

No Ulysses He: the Migrancy of Lafcadio Hearn

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The inspiration for this contribution to the March 13th 2021 online conference organised by the University of Patras on *Lafcadio Hearn's Journey into Culture* harks back to late 2015. In the Autumn of 2015, the remarkable Lafcadio Hearn travelling exhibition was brought to Dublin. This exhibition was held in the Southern heart of the city, beside Stephen's Green, a compact park surrounded by an elegant Georgian square. On this square stood the Catholic University of Ireland, conceived in 1851 and founded in 1854, just as little Patrick Lafcadio Hearn was coming to Ireland. The University, which became about 150 years later under its new name, University College Dublin, Ireland's largest and self-styled global university, was assembled essentially by the famous English convert to Catholicism, Cardinal John Henry Newman. At the time of its foundation and almost up to the 1960s when it relocated to the suburbs of Dublin, it was the Catholic answer to the overwhelmingly Protestant Trinity College Dublin, founded by Queen Elizabeth 1st of England and historically a bastion of colonial hegemony.

The Hearn exhibition was held in a rather quirky, independent museum, appropriate titled 'The Little Museum', a venue located in the heart of Stephen's Green's more commercial side, right beside the large 'Stephen's Green Shopping Centre'. The theme of the exhibition was 'Coming Home'. This theme seemed to suggest that Ireland was Lafcadio Hearn's 'home' in some absolute sense. Home is, after all, quite simply the place from which one can be exiled. Unless, that is, as Pope Urban II famously declared of the Christian, 'exile is [one's] country, and [one's] country exile'.¹



¹ *De Gestis Regum Anglorum* (1095).



Like the Lafcadio Hearn conference held virtually from Patras in 2021, the colloquium held to mark the launch of the 'Coming Home' exhibition in Dublin benefited from the imprimatur of Lafcadio Hearn's great-grandson Bon Koizumi and of his great-granddaughter-in-law Shoko Koizumi. The pair are today the main curators of Lafcadio Hearn's memory and also the literal curators of the moving Hearn Residence and Museum in Matsue, Japan. The extraordinarily rich and aesthetically striking catalogue of this Lafcadio Hearn Memorial Museum is most aptly entitled 'Lafcadio Hearn: Tracing the Journey of an Open Mind'.

Unlike the 2015 Dublin exhibition conference, the March 2021 conference in Greece had to be held virtually of course. The online format of the 2021 Patras event meant that participants from outside Greece were deprived of the opportunity or released from the obligation of setting foot in the land – or at least on the archipelago – of Hearn's first home. Indeed, in abolishing distance and in connecting Hearn readers across so many different time-zones, the colloquium could hardly have reflected more strikingly the idea of cultural mobility reflected in the theme chosen for the conference: 'Hearn's Journey into Culture'. But what of the theme of the earlier 2015 exhibition conference? How true was its central concept of homecoming to the spirit of Hearn's imagination? More specifically, to what extent can Ireland plausibly be seen as Lafcadio Hearn's home(-land)?

Certainly, Patrick Lafcadio Hearn grew up in Ireland from the age of about two. Yet, although Ireland may have been his home address up to the age of about seventeen, he stopped living continuously in Ireland at the age of thirteen and though it may have remained home to him for longer, it was a somewhat troubled home. After his family's arrival there, Dublin was a place that the child's army-surgeon father only visited intermittently on furlough or at intervals between imperial postings. And it rather quickly became the place that first his mother and then his father fled or even deserted for alternative marriages. Both parents abandoned him there definitively for other preferred homes (in Greece and India respectively) and, most crucially, for other spouses, families and, ultimately, for other children. Afterwards, however, as he came of age, Hearn himself moved ever further away from Ireland, first to England, and then away from Europe: initially to the East Coast of the United States, then quickly inland to Ohio, whence he moved to Louisiana, the Caribbean and ultimately Japan. It is very difficult to see in this context how he could have continued to call Ireland home. His letters certainly show no obvious feeling of nostalgia for the island or any desire to return there. There is, indeed, no evidence that he regards himself as an exile from Europe in the USA, or indeed as an exile from the scene of his upbringing (Ireland), much less from the place of his formal schooling (England).

What was Ireland to Hearn then? To begin with, the island was part of the British-Norman archipelago and was as such the colonial home of his father's hyphenated people: those Anglo-Irish settlers who had hailed originally from England. Ireland was also, however, his mother's place of catastrophic exile. It was the place where little Patrick Hearn the boy grew from toddlerhood into adolescence. Unlike his Southern birthplace, however, this British Isle was a cold grey land on the outer edge of Europe, far west and north of the sun-soaked Mediterranean basin. Neither Hearn's colourful Greek middle-name, Lafcadio, nor his sallow skin colour, nor his mother's Mediterranean nature or culture, belonged in Ireland. Instead, they all marked him as foreign.



Secondly, Ireland was the place of Hearn's childhood stories, mainly ghost stories: tales of death and loss, stories of the dispossessed and of the restless departed. It was where he heard the stories, the oral tales transmitted in Hiberno-English by the non-hyphenated Irish 'help': he absorbed this lore from the women and the men who worked in the homes and gardens of his extended Irish family in Dublin, but also in Tramore and in Cong – and indeed across the Irish sea-water too (in Bangor, a North Wales coastal town). It was also where Hearn was essentially home-schooled by private tutors, where he learned to read and write, in English, of course, his father-tongue. At about six or seven years of age he lost, definitively, all physical connection with his motherland, mother tongue, and mother lore. Perhaps, however, he didn't altogether lose the memory of these inscapes, or of their loss.

Thirdly, Ireland was the place where Hearn was effectively orphaned and where his nuclear family terminally exploded. Father and mother both abandoned him there, after all, to the care of his widowed, childless, Catholic convert grand-aunt, Sarah Brenane. His father took off for India with another woman and with her children by a different spouse when Patrick Lafcadio was only about seven; his traumatized mother had returned home to Greece some time before this, pregnant with Lafcadio's brother, christened Charles Cassimatis in Greece. Lafcadio would never see either his mother or his father again after this double abandonment. He would see his surviving brother only very fleetingly and indeed for the last time in Dublin (an elder brother had died in Greece not long before Lafcadio's own birth). This younger brother, rechristened James Daniel in Ireland, had been dispatched by his mother from Greece to facilitate a fresh start in Greece with her new husband, presumably. It did not take Rosa's in-laws long to send this utterly unwanted child across the Irish sea.² James Daniel Hearn was fostered from a very young age by family connections in Scotland, whereas his elder brother was educated only from the age of thirteen at boarding school in England.

Finally, Ireland was the place that cast Hearn and his brother out and ultimately washed its hands of him. They were both sent back to Britain, whence their father's family had migrated centuries previously. Patrick Lafcadio's Dublin guardian first sent him away to the Catholic seminary school in Ushaw, but then, when she believed she could no longer afford to pay his school fees, his formal education was cut short. Eventually, after he had spent some time aimlessly in London, it appears that he was dispatched with an introduction to a family connection in Ohio. He and his full sibling, James Daniel, would both coincidentally settle unbeknownst to each other in Ohio. The latter stayed on in this mid-western state whereas Patrick Lafcadio's star drew him further afield. It was only when that star started calling him to Japan that he entered into a brief, initially guarded but eventually more freely reminiscing correspondence with his Ohio-based, rancher brother. The correspondence was centred on Lafcadio's passionate memories of their mother and was perhaps for that reason too painful for him to prolong. By contrast, his letters to and from one of his three half-sisters, born in India of his father's second marriage, were more relaxed and extensive, and less focused on a painful past.

Neither the Ionian island of Hearn's birth, nor Ireland, nor even Europe were ever what one might term an Ithaca for the migrant writer that Lafcadio Hearn would become. These

² See Henry Tracy Kneeland, 'An Interview with James Daniel Hearn, Lafcadio Hearn's brother', *Atlantic Monthly*, January 1923, pp. 20-27.



places of origin were in no way spaces to which he would dream of returning. Like Greece and like Europe, Ireland probably did haunt him, however, in the shape of the folklore – fairy-stories and ghost-stories – that inhabited his imagination, much as did the (hi)stories of Ancient Greece and Rome, the myth of Odysseus and the story of Pompei for example. At the end of his life, however, neither ghost-land, neither Ireland nor Greece, neither the fatherland nor the motherland, was the principal location to which he returned in his dreams. Instead, it would appear that, at the start of his life in Japan, his imagination was still overwhelmingly fixated upon the Tropics.³ This world, from which he had departed in 1889 is perhaps standing in, however, for everything that he ever left behind, for everything that he finds himself yearning or even pining for in Japan. Even if, about twelve years later, as his heart started to wear out, it was of a university posting to the USA as a Lecturer on Japan that he dreamed, this posting was still – to some extent at least – associated in his mind with his Juvenilia, including his work on ‘Southern’ subjects, including the (for him, seminal) archipelagos of the Caribbean⁴.

Ulysses’ return to Ithaca magnetises the Odyssey from the outset. The entire wandering of Homer’s hero is predicated upon, or at least structured around, the idea of eventual return. It would be an understatement, then, to say that Hearn was no Ulysses and his journey no Odyssey. He was either too homeless or his sense of home was too disturbed, too dispersed for him to feel the nostalgic urge to return to the place ‘whence he had come’ or ‘to which he belonged’. In that sense, Hearn can perhaps be best regarded as a serially migrant author. Even in his early fifties, towards the end of his tragically brief life, he was starting to become restless in Japan and was beginning to think *not necessarily of an actual return to the Tropics* but rather of a new departure to a whole different set of tropical islands. He is still pining for the Tropical bandwidth, certainly, but he is also envisaging new adventures in the Philippines or indeed in the archipelagos of the Indian Ocean off Africa, rather than simply pining for the more familiar lost Tropical world of the Caribbean, the Atlantic and the Americas.⁵

Lafcadio Hearn is one of a small handful of world-scale expatriate writers who had Irish childhoods. And of this very small group he is perhaps the one who has the most to say to our century of mass intercontinental migration and mass creolization. It thus appears inevitable that Ireland will eventually move in the 21st century to claim him as one of the three greatest expatriate writers of Irish origin and upbringing (alongside James Joyce and Samuel Beckett). It follows from Hearn’s serial migrancy that his writings could never and would never be identified as belonging to one national literary tradition rather than another. He might be

³ In a letter written from Matsue to Ellwood Hendrick in 1891: ‘Don’t please imagine there are any tropics here. Ah! the tropics—they still pull at my heart-strings. Goodness! my real field was there—in the Latin countries, in the West Indies and Spanish-America; and my dream was to haunt the old crumbling Portuguese and Spanish cities, and steam up the Amazon and Orinoco, and get romances nobody else could find. And I could have done it, and made books that would sell for twenty years yet. Perhaps, however, it’s all for the best: I might have been killed in that Martinique hurricane. And then, I think I may see the tropics on this side of the world yet,—the Philippines, the Straits Settlements,—perhaps Reunion or Madagascar. (When I get rich!)’, *The Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn*, vol.2 ed. Elizabeth Bisland, Boston & New York, Houghton Mifflin, 1906, p.63.

⁴ In a letter to Mrs Wetmore (Elizabeth Bisland’s married name) from Tokyo, dated 1903: ‘I have also something to say about your proposed “Juvenilia.” I think this would be possible:— To include in one volume under the title of “Juvenilia”—(1) the translations from Théophile Gautier, revised; (2) “Some Chinese Ghosts;” (3) miscellaneous essays and sketches upon Oriental subjects, formerly contributed to the *T.-D.*; (4) miscellaneous sketches on Southern subjects, two or three, and fantasies,—with a few verses thrown in.’, *Ibid.*, p. 500.

⁵ See above, n. 3.



more plausibly classified as an Anglo-Irish, British or American writer than as a Greek or Japanese author because of the fact that he wrote in English, rather than Greek or Japanese. Yet no one of these classifications is sufficient to capture fully his multinational, multilingual affinities and affiliations. Only a multiply hyphenated construction could be true to the latter.

Today Hearn lives on through his works much more vibrantly in Japan than in any other place in the world. Furthermore, Japan incontestably does more than any other country on earth to keep Hearn's legacy alive wherever there is a Japanese community and embassy. It is an interesting fact that his work attracts, by comparison with its enduring reputation in Japan, only a tiny following in contemporary North America. He is, however, remembered as a local writer much more in Cincinnati than he is in New Orleans, which almost seems intent on forgetting him. In New Orleans in 2019, just one book of his – the Creole cookbook⁶ – was on sale in two of the city's main bookshops. As for Hearn's renown in Ireland, thanks in great measure to a handful of inspired individuals such as Agnes Aylward, who created and now curates the monumentally meaningful Lafcadio Hearn gardens in Tramore and to Jean Pasley, whose recent novel *Black Dragonfly*⁷ is inspired by his life and life's work, his writings have never been as present in the Emerald Isle as in this new millennium. He is also most faithfully remembered in the French Caribbean where he left his heart in 1889 and to which he continued to return over and over in his mind when he lived in Japan. Contrasting with the relative indifference towards Hearn's work that is (or that was, at least, in 2019) so apparent in the bookshops of New Orleans, the prominent display of the French translations of his works a few years previously in the main bookshop in Fort-de-France illustrates Martinique's fidelity to his memory.

⁶ Lafcadio Hearn, *La Cuisine créole: A Collection of Culinary Receipts from Leading Chefs and Noted Creole Housewives, who have made New Orleans famous for its Cuisine*, New York: W.H. Coleman, 1885.

⁷ London: Balestier Press, 2021.





Hearn can perhaps best be characterized as a transnational and even transcontinental writer, at home above all in his writing life. While it is true that his life has been infinitely more closely studied than have his works, his literary legacy is marked by a striking continuity of purpose. As an author, he was, constitutionally, a *passeur*, a serial, border-crossing migrant, a vocational trans-lator, moving between languages and cultural worlds, bringing stories across from one to the other. In that sense, most of Hearn's writing registers his life story, while also refracting it. The early disturbance and displacement and the brutal loss of connection with his mother's language, land and lore is certainly registered in his sketches and stories, most directly perhaps in his focus on the theme of mother-child relations, for example, but also more indirectly, in his gravitation as an author towards the languages, lands and lores of *others*. Hearn's life journey towards other places began only a very few years after his birth in the Mediterranean sea on a Greek archipelago in 1850 and ended with his death in the Pacific on the Nippon archipelago in 1904. He spent his first two years of life by the Ionian sea and his next eleven years by the Irish sea (Dublin, Tramore, Bangor...). He spent most of the following four years of his life between Dublin and Durham in England and then two years at a loose end, largely, according to his biographers, in London. His eight inland, not to say landlocked years in Ohio were an aberration in relation to his life of largely coastal dwelling, although even in Cincinnati, his writings register the central place occupied in his imagination by the fluidity and mobility associated with river ports and river-life. The following ten years he spent absolutely immersed in the coastal space of archipelagos – firstly those washed by the Caribbean sea and then by the Pacific Ocean. So from the Ionian archipelago (1850-1852), he moved to the British Isles, or at least Ireland (1852-1863) and thence to boarding-school in England (1863-1867) and from there via London and New York (1867-1869) and Cincinnati (1869-1877), on to Louisiana and Florida (1877-1887) with a trip to the Caribbean and a stay in Martinique (1887-1889), before his sojourn in Japan 1890-1904.

The genres in which Hearn excelled were newspaper/magazine sketches and stories. These were all, essentially, cultural studies and they fall into four main categories: firstly, original short fiction (principally his Creole 'Fantastics' and two novellas); secondly, cultural/ethnographic sketches and travel writing (eg. *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation* (1904) and *Two Years in the French West Indies* (1890)); thirdly, folklore collections: traditional tales, proverbs, recipes etc.; fourthly, literary adaptations and translations (essentially from the French). The closest he came to producing original literary works were his two novellas: first *Chita: a Memory of Last Island* (1889) and then *Youma: the Story of a West Indian Slave* (1890). Arguably, a fifth body of work is just as important as any of the foregoing: namely the story of Hearn's own life, inner and outer, as it unfolds in real time in his letters. This (apparently less constructed) composition contains some of his most accomplished and stimulating writing.

Hearn's Creole Tropism can be clearly seen in the way he became fascinated in Cincinnati with the culture of the black ghettos of the city and particularly with the music and the language of these quarters. The essence of creoleness derives, after all, from the context of colonial displacement and re-settlement of Africans and Europeans, against the backdrop of slavery and of the associated cultural contact, interrelation but also segregation across racial lines. In that sense, the levee ghettos of Cincinnati were proto-Creole environments and the culture of these spaces clearly captivated Hearn. Indeed, he found them



so compelling that he spent the following decade of his life exploring one of the most vibrant Creole heartlands of the Americas, namely Louisiana and the Caribbean.⁸

Decisive as Lafcadio Hearn's focus on (folk-) cultural interpretation and curatorship is, several of his biographer-critics locate the essence of his quiddity as a writer less in his published work than in his all-determining, constitutional migrancy. Thus Jonathan Cott entitles his study of Hearn *Wandering Ghost: The Odyssey of Lafcadio Hearn*.⁹ There can be no doubt, of course, that Hearn was indeed a wandering, migrant writer and that his life-story was haunted from the start by absences and abdications, and by sometimes harrowing hauntings. Yet Cott's subtitle, which includes the term 'Odyssey', suggests a journey-narrative that is over-determined in many respects by a teleology. This is not just because, like most narratives it moves towards a conclusion or an ending. It is also because this particular narrative is supposedly focused on the return to Ithaca. Homer's *Odyssey* is indeed every bit as much a story of return as it is a tale of departure and adventure; in other words, the *Odyssey* would not be the *Odyssey* if it hadn't included a return. And yet, no more than James Joyce's European exile – in Trieste, Paris, Zurich – or Samuel Beckett's more settled Paris exile too, Lafcadio Hearn's transcontinental trajectory was in no way oriented towards an eventual return to the 'home' island. Unlike the reference to Ulysses in his subtitle, Cott's main titular phrase 'Wandering Ghost' and Ciaran Murray's titular phrase 'Otherworld Pilgrim'¹⁰ in no way imply ascribe a teleological dimension to Hearn's mobility¹¹. The same could indeed be said of the title of Paul Murray's study: *A Fantastic Journey: the Life and Literature of Lafcadio Hearn*.

In 1998, the postcolonial critic Chris Bongie, based in Canada, produced a work that includes a study of Hearn. Bongie entitled this work *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/Colonial Literatures*¹². Although Hearn's life-story and his writings engage intensively with island spaces, with colonialism and with displacement, it is difficult to see how he can be regarded as an exile specifically from Ireland or from Greece. He can at most, perhaps, be regarded as a serial exile; that is, as a nomad. And yet, whereas the idea of Hearn as a Ulysses is implausible, the notion that he was a cosmopolitan, equally at home in any number of places across the whole world, is not quite credible either. There is something altogether too comfortable about the expansive state of the cosmopolitan as characterized by Timothy Brennan for it to fit Hearn's situation: *At Home in the World; Cosmopolitanism Now*¹³. Jonathan Cott's inclusion of the word 'Ghost' in the title of his book on Hearn and Ciaran Murray's reference to the 'Otherworld' in the title of his study, as well as Chris Bongie's evocation of his association with the Creole world provide perhaps the most pertinent clues to Hearn's positioning. The exponential losses and the radical homelessness that propelled him out of Europe to begin with, and that then drove his restless, serial displacement onwards from one location to another in the Americas and then across Japan, also explains his affinity with the Creole world. The Creole is, after all, the historically transoceanic immigrant whose

⁸ Mary Gallagher, 'Lafcadio Hearn's American Writings and the Creole Continuum', in *American Creoles: the Francophone Caribbean and the American South*, ed. Martin Munro and Celia Britton, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012, pp. 19-39.

⁹ New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991.

¹⁰ Ciaran Murray, Preface to *Sayonara, Japanese Folklore Collected by Patrick Lafcadio Hearn*, translated by Pádraig Mac Cearáin, Dublin: Coiscéim Press, 2018, pp. v-vii.

¹¹ Folkstone: The Japan Library, 1993.

¹² Stanford, CA: Stanford U.P., 1998.

¹³ Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1997.



displacement was either a voluntary adventure (for Europeans), a much more ambiguous sort of indenture (for Asians), or – most consequentially – a coerced mass-transportation into the absolute capitalist-racist alienation of chattel plantation slavery (for Africans). The ambiguity surrounding the question as to which of these origins applies most to a given Creole is compounded by the overlapping and superimposition that ensued in the post-colonial, creolized world. It is hard, however, to see how Hearn could have identified as a displaced Creole settler in Cincinnati, New Orleans, the Caribbean or even in Japan, where he became a naturalized citizen. He might have been drawn to people(s) of multiple or mixed origins, just as he might have taken a special interest in the existential and cultural fallout of displacement, but his interest in writing about Creoles and in objectifying them seems to bespeak empathy or affinity rather than any sense of direct identification, affiliation or association. Hearn's own displaced and mixed origins – which were not transoceanic or transcontinental, but rather quite clearly Endo-European if transnational – are what separate him from the Creoles.

When did Lafcadio Hearn's own displacement and resettlement story begin? He would, perhaps, have grown up in Greece, speaking Greek, had his army surgeon father not been transferred by the British military to the Caribbean when Hearn was an infant. Having already lost his first son to illness, and not wishing to jeopardize his second son's health by taking his family to the West Indies, Charles Bush Hearn decided, perhaps bowing to family pressure, that they would not be abandoned in Greece either but would rather be brought to his home in Ireland. The author would later claim in a piece entitled 'The City of the South' published in New Orleans on November 29th in 1877 that he had first heard Creole spoken in England by the 'children of an English family from Trinidad who were visiting relatives in the mother country'¹⁴. Although there were, then, these early biographical brushes with cultural diversity and mixture and even with the Caribbean in his early childhood and colonial youth, Hearn moved infinitely closer to the Creole world when he settled in Cincinnati, Ohio and became a writer. He produced over 400 pieces of journalism over the seven to eight years that he spent in this city. Most of these appeared in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* and then in the rival newspaper that Hearn was obliged to move to after the former outlet felt obliged to dispense with his services owing to his felony (the illegal marriage that he had contracted with Mattie Foley in defiance of Ohio's anti-miscegenation law). It was also for the *Cincinnati Commercial* that he continued to work initially after he moved to New Orleans, sending them back the kind of copy for which he had managed to extract a commission. As the individual titles of Hearn's journalistic articles/stories show, he was particularly interested in the people who lived on the social margins of Ohio's young and prosperous river-port city: 'Pariah People', 'Black Varieties', 'Banjo Jim's Story', 'Children of the Levee'. The subjects of his writing included, in particular, displaced Africans, but also the displaced Irish, who populated the city's laboring, colourful ghettos.

Even a cursory glance at Hearn's oeuvre shows that he was, above all, a storyteller. Furthermore, of all narratives it is the folktale that is central in his work. This explains the deep connection with the oral tradition that permeates all of his writings. It also makes sense of his narrators' frequent references to local sources, mediums or informants. A further tendency in his work is his obsession with ghost stories, tales of the supernatural, tales of loss, especially childhood losses. In that sense, Hearn's telling of the stories of the port district of Cincinnati,

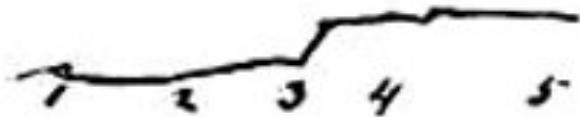
¹⁴ S. Frederick Starr (ed.), *Inventing New Orleans; Writings by Lafcadio Hearn*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001, p.16.



of the streets and courtyards of New Orleans, of the waterlands of Louisiana and Florida, of the Caribbean islands and of the Japanese archipelago could perhaps be regarded as ghostwriting. In other words, the author is often represented as transmitting not just stories about ghosts, but the stories told to him by others, others whose voices he somehow 'ghosts' by replacing their narration, their voices, their perspective etc. with his own.

In the words of the renowned author of 'The Storyteller', the latter 'takes what he [*sic*] tells from experience, his [*sic*] own or that reported by others'.^{15*} In Hearn's case, most of his stories are drawn from the experience of others. His Cincinnati journalism includes, for example, two of his wife - Mattie Foley's -stories: 'Some Strange Experience: The Reminiscence of a Ghost-Seer - Being the Result of a Chat on the Kitchen- Stairs', first published in the *Cincinnati Commercial*, September 26, 1875 and based on his wife's ghost-seer experience as a Kentucky slave; and 'Dolly: an Idyll of the Levee', also published in the *Cincinnati Commercial*, on August 27, 1876. This story is based on Mattie's relationship with her small son. Far from positioning himself as a ghostwriter, however, Hearn has his narrator place his source, the woman storyteller, in the foreground of the story. This highlighting of the mediation process is indeed standard practice for Hearn in his transmission of local Caribbean lore also.¹⁶

For Walter Benjamin, there are two types of storyteller because there are two types of story. First there are the stories of 'the past, as it best reveals itself to natives of a place'; second there is the lore 'of faraway places such as a much-traveled man brings home'.¹⁷ Hearn was not, of course, a native of the places of which he wrote; he was rather Benjamin's 'much-traveled man', much-traveled either virtually – through reading or physically and materially – to 'faraway places'. He adapted and transmitted second- or third-hand ghost-stories from China, for example, just as he translated into writing the stories he heard in the Cincinnati ghettos, in the New Orleans 'Vieux Carré' and in the countryside, villages and towns of Martinique and Japan. He didn't just translate the oral stories into writing, but also into English. Of all his translations or adaptations, these are perhaps the most read today. And they are perhaps most widely read in Japan and in the Francophone Caribbean, not in the original (English) published version, but rather in the Japanese or French translation. In that sense, the truth about Hearn is that, as a writer was not so much at home in the whole world as wide open to the stories of every body and of every place and that he was, in that sense, a world writer, a mediator of the diverse cultural worlds embedded within stories, particularly stories of loss.



¹⁵ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, London: Fontana/Collins, 1982, 'The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov', pp. 83-110, p. 85.

¹⁶ Mary Gallagher, 'The Creole folktale in the Writing of Lafcadio Hearn', in *The Conte: Oral and Written Dynamics*, ed. Janice Carruthers and Maeve McCusker, Oxford, Peter Lang, 2010, pp. 133-152.

¹⁷ See above, n.14.

