

## THE POLITICS OF NOSTALGIA IN *VESTIGES OF JAPAN*: YAMADA TAICHI'S REPRESENTATION OF LAFCADIO HEARN

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“[Lafcadio Hearn] became the interpreter of a Japanese soul that the Japanese themselves were loathe to expose or recognize until, once safely modernized, they could take it up again and rediscover him as the emperor of their bruised nostalgia”

(Roger Pulvers, 2000) .<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Over a hundred years have passed since the noted Japanophile Lafcadio Hearn or Koizumi Yakumo (1850-1904) died. Yet he still looms large in Japan as its most celebrated foreign interpreter and as the great connoisseur of its traditions. His very name has come to symbolize a so-called Old Japan, the essence of which is said to have been lost during the rapid modernization since the Meiji Restoration in 1868. Needless to say, Old Japan is a construct used to indicate the values and traditions of the pre-Meiji Japan, while New Japan refers to the increasingly industrialized Japan of the Meiji era and beyond. Today Japanese commonly use Hearn as a vehicle of nostalgia. By celebrating Hearn, they attempt to re-examine Japan's politics and directions and to re-evaluate the lost, buried past. As Ōta says, Hearn appeals to “those Japanese who felt rootless after modernization destroyed their traditional way of living”.<sup>2</sup>

Yamada Taichi (1934-), one of the most famous and popular playwrights in Japan today, is one such admirer. In his play on Hearn, *Nihon no omokage – Rafukadio Hān no sekai* (Vestiges of Japan: The World of Lafcadio Hearn, 2002), he uses Hearn as a vehicle of nostalgia.<sup>3</sup> He once talked about the intentions of his play in an interview as follows: “In the process of becoming a world power, Japan has ruined the sensibility that has been formed during its long history. I would like to look at and re-examine what

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1 Roger Pulvers, “A Divided Reputation, Lafcadio Hearn: Interpreter of Two Disparate Worlds”, *The Japan Times*, 19 January 2000, pp. 17-21, also available at <http://www.trussel.com/hearn/pulvers.htm>. In this paper, I have followed the Japanese name order for Japanese personal names, which is surname first, followed by given name.

2 Ōta Yūzō, *Rafukadio Hān – Kyojō to jitsuzō* (Lafcadio Hearn: Image and Reality), Tokyo: Iwanami shinsho, 1994, p. 189.

3 See Yamada Taichi, *Nihon no omokage – Rafukadio Hān no sekai* (Vestiges of Japan: The World of Lafcadio Hearn), Tokyo: Iwanami gendai bunko, 2002.

we have lost and abandoned”.<sup>4</sup> What he wishes to tackle through Hearn is the issue he calls “distortion” (*yugami*), the moral decay of contemporary Japan seen at school, in the family, and in society as a whole.<sup>5</sup>

*Vestiges of Japan* was first written as a television drama in 1984 and was a huge success, having triggered a “Yakumo [Hearn] boom” (*Yakumo būmu*) in Japan from the mid-1980s.<sup>6</sup> This was a time when the Japanese, exhausted with the frenzied postwar development, realized how much of their traditional homeland had disappeared through the headlong economic growth of the 1960s and 70s. This sense of loss can be seen in the nostalgic “hometown boom” (*furusato būmu*) and the Japanese National Railway campaign slogan, “Discover Japan” around this period.<sup>7</sup> *Vestiges of Japan* was a timely work that touched the hearts of postwar Japanese. The play has been repeatedly performed on the stage ever since and remains popular.<sup>8</sup>

Although the play is performed in Japanese, a distinction is made between Hearn’s English conversation and his Japanese conversation. In real life, Hearn communicated with Westerners and educated Japanese (who could speak English) in English (in the play this is represented through the use of fluent Japanese), while he used a pidgin Japanese in communication with his wife and common people (despite his reputation, Hearn could only speak a unique form of pidgin Japanese, which is popularly called the “Hearn dialect” (*Herun-san kotoba*); in the play this is represented through the use of a pidgin Japanese).

To a large extent, the play is based on Hearn’s life in Japan, and follows biographical facts. Still Yamada chooses to present some facts as well as to omit others. It goes without saying that to celebrate Hearn is a nationalistic endeavour. Roy Starrs was right to call Hearn a “Japanese nationalist”.<sup>9</sup> The term “nationalist”, however, would often be rejected in Japan today, since it has nefarious connotations due to the notorious image of wartime nationalism. In fact nationalism “has long been identified

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4 Yamada Taichi, cited in Kimura Kōichi, “Kaisetsu” (Comment), in Yamada, *Nihon no omokage*, pp. 383-91, at p. 387.

5 Yamada, cited in Kimura, “Kaisetsu”, p. 388.

6 Sekita Kaoru, “Rafukadio Hān, Koizumi Yakumo, nenpu” (Lafcadio Hearn, Koizumi Yakumo, A Chronological Record), in Hirakawa Sukehiro ed., *Koizumi Yakumo jiten* (The Koizumi Yakumo Encyclopedia), Tokyo: Kōbunsha, 2000, pp. 703-31, at p. 730.

7 Koizumi Bon, *Minzokugakusha Koizumi Yakumo – Nihon jidai no katsudō kara* (The Folklorist Koizumi Yakumo: From Hearn’s Japan Years), Tokyo: Kōbunsha, 1995, p. 166. According to Marilyn Ivy, “Discover Japan was the first highly visible, mass campaign urging Japanese to discover what remained of the premodern past in the midst of its loss”. Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 34.

8 Hayakawa Kazuo, “Nihon bungaku e no eikyō” (The Impact on Japanese Literature), in Hirakawa ed., *Koizumi Yakumo jiten*, pp. 451-56, at p. 452. *Vestiges of Japan* was also performed overseas in places such as Ireland.

9 Roy Starrs, “Lafcadio Hearn as Japanese Nationalist”, *Japan Review*, no. 18, 2006, pp. 181-213.

with fascism, militarism, and expansionism”.<sup>10</sup> What Starrs means by “nationalist” is not so different from this notorious political nationalism. Indeed he defines the word as synonymous with a “militant modern state nationalist”.<sup>11</sup> Although his tone is not accusatory, Starrs is nevertheless in danger of provoking anger among lovers of Hearn.

Conscious of this postwar Japanese sensitivity about nationalism, Yamada has drawn a distinction between two nationalisms, political and cultural, and confines Hearn to the latter.<sup>12</sup> In order to differentiate Hearn from the so-called nationalists (political nationalists), Yamada has depoliticized Hearn as a romantic folklorist, and demilitarized pre-modern Japan as a country of child-like innocence. Hearn is in fact frequently defined as a folklorist in postwar Japan.<sup>13</sup> Because of the non-authoritarian and egalitarian stance of folklore, its love of tradition is not offensive to those who are critical of the wartime political nationalism.<sup>14</sup> Yamada realizes this point and presents Hearn as an agent of nostalgia – a nationalist of more ‘acceptable’ kind.

In this paper, I will discuss *Vestiges of Japan*, focusing on the politics of nostalgia. What I mean by the politics of nostalgia is the political nature of Yamada’s obsession with nostalgia (and his resolute rejection of political nationalism). As a result, my primary concern here is not to examine the biographical accuracy of the text, but to clarify the image of Hearn (and Japan) that Yamada has attempted to create. (At times, of course, an examination of biographical accuracy will shed light on Yamada’s intentions.) I will also discuss what this representation means in the context of contemporary Japan. First of all, however, let us look at the story.

## The Story

The play begins in 1884 in New Orleans, where Hearn works for a newspaper company as a journalist. It is “the age of science”, and many celebrate its rationality.<sup>15</sup> In reality it was also the age of pragmatism. A ‘pragmatic’ work such as Samuel Smiles’ (1812-1904) *Self Help* (1859) “became a bible for young Japanese men eager to emulate Western

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10 Asaba Michiaki, *Nashonarizumu – meicho de tadoru Nihon shisō nyūmon* (Nationalism: An Introduction to Japanese Thought through Great Books), Tokyo: Chikuma shinsho, 2004, p. 25.

11 Starrs, “Lafcadio Hearn as Japanese Nationalist”, p. 191.

12 Museum representations of Hearn do exactly the same thing. See Rie Kido Askew, “The Politics of Nostalgia: Museum Representations of Lafcadio Hearn in Japan”, *Museum and Society*, vol. 5, no. 3, November 2007, pp. 131-147.

13 See, for instance, Koizumi, *Minzokugakusha Koizumi Yakumo*.

14 Nakamura Akira, *Yanagita Kunio no shisō: Shinpan* (The Thought of Yanagita Kunio: A New Edition), Tokyo: Hōsei daigaku shuppankyoku, 1974, p. 51.

15 Yamada, *Nihon no omokage*, p. 11.

ways".<sup>16</sup> Yet Hearn is not interested in science and pragmatism, but in the irrational such as ghosts and superstitions. Because of this peculiar stance, he is depicted as an eccentric; yet his love for the irrational is not just due to his eccentricity, but also to the idea that the scepticism inherent in the science and rationalism of the Enlightenment has missed something important. In the play, Hearn maintains this stance until his death.

The 1880s is also the age of the exhibition. New Orleans hosts one in 1884, and Hearn visits the venue as a journalist. This is where he encounters Japan for the first time. The official sent from Japan as a delegate is Mr. Hattori, who was indeed the Japanese delegate in real life. Hattori is depicted as a typical Meiji individual who makes an effort to behave well in order to gain the respect of Westerners. He says to his subordinate, Nishimura, "Though [Japan is] a small country, we [Japanese] need to demonstrate that we are an honorable nation".<sup>17</sup> For Hattori and Nishimura, Hearn appears to be a perplexing Westerner. They want to demonstrate that Japan is as 'civilized', 'modern' and 'rational' as the West, but Hearn is interested in the irrational such as the ghost stories of Old Japan. Nevertheless, Hattori and Hearn become good friends. Though Hattori is certainly in favour of modernization and rationalism, he is not the type of "arrogant, egoistic, rigid, and soulless" individual Hearn later criticizes in both real life and in the play as characteristic of the New Japan generation.<sup>18</sup> Hattori still maintains some of the time-honoured virtues of modesty and selflessness. The play is hereafter told from the perspective of Hattori, who maintains a neutral position between modernization (or rationalism) and tradition (or the irrational).

In both the play and real life, Hearn's passion for Japan continues after the exhibition and, in 1890, he finally arrives in Yokohama and lives in Japan until his death in 1904. In 1890, he secures a job as an English teacher at a middle school in Matsue, where old customs and manners linger on. Matsue represents the imagined Old Japan he has been yearning for. What he is especially attracted to is the gracefulness of the Izumo Shrine, one of the most famous Shintō shrines, and the kindness of the Matsue people including Mr. Nishida, who is the principal of Hearn's school, and Koizumi Setsuko, who first works as Hearn's maid and later becomes his wife. Nishida represents not just the old Japanese virtues such as kindness, but also "modern intelligence" (*kindaiteki chisei*).<sup>19</sup> In the play, as in reality, Hearn finds the combination admirable.

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16 Anon., "Samuel Smiles", in Kathleen Kuiper ed., *Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature*, Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, 1995, p. 1042. *Self Help* was translated into Japanese in 1871 and, according to Watanabe, sold one million copies in Japan – many more than the fifteen thousand copies sold in Britain. Watanabe Shōichi, "Nakamura Masanao to Samyueru Sumairuzu" (Nakamura Masanao and Samuel Smiles), in Samuel Smiles (Nakamura Masanao trans.), *Saigoku Rissishien* (Self Help), Tokyo: Kōdansha gakujutsu bunko, 1871/1981, pp. 544-56, at pp. 548, 546. Watanabe does not specify the period during which one million copies of *Self Help* were sold in Japan. As for Britain, the period is shown as from 1858 to 1889.

17 Yamada, *Nihon no omokage*, pp. 25-26.

18 Yamada, *Nihon no omokage*, p. 352.

19 Yamada, *Nihon no omokage*, p. 334.

One of Hearn's pleasures is to listen to his maid, Koizumi Setsuko, telling ghost stories with emotion. Setsuko is the daughter of a *samurai* who was obliged to lead a life of poverty after the Meiji Restoration (Yamada's Japanese audience will of course know that the Meiji government cut the financial support of the *samurai* and that, in the immediate post-1868 period, many *samurai* had become members of an impoverished ex-elite). Such being the case, Setsuko has no real education and cannot speak any English. The story-telling is conducted in the "Hearn dialect". This time spent together over ghost stories leads to love and marriage. Thus Hearn's life in Matsue is full of happiness.

Nevertheless, even in Matsue, Hearn cannot miss the encroaching signs of modernization. Young people, including his students, realize that Japan needs to modernize in order to compete with the West. For them, "rationalism and science were as gods to worship", and Hearn's advice, "do not be infected with the West. Observe the virtues of Japan", sounds hopelessly unrealistic and other-worldly.<sup>20</sup> Still, the Matsue students are respectful and polite, and many befriend Hearn, sometimes even visiting him at home. (This was not an unusual custom in Meiji Japan.)

Despite all his happiness in Matsue, Hearn cannot bear its cold winters and decides to leave for Kumamoto, in the south of Japan, where he teaches English at a prestigious high school. Unlike Matsue, however, Kumamoto is a modernized city, and represents the New Japan that he hates. The person who symbolizes this Kumamoto is Mr. Sakuma, Hearn's colleague. He is depicted as an arrogant, soulless individual whom Hearn dislikes as a typical New Japan product. Sakuma says to Hearn, "Old Japan is far from good. (...) There was poverty, superstition, and sexism".<sup>21</sup> For him, Hearn's idealization of Old Japan is a romanticism that the rapidly modernizing Meiji Japan can ill afford. Sakuma says, "Mr. Hearn, we have no time to participate in your [Japanophilic] hobby (...) Japan needs to become a powerful modern state, and combat the colonization of the World Powers".<sup>22</sup> Hearn realizes that there are more and more people like Sakuma in New Japan. The narrator, Hattori, though sympathizing with Hearn, shows some understanding of Sakuma's viewpoint.

His unpleasant experience in Kumamoto together with his homesickness for the West leads him to move to Kobe, a harbor town with many foreigners, where he works as a journalist. He says to his wife, Setsuko, "How great the West is! (...) Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, Shakespeare (...) there is no limit to its greatness".<sup>23</sup> The next moment, however, Hearn expresses a hatred for the arrogance of the West. Hearn's love and hate relationship with the West is thus intermingled with his love and hate relationship with Japan. When he misses the West, he hates Japan, and when he hates the West, he loves Japan.

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20 Yamada, *Nihon no omokage*, pp. 124, 102-03.

21 Yamada, *Nihon no omokage*, p. 256.

22 Yamada, *Nihon no omokage*, p. 298.

23 Yamada, *Nihon no omokage*, p. 303.

The 1890s and the early twentieth century during which Hearn resided in Japan coincides with the time Japan emerged as a world power, through military victories in the Sino-Japanese War, the Russo-Japanese War, and beyond. Even Hearn could not afford to remain a romantic. In a conversation with Hattori during the Russo-Japanese War, he notes, "I am not totally divorced from reality".<sup>24</sup> Though Hearn praises Japan's "admirable army and courageous navy", he also warns that if "they increase their power more and more, they will, one day, escape the control of the government".<sup>25</sup> In his last work, *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation* (1904), Hearn actually wrote that "her [Japan's] admirable army and her heroic navy may be doomed to make their last sacrifices in hopeless contest against some combination of greedy states, provoked or encouraged to aggression by circumstances beyond the power of Government to control".<sup>26</sup> Yamada thus sheds light on the pragmatic aspects of Hearn.

Hearn's oscillating love-and-hate relationship with Japan ends in disillusionment, which is linked directly to his dismissal in 1903 from the Tokyo Imperial University where he worked from 1896. The former Dean Tōyama, who had admired Hearn and invited him to join the English department, is now dead. The atmosphere is becoming unfriendly and even disrespectful. Hearn attributes his dismissal to the notion that he is unwanted by the New Japan. (In reality, Hearn, who was then naturalized as a Japanese citizen, negotiated with Dean Tōyama and made an arrangement to be employed as a Westerner, and was therefore paid three times as much as a Japanese professor. It may be true that a lover of Old Japan like Hearn was unwanted, but the direct reason for his dismissal was that Hearn's contract had ended and the university wanted to employ someone who was Japanese and therefore cheaper. Yamada includes a scene in which Hearn negotiates over his salary, yet attributes the dismissal to the fact that Hearn cannot fit into New Japan). Before his death, Hearn says to Setsuko, "Japan does not want me any more (...) simplicity, kindness, ghosts, smiles (...) the individual who loves these things is not wanted".<sup>27</sup> Thus Hearn died in 1904 in despair. Hattori's narrative sadly concludes the play with the following: "modern Japan developed, pushing these things [simplicity, kindness, ghosts, smiles] under the rug. In doing so, we gained much. Yet at the same time, we also lost many other things".<sup>28</sup>

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24 Yamada, *Nihon no omokage*, p. 354.

25 Yamada, *Nihon no omokage*, p. 355.

26 Lafcadio Hearn, *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*, New York and London: Macmillan, 1904, reprinted in Lafcadio Hearn (Elizabeth Bisland ed.), *The Writings of Lafcadio Hearn*, vol. 12, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1922, p. 434.

27 Yamada, *Nihon no omokage*, p. 358.

28 Yamada, *Nihon no omokage*, p. 359.

### Main Theme: The Cost of Modernization

Compared with other popular representations, which merely idealize Hearn as an uncritical Japanophile, *Vestiges of Japan* aspires to be more biographically correct.<sup>29</sup> It in fact depicts Hearn's love-and-hate relationship with Japan (and the West). It also introduces the most disillusioning episode in which he negotiates with Dean Tōyama about his salary. (This contradicts Hearn's popular image as an "anti-materialist" and may disappoint ordinary fans of Hearn.<sup>30</sup>)

However, these are marginal issues. Overall the play capitalizes on nostalgia, turning Hearn into a cultural icon. Like the Hollywood film *The Last Samurai* (2003), *Vestiges of Japan* contrasts an Old with a New Japan, and attributes nobility to the former and vulgarity to the latter.<sup>31</sup> This is a typical example of the anti-Western ideology, Occidentalism.<sup>32</sup> In the Occidentalist discourse, the West is viewed as soulless and materialistic, and is contrasted with the spiritual East. (Since New Japan was constructed under the Western influence, it is treated as a version of the West.) In both stories, the outsiders (the character played by Tom Cruise, and Lafcadio Hearn) side with Old Japan and grieve over the encroachment of New Japan.

*Vestiges of Japan*, however, takes a more balanced attitude to the issue of modernization than does *The Last Samurai*. This balance is also the fundamental difference between this play and other popular representations of Hearn. In *Vestiges of Japan*, the vices of modernization, such as the soullessness of Sakuma, are constantly modified by the narrator, Hattori, who has an ambiguous view of modernization. Indeed, instead of mercilessly denouncing Sakuma, Hattori refers to global socio-political realities, and shows an understanding of Sakuma as a necessary evil in a hastily modernizing Japan. The impact of Hearn's nostalgia is thus mitigