realized that the size and factory-like atmosphere, so different from the school in Matsue, were not the only factors contributing to his feelings of isolation. Even when there was contact with other members of staff, he felt alone, politely ignored. He began to sense that he was somehow being *treated* differently, like a pedagogical outsider. "If I speak, I am saluted. If I ask a question, I am politely snubbed or evaded. I have been made to understand, without being actually told as much, not to ask any questions."[8] In Matsue, thanks to Nishida and others, he had felt like an essential and valued member of staff; his foreign-ness was clearly an asset. In Kumamoto, however, he sensed his foreign-ness sometimes working against him. Without a helpful and friendly colleague like Nishida, he felt more and more insecure and alone. "I am only a poor foreign teacher, liable to be dismissed at a moment's notice, and hated with a very curious hatred by my fellow-teachers for no reason that I can discover," he wrote to Nishida.[9] But less than one month later he could report that "I have been getting along much better with my fellow-teachers. It seems as if the ice had broken at last.... But there is nobody here like you."[10] And a few months later he could announce that "I have actually begun to make friends here."[11] Yet despite the apparent thaw in human relations, Hearn still could not shake the deeper sense of isolation. To another foreign teacher, Professor Chamberlain of Tokyo University, he complained:

> And you know how a foreign teacher is placed—he has no moral support whatever, and must smooth everything himself. I have never been obliged to complain—but I feel, if I did, that the blame of the result would be rather for me than for the offenders.[12]

By "no moral support" Hearn meant no friend, no kindly colleague or administrator to "smooth" the myriad obstacles that must have cropped up in his daily teaching, language difficulties surely among the most frustrating of them. Even the opportunity to complain would have probably provided some relief, but that outlet, he felt, was also effectively closed. By August of 1894 he again felt "I have no friend in the school."[13]

But what bothered Hearn more than the lack of a friend was the unspoken assumption by his employers that a foreigner, in general, could not really understand Japanese people. In a subsequent letter to Chamberlain he chafed at the realization that his foreign nationality alone was labeling him as somehow untrustworthy:

> Again the foreign teacher is trusted only as an intellectual machine. His moral notions, his sympathies, his intuitions, his educational ideas are not trusted at all;—a Japanese teacher is

> always consulted by preference. There seems to be the set conviction in every official mind that a foreigner *cannot* understand Japanese students.[14]

Not only the officials, but his Japanese colleagues also came under his increasingly resentful eye. One of his severest criticisms, in another letter to Chamberlain, depicts them as incapable of real intellectual intercourse, full of intellectual pride, ignorant, arrogant, and blatantly racist in their assumption of superiority to foreigners:

> [The present University men] have no ideas. Under such studies as they have made, their brains seem to have shriveled up like kernels in roasted nuts. When they try to talk there is only a dry rattle. Perpetual questions about things that a new-born babe ought to know; and withal a conceit as high as the moon;—an ineradicable belief that they have mastered all the knowledge of the nineteenth century—and that a foreigner is a sort of stupid servant to be used, but never to be treated as a real human being.[15]

His isolation was also felt outside of the school, in Kumamoto society in general; he complained of how emotionally unsatisfying it was to be a foreigner living in Japan's "interior," far from the open ports and other foreigners:

> Life in the interior, of itself, forces a self-restraint,—to me,—absolutely unnatural. From year to year I can speak to no one outside of my house except in the most formal way. A conversation with those who seem kindly disposed is painful as a fencing-match,—so difficult is it to meet the Oriental thought, and to deliver one's own in the right direction.[16]

For a man to whom sympathetic communication was as vital as air to breathe, the feeling that there was no one outside of his family with whom he could have a relaxed, friendly, stimulating conversation must have made life extremely depressing at times. Ironically, however, what angered him more was that even his closest friends, like Nishida and Chamberlain, did not seem to understand his feelings. To the expert on things Japanese Hearn wrote testily:

> I have been exactly three years here under conditions you could not bear for a month; and if you cannot understand the position of a foreigner in a population of 56,000 people,—none of whom ever address him except for some selfish purpose, you must at least confess there are possible experiences in Japanese life which you cannot understand. The mere question of money is not a sufficient cause for remaining in a position which people desire to get you out of, and which offers no possibility of a single hour's pleasure—not even the sight of a landscape.[17]

Hearn was so dejected that, despite a lack of sympathy even from Setsu, who was enjoying Kumamoto, he resigned from his post at the Fifth High School. The reason, he explained to Nishida, was *nakama hazure*, a general feeling of having been ostracized by his colleagues.

> —You said in your last letter you did not understand why I left Kumamoto. I can't tell, because I don't know the machinery at work. I can only guess. The teachers boycotted me, and tried to make trouble for me with the students. Not all of the teachers,—but some. The man Sakuma was ... the chief party in the matter,—at all events, after three years, I could not possibly live in the school with him any longer at any salary.... Those are my ideas in the matter: but I cannot be sure they are all true, for I have no proofs, and no one else in the school, except the headmaster Sakurai, talked to me at all.[18]

While Hearn's tone sounds almost paranoid, his suspicion was certainly understandable. Intrigue in government service was ubiquitous, anti-foreign sentiment on the increase, and with his limited ability in the Japanese language he would have felt unable to understand completely what people were saying, let alone thinking. Trying in vain to read between virtually unintelligible lines surely would have made a sensitive man like Hearn distractedly nervous.

To Nishida, a Japanese, Hearn was careful not to blame the Japanese as a race or nationality, but when writing to his American friend Ellwood Hendrick, the bitterness of his feelings prompted some patently racist remarks:

> I have been practically forced out of the Government Service by small intrigue, but have obtained a position on an English newspaper published in Kobe—whither I am to go shortly.... The pay is very small, the prospects uncertain; but—it is a white man's job. The meanness of Oriental intrigue is meaner than almost anything one is likely to meet in English employ.[19]

And to Chamberlain he specified the psychological need to live again, if only temporarily, among white people, in the country where he seemed to feel most at home, America.

> We are all tired of Kumamoto. I must try to get out of it this year or next year. I am almost certain, however, that I had better go to America for a time. One does not isolate oneself from the Aryan race without paying the penalty.... The condition is unspeakable. You say I work well. If I did not, I should go insane, or become a prey to nervous disease.[20]

In the next day's letter, he repeated to Chamberlain his desire to work for a man of his own race: "I feel, much more than you could have thought, your words about "white men." Yes, I would rather work for white men of almost any kind—though there are mean kinds enough—than these . . . ."[21] Before, he had been worried most about his physical health; now, after three and a half years in Japan, he was anxious about his mental health as well.

Though Hearn had moved to Kobe in search of mental peace, even after nine months there his psyche was still smarting from his Kumamoto experience, and he despaired of ever overcoming the culture gaps between Orientals and Westerners. In Matsue and Kumamoto his general attitude had been: Could a Westerner ever really understand how an Oriental thinks? Now he saw that it was equally important for *him* to be understood by *them*. Cultural interaction was a two-way street. True, he could not always understand the Japanese people as well as he would have liked, but neither could *they* understand him—

nor anyone else who thought in a Western way, regardless of race or nationality—even a Japanese:

> ... But no Japanese or Chinese or Korean can possibly understand Western character except by going to Europe as a child. Matsumoto, the railroad director did that. He *thinks* like an Englishman. And curiously enough, the fact has injured his career. His own countrymen do not understand him; and we naturally suspect what we do not understand. So a graduate of Cambridge sent to Kumamoto as a teacher, was regarded there as a sort of renegade to his country, —he *thought* like a European. Nobody spoke to him, and they tried to get rid of him successfully.[22]

Hearn now felt categorically shut out from the society he had done his best to get in to. Despite the publication of *Glimpses, Out of the East, and Kokoro*, he had to admit that all his efforts to enter into the minds and lives of the Japanese had pretty much failed:

> Besides the devilish treatment I received in the Government Service, I have been obliged to recognize the fact that I can never become a Japanese, or find real sympathy from the Japanese as a whole. I am obliged to acknowledge that my isolation became too much for me. I felt the need of being again among men of my own race who, with all their faults, have sympathy and kindness, and who have the *same colour of soul* as myself. How foolish the foreigner who believes that he can understand the Japanese![23]

That he wrote this to Nishida testifies to Hearn's belief that their friendship had now transcended any differences in race and nationality. Though he felt he could not exchange affectionate slaps on the back with him, clearly Nishida was a true "friend" according to the student's definition that Hearn liked so much, i.e. "one person to whom we can tell *all our suspicions*."[24]

Part II

Though Kobe was an open port, full of Westerners, he grew to feel even more isolated there. He was at last working for a man "of [his] own race," but he quit rather soon. Eyestrain was one factor in his decision to resign, but perhaps more importantly, as he wrote to Nishida, he "didn't much like the man."[25] So much for the benefits of a "white man's job." Now for a while he turned against foreign bosses as being generally brutish. He deplored a non-scientific education for young Japanese since it rendered graduates "good-for-nothing—begging and praying to get a position as servant to some foreigner . . . the 'boy' of a brutal and vulgar foreigner, —as many of them are."[26] If working for foreigners was often so degrading, then was Hearn implying that Japanese employers were generally better after all?

At this point in his life he seemed displeased with almost everyone. In the same letter, he categorically rejected another large pool of possible friends—all English-speaking Japanese:

> I am so disgusted at the way I was treated in Kumamoto that I don't feel inclined to see any Japanese who speak English. I imagine they would turn out something like the Kumamoto frauds.

And since only one of his former students from Kumamoto had sent him a New Year's card, he told Nishida that "I hope I shall meet no more of them." The only people he said he did not mind meeting were "people from Izumo, who don't know English." Despite these misanthropic pronouncements, however, Hearn was clearly hungry for any form of human sympathy, regardless of nationality or language. He believed that he had had it in Izumo, and he felt miserably lonely without it. With few exceptions it was the educated Japanese, the professors and officials, that Hearn had difficulty relating to. "The educated class repel me," he had once written to Mason. "It is impossible to make friends among them, and pure madness to expect sympathy."[27)]

During the Kumamoto period, Hearn began to experience bursts of misanthropic feelings so intense that the editor of his letters, Elizabeth Bisland Wetmore, omitted them from his published correspondence. She allowed a disparaging 1892 remark to Mason ("D------n the modernized Japanese!") to stand, but she tried to protect Hearn's reputation with the people of his adopted country by striking the following passage to Chamberlain:

> The finale of my long correspondence with you on Japanese character is frankly this: (I know it is unjust; I know it is small. But I suppose it is natural,—and I am not superior to nature—besides I see no reason why I should not be in all things frank with you):—
>
> I hate and detest the Japanese.
>
> I refused even to attend a banquet given by a European merchant the other day because there were Japanese present. I wish to make no more Japanese acquaintances. I shall never again be interested in any Japanese of the educated generation. I shall never again receive any of my former pupils. I simply abominate the Japanese.
>
> There's a nice confession from the author of "Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan" to make. But remember—the book was finished a long time ago; and the illusion had not worn off. I should not like now to trust myself to say what I think of the Japanese in their relation to us. I fear the missionaries are right who declare them without honor, without gratitude, and without brains.
>
> D______n the Japanese!
>
> Excepting, of course, the women of Japan who are—well, who are not Japanese. They remain angels.[28)]

Strong stuff, to be sure, but this was not, despite the author's claim, the "finale." He was to vacillate between love and hate for Japan and certain aspects of it for the rest of his life. A few months later, in Kobe, he was already modifying his views, now suggesting to Chamberlain a hierarchy of gentility with the Japanese peasant at the top, the foreign merchant next, followed by the savage, and at bottom the Japanese official: "The Japanese peasant is ten times more of a gentleman than a foreign merchant could ever learn to be," but "the Japanese official . . . is something a good deal lower than a savage and meaner than the straight-out Western rough (who always has a kernel of good in him)."[29)] Ironically, life in Kobe, in close proximity to Westerners, had proven "very unpleasant, after life in the interior."

Part III

The years in Tokyo show Hearn's loneliness intensifying despite sporadic feelings of friendship with other foreign staff. The Tokyo University was, like the Fifth High School, large and impersonal, but now he considered this to be agreeable: "Professors far off, moving in separate and never-colliding orbits. I can teach for years—if I please—without ever seeing any of my colleagues."[30] It was not, however, that he wished to avoid everyone; he simply wanted the choice to associate with whom he pleased, and he did make casual friends with several teachers.

Ironically, given his well known antipathy to Christianity, the people at school with whom he felt he had a common bond were other foreign professors of Roman Catholic—not Protestant—background. "We are not believers—but there is a human something separating us from the froid protestantisme, or the hard materialism of the other foreign professors—something warmer and more natural," which Hearn called a humanizing "Latin feeling."[31] He even became friendly with a Jesuit, despite the vast differences in their beliefs, but a true soul-mate was not to be found: "I regret to say, however, that I have no Spencerian sympathizer. In my beliefs and tendencies I stand alone; and the Jesuit marvels at the astounding insanity of my notions."[32]

Despite this Roman Catholic affinity that he felt with some of the foreign staff, he remained while at Tokyo University socially aloof: "I have become very gray, and much queerer looking; and as I never make any visits or acquaintances outside of my quiet little neighbourhood, I have become also rather henjin [strange]."[33] Yet he continued to be a keen and careful observer of his foreign colleagues. Consider this excerpt from a letter to Hendrick:

> I cannot write to you about such delightful friends as the one described in your last letter, for the simple reason that I have n't any. (You know that it is very difficult for me to find sympathizers in such a frogpond as the foreign community of an open port.) The Russian professor of philosophy, although boasting a Heidelberg degree, acknowledges to me that he believes heretics ought to be burnt alive ("for the saving of their souls"), and that he hopes to see the whole world under Catholic domination.... The Jesuit improves on acquaintance—gentle, courteous, half-sympathetic, but always on guard, like a man afraid of being struck by some human affection. The American lawyer, hard and grim, has a rough, plain goodness about him—providing that he be put to no trouble . . . . And the German, Dr. R-----, of whom I spoke rather unsympathetically before, seems to me now the finest man of the lot.[34]

Hearn seems to have enjoyed the other foreign nationals mostly as characters in the drama of his life, an interesting variety of individuals that he could observe, analyze, and do quick sketches of to amuse Hendrick. Even those professors of unfamiliar nationality seemed relatively easy to characterize. As a group, however, he portrays them as a curious, frightened biological species with a common pattern of behavior, amusing but unpleasant:

> The foreign element appears to live in a condition of perpetual panic. Everybody is infinitely afraid of everybody else, afraid to speak not only their minds, but to speak about anything except

> irrelevant matters, and then only in a certain formal tone sanctioned by custom. They huddle together sometimes at parties, and talk all together loudly about nothing-- like people in the expectation of a possible catastrophe, or like folks making a noise to drive away ghosts, or fear of ghosts. Somebody, quite accidentally, observes—or rather drops an observation about facts. Instantly there is a scattering away from that man as from dynamite. He is isolated for several weeks by common consent. Then he goes to work to reform a group of his own. Gradually he collects one—and rival groups are formed. But presently some one in another party or chat talks about something as it ought to be. Bang-fizz—chaos and confusion. Then all the groups unite to isolate that wicked tongue. The man is dangerous—an intriguer—ha! And so on—ad lib.... This is panic, pure and simple. [35)]

Despite what Stevenson calls "particularly pleasant relations" between Hearn and colleagues Osman Edwards and Ernest Foxwell,[36)] Hearn wrote to Hendrick in May of 1897 that "The loneliness thickens." Certain associates, including the professor with the doctorate from Heidelberg, now "make it a rule to spit upon the ground with a loud noise when I pass by." (Hearn's reaction: "It won't work.") The main cause of this deep mutual mistrust among the foreigners, he deduced, was basically job insecurity. The continuous fear of losing one's post created a perfect breeding ground for mistrust and loneliness. It was something that he had been feeling since his first year in Kumamoto and continued to feel until his death in 1904.

Lamentations over the foreign national's job insecurity appear as early as seven months after arriving in Kumamoto. Already he was convinced that "there is nothing sure in Japan for a foreigner: the only thing for him to do is to try to save money enough before his services are dispensed with."[37)] This was a conclusion that he reached not only from his personal experience at the Fifth High School but also from knowledge he had gathered, largely through Chamberlain, about the situations of other foreigners. As an issue, it was of great importance to him, on a par with the issue of physical health. Indeed, as he later expressed it to Elizabeth Bisland Wetmore, "the great and devouring anxiety is for some regular employ."[38)]

Insecurity was a double-edged sword of Damocles over the foreigner's head; or rather it was a blade that could fall in two ways. On the one hand, political instability and intrigue in the Japanese government could make any job or worker redundant by closing schools or reducing budgets. This threatened any government worker, but especially non-Japanese nationals such as *yatoi* like Hearn.[39)] No one could tell for sure when, where, or how the shake-up might come. "We are all in Japan living over earthquakes. Nothing is stable. All Japanese officialdom is perpetually in flux—nothing but the throne is even temporarily fixed; and the direction of the currents depends much upon force of intrigue."[40)] To Hearn the feeling was like being about to be blown away in some violent explosion: "I am reposing upon the safety-valves of a steam-boiler—much cracked, with many rivets loose—and the engineers [government officials] studying how to be out of the way when the great whang-bang comes around."[41)]

On the other hand, the mounting anti-foreign sentiment manifesting itself through an almost cruelly impersonal treatment of foreign workers also made Hearn feel insecure and helpless. Notice the theme of impersonality in these excerpts from Hearn's correspondence:

> A foreigner among Japanese officials is simply a *go-ishi*, a pawn. He has no friend, and no

> sympathy: indeed his feelings are not considered to exist.... I am so terribly alone here that living is tiresome.... Indeed I would not stay in Japan another day, but that I have a family to take of, and that my boy is so young.[42]

> To the Japanese official world, all of us foreigners are mere animated numerals. The salary of No. 7 ought to be reduced because it is larger than that of No. 8. There is no other reason.[43]

Of course, such insults to individuality must have also been felt by many Japanese nationals, too, and by people under the control of impersonal bureaucracies everywhere, but Hearn had heard only about foreigners or those like Mr. Matsumoto who *thought* like foreigners. No matter how hard he worked, or how good a teacher he might be, the fact of his foreign nationality seemed to be the primary consideration affecting his livelihood. His frustration and disappointment prompted this scathing, unpublished assessment of the role of the foreign teacher in Japan:

> I should say these were the general rules for a foreigner in Government service:
>
> Never to ask any questions concerning business.
>
> Never to ask why.
>
> Never to criticize even when requested.
>
> Never to speak either favourably or unfavourably of other officials, of students, or of employees.
>
> If obliged to speak, to remember that favourable criticism may prove much more objectionable than the other.
>
> Give no direct refusal under any circumstances, but only say 1. "It is difficult for the moment — " ; or 2. "Certainly" —but take care to forget all about it. Direct refusals are not forgiven. The other devices are respected and admired.
>
> *Never imagine intimacy possible,—or imagine reserve possible.* Both are entirely impossible; but one must steer carefully between the two.
>
> Consider that all adverse criticisms upon national or official matters are thrown out as "feelers" and that any expression of sympathy with them is likely to provoke immediate hostility.
>
> *Do not imagine that the question of application, efficiency, or conduct in relation to students is of any official importance. The points required from the foreigner are simply 2: (1) Keep the clams in good humor. (2) Pass everybody.* [44] (My italics)

The tone was so satirical, bitter, and derisive toward his employers that Elizabeth Bisland Wetmore chose, perhaps wisely, to omit the passage from the published letters. Being treated with smug indifference seemed to bother Hearn more than anything else did, and he returned to this point again and again. His employer's attitude toward him was so dehumanizing, he called it "barbarian."

> I do most sincerely hope to get out of Japanese employ some day before long. The conditions of every foreign employee are bound to become worse. And no effort is recognized, no personality remembered. The indifference shown us is certainly barbarian. The barbarian Japanese are the

officials.[45)]

Foreign acquaintances who had been successfully working in Japan for many years were suddenly being fired from their posts, and Hearn was feeling the disturbing repercussions even in far-away Kumamoto.

> Another thing that has been puzzling me lately very much is the feeling of the Japanese toward men like Dening, Eastlake, Dixon, and others long in their employ. There may be individual reasons; and I do not know personally any of the parties mentioned; but so far as I can see the Japanese seem to regard many men who have passed their best days in Government service, as tools merely to work with—to be thrown away when the edge wears off. Did not that wonderful Nakamura, who wanted all foreigners discharged as soon as their "freshness" had faded out, really express a national sentiment about foreigners?[46)]

Intellectual machines, pawns, animated numerals, tools to be used and discarded when no longer "fresh." No wonder that Bisland also omitted the above reference from Hearn's official *Letters*. His hosts might feel indignant, and Hearn's reputation might be damaged.

Walter Dening was an Englishman teaching at the Second High School in Sendai and author of *The Life of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Japan in Days of Yore*, and learned articles for the *Transactions of the Asiatic Society*.[47)] James Main Dixon was another well-educated Englishman teaching English in the Literature Department at Tokyo Imperial University.[48)] When Hearn learned that men of this caliber had not been rehired, he inquired about the possibility of their coming to teach at the Fifth High School. The reason he received for rejecting them deepened his mistrust in his employers:

> —So Dening has gone! The ranks of the liberals have lost a good soldier, and foolish Japan has lost a scholar she had not intelligence enough to utilize.... I tried for him here, and was told he "was not earnest in his work." The same thing was said of Eastlake. Exactly the same words were used about Dixon. This stereotyped criticism convinced me it was no use, —because the statement was vague and evidently untrue. There are other reasons; but the Japanese are never frank. What a pretext the same phrase would be to get rid of any man: "He is not earnest about his work; —he thinks only of the salary(!)" I expect the same thing will be said of me the very moment my services can be dispensed with. And people go to the foreign hireling for counsel, adopt his suggestions, enforce his reforms, advertise the improvements as their own imagining, and thereafter ignore the adviser. Ah, bah![49)]

Hearn realized that the reasons given in Kumamoto were only a pretext, not the true ones. Even well qualified foreign teachers could summarily be fired, or not hired, on trumped up criticism, and he knew that he himself was also vulnerable. Three years later in Tokyo he was actually present at a faculty meeting where the contract of a German professor of history was terminated. This time, however, the reason was plainly given by Professor of Philosophy, Tetsujiro Inoue:

> He very sensibly observed that he saw no reason why foreign professors should forever teach *history* in a Japanese university—or why students should be obliged to listen to lectures not in their native tongue. I felt he was right; but it meant the doom of nearly all foreign teaching. (Perhaps I shall last for some years more, and the professors of foreign *languages*—but the rest will certainly go before long.)[50]

Hearn, despite the dire implications to himself, agreed with Inoue in principle. Interestingly, he was more surprised at how quickly the man's "friends" had gone against him when they saw the drift of things. And as much as he mistrusted his Japanese employers, he mistrusted his foreign "friends" even more:

> I said to my little self: "Don't expect any love from those quarters, old fellow: the Japanese themselves will treat you more frankly, even if they get to hate you." I have no doubt whatever that there will be as much said against *me* as *dare* be said. Happily, however, my engagement is based on Japanese policy—kindly policy—with a strong man behind it; and mere tongue-thrusts will do me no harm at all in the present order of things.[51]

All the predictions he had been making privately since his first experience as a foreign teacher at a government school seemed to be coming closer and closer to home, and despite the "kindly policy" mentioned above, his outlook on the future of foreign teachers was characterized by despair.

> I think it will be Korea over again—in regard to public education.... The teaching of English was restricted every year. The foreign teachers and managers are being got rid of as quickly as possible.... The remuneration of all foreign teachers has been reduced.... Government will drop education perforce; and it will have to be all reconstructed by private effort.[52]

> The day of foreign languages is over. The day of foreign influence is dead.... Though I cannot but regret that I should become useless to the Japanese Government.[53]

> I feel pretty sure that the other foreigners in Government employ will soon be dispensed with. There will be foreign teaching, perhaps; but the missionaries will supply it for about 50 yen a month, if required to. No layman can do that.[54]

> My contract here is supposed to be renewed until March, but as I have no friend in the school, I can't tell how things will go. We all—I mean all of us foreign *yatoi*—expect that the next meeting of the Diet may throw us out of place. There is certainly no more future for English teachers of English in Japan.[55]

> —I have had offers of two posts—teacher at Kagoshima or at Sendai.... But I don't know what to do. The Mombusho is in a horrible state, and is doing wicked and foolish mean things to foreign employees. How long would the plan last?... How soon would there be a set scheme to force me out of the school in favour of a cheaper man?... But the foreigners are all pretty well

convinced by this time that there is no place for them in Japan.[56)]

The story of Hearn's own termination from his post at Tokyo University is well known. Certainly his reluctance to leave was understandable: the job paid twice the salary he earned at Kumamoto and required only about half the teaching time (12 hours per week). And he was well aware that he was special: a Japanese receiving a foreigner's salary. Still, it was not without a dark side, for he smelled ulterior motives behind his appointment:

> Dear Hendrick, —I fear—I suspect that this position has been given unto me for a combination of reasons, among which the dominant is that I may write at ease many books about Japan.[57)]

Did Hearn sense that he might be being used as a kind of propaganda tool of the Japanese government? Did he feel that he was being treated extra kindly so that he could write books not objectively true but biased in favor of Japan and the government so generously supporting him? If we look at Hearn's attitude toward his three teaching jobs in Japan, we see that his highest priority was always a commitment to what he called "honest teaching."[58)] He was not above accepting a high salary and an easy course load, but he was more interested in the non-monetary rewards of teaching—love of students, respect of colleagues, kind treatment by officials. As he explained to Professor Kano about his desire to leave Kumamoto, it was not salary or prestige that he was looking for, but simply a school where he would be appreciated, wishing more "to be kindly treated than to secure any important post."[59)]

Hearn never found the ideal teaching situation he was seeking, but he has left a picture of it in a letter to Nishida that speaks volumes about his loneliness and his sincerity as an educator. It appeared to him in a recurring dream.

> I can't just now remember when—at Matsue—a man came into the classroom to watch my teaching. He came from some little island. I have quite forgotten the name. He looked a little like Mr. Takahashi;—but there was something different in his face—a little sad, perhaps. When the class was over he came to me and said something very good and kind, and pressed my hand and went away to his island. It is a queer thing that experiences of this kind are often among the most vivid of one's life—though they are so short. I have often dreamed of that man. Often and often. And the dream is always the same. He is the director of a beautiful little school in a very large garden, surrounded by high white walls. I go into that garden by an iron gate. It is always summer. I teach for that man; and everything is gentle and earnest and beautiful, just as it used to be in Matsue—and he always repeats the nice things he said long ago. If I can ever find that school, with the white walls and the iron gate—I shall want to teach there, even if the salary be only the nice things said at the end of the class. But I fear the school is made of mist, and that teacher and pupils are only ghosts. Or perhaps it is in Horai.[60)]

The loneliness implicit in Hearn's poignant description is almost palpable. In a sense, wherever he went and whatever he did in life, it was finally human sympathy that he was seeking. In Japan that meant a chance to teach not for an institution but for an appreciative person, and not so much for money or power

or prestige as for "the nice things said at the end of the class." Ironically, the higher this foreign teacher climbed up the academic ladder, the farther he drifted from the Japan of his dreams and his ideal place in it.

Notes

1) *The Writings of Lafcadio Hearn* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1922), Vol. XVI, p. 303. Hereafter referred to as *Writings*. Letter to W. B. Mason. 5/28/92.
2) Ivan Hall, *Cartels of the Mind* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1998), p. 102.
3) *Writings*, XVI, 261. To Chamberlain. 9/12/94.
4) *Writings*, XIV, 164-65. To Ellwood Hendrick. (no day or month) 1891. "About the men,—one never gets very close to them. One's best friends have a certain far-offness about them, even when breaking their necks to please you. There is no such thing as clapping a man on the back, and saying, 'Hello! Old boy!' There is no such thing as clapping a fellow on the knee, or chucking a fellow under the ribs. All such familiarities are terribly vulgar in Japan. So each one has to tickle his own soul and clap it on the back, and say 'Hello' to it. And the soul, being Western, says: 'Do you expect me always to stay in this extraordinary country? I want to go home, or get back to the West Indies, at least. Hurry up and save some money.'"
5) Ms [13], p. 36. To Mason. 11/20/91.
6) *Some New Letters and Writings of Lafcadio Hearn*, edited by Sanki Ichikawa (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1925), pp. 150-52. Hereafter referred to as Ichikawa. To Nishida. 7/25/95: "—I had a visit from Kano—not kind at all. He denied many things I knew to be true; and he came to the house chiefly for information as to how the Sendai and Kagoshima posts had been offered me. He left suddenly and abruptly,—and I felt quite convinced from his conversation that I had been got rid of with his approval."
7) Ichikawa, pp. 34-35. To Nishida. 6/27/92.
8) *Writings*, XV, 446. To Chamberlain. 6/15/93.
9) Ichikawa, p. 75. To Nishida. 2/8/93.
10) Ichikawa, p. 84. To Nishida. 3/3/93.
11) Ichikawa, p. 95. To Nishida. 6/27/93.
12) *Writings*, XVI, 42. To Chamberlain. 9/27/93.
13) Ichikawa, p. 125. To Nishida. 8/5/94
14) *Writings*, XVI, 106-07. To Chamberlain. 1/27/94.
15) *Writings*, XV, 422, To Chamberlain. 5/12/93.
16) Manuscript in the C. Waller Barrett Collection, University of Virginia Library. Item 80. To Chamberlain. 11/24/93. Hereafter referred to as Barrett Collection.
17) Barrett Collection, Item 111. To Chamberlain. 10/10/94.
18) Ichikawa, pp. 150-52. To Nishida. 7/25/95.
19) Manuscript letter to Ellwood Hendrick dated 9/30/94, in The New York Public Library. (I wish to thank the New York Public Library for permission to see their manuscript collection of Hearn's letters to Hendrick).
20) *Writings*, XVI, 257. To Chamberlain. 9/11/94. A similar need was expressed in a letter to Amenomori, quoted by Bisland in *Writings*, XIII, 122: "I have been so isolated, that I must acknowledge the weakness of wishing to be among Englishmen again—with all their prejudices and conventions."
21) *Writings*, XVI, 261. To Chamberlain. 9/12/94. Omitted by Bisland.
22) Ichikawa, p 150-52. To Nishida. 7/25/95.
23) Ichikawa, p. 133. To Nishida. 10/23/95.
24) *Writings*, XVI, 261. To Chamberlain. 9/12/94.
25) To Nishida. 1/30/95. Photocopied manuscript, p.136.
26) *Ibid.*, To Nishida. 1/30/95.
27) *Writings*, XVI, 285. To Mason. 7/30/92.
28) Barrett Collection, Item 114. To Chamberlain. 11/3/94.
29) *Writings*, XIV, 310. To Chamberlain. 1/95.
30) *Writings*, XV, 35. To Ellwood Hendrick 1896.
31) *Writings*, XV, 41. To Ellwood Hendrick. 10/96.

32) *Writings*, XV, 46-47. To Ellwood Hendrick. 11/96.
33) *Writings,* XV, 61. To Nishida. (no day or month) 1897.
34) *Writings*, XV, 45-46. To Ellwood Hendrick. 11/96.
35) *Writings*, XV, 50. To Ellwood Hendrick, 5/97.
36) Elizabeth Stevenson, *Lafcadio Hearn* (New York: Octagon Books, 1979), p. 291.
37) Ichikawa, p. 33. To Nishida. 6/27/92.
38) *Writings*, XV, 245. To Mrs. Wetmore. (no day or month) 1903.
39) For a detailed account of the political intrigue and its effect on Hearn's post, see Masayuki Kawarabata, "Lafcadio Hearn at the Dai-Go-Koto-Chugakko," *Kumamoto University Hobun Ronso 17*, November 1964, pp. 48-64 (in Japanese).
40) *Writings*, XV, 51. To Ellwood Hendrick. 5/97.
41) *Writings*, XV, 46. To Ellwood hendrick. 11/96.
42) Ichikawa, p. 120. To Nishida. 7/8/94.
43) Barrett Collection, Items 95, 96. To Chamberlain. 6/94.
44) To Chamberlain. 6/4/1894. Omitted by Bisland.
45) Barrett Collection, Item 103. To Chamberlain. 7/22/94. Omitted by Bisland (*Writings*, XVI, 235). See also a letter to Amenomori quoted in *Writings*, XIII, 121-22.
46) Barrett Collection, Item 54. To W.B. Mason. 8/6/92. Omitted by Bisland (*Writings*, XVI, 289).
47) Harold S. Williams, *Foreigners in Mikadoland* (Rutland, Vermont: Tuttle, 1963).
48) Takeuchi Hiroshi, *Rainichi Seyoujin Jiten* (Japanese Biographical Dictionary), p. 235.
49) To W.B. Mason. 10/7/93 (misdated 1892).
50) *Writings*, XV, 42-43. To Ellwood Hendrick. 10/96. According to Ivan Hall's translation of Tetsujiro Inoue's *Reminiscences* as quoted in Kazuyuki Kitamura's *Daigaku Kyoiku no Kokusaika* (Tokyo: Tamagawa Daigaku Suppanbu), p. 40, Inoue supported the firing of dispensible foreign staff: "We had many foreigners as teachers at Tokyo University in the early years of Meiji, in order to make up the deficiency in Japanese professors. In principle, however, professors at Japanese universities should all be Japanese. Accordingly, we managed to dismiss the foreign instructors relatively quickly from the Faculties of Medicine, Law, and Science so that there was not one of them left. That was the policy throughout the university. In the Faculty of Letters, too, we were guided by the belief that every field should be taught exclusively by Japanese staff, and that the number of foreigners should gradually be reduced and ultimately eliminated altogether."
51) *Writings*, XV, 42-43. To Ellwood Hendrick. 10/96.
52) *Writings*, XVI, 119-20, To Chamberlain. 2/12/94.
53) Barrett Collection, Item 95. To Chamberlain. 6/20/94. Omitted by Bisland.
54) To Nishida. 9/30/94.
55) Ichikawa, p. 125. To Nishida. 8/5/94.
56) Ichikawa, pp. 144-45. To Nishida. 3/9/95.
57) *Writings*, XV, 43-44. To Ellwood Hendrick. 11/96.
58) Ichikawa, pp. 129-30. To Nishida. 9?/94. "There is intrigue of which the wires end both in Kumamoto and in the Mombusho.... The boys are good, and I am sorry to leave some of them . . . but in the present condition of the school even honest teaching is difficult."
59) Ichikawa, pp. 357-58. To Jigoro Kano. 9/14/94.
60) *Writings*, XV, 62-63. To Nishida. (no month) 17/97.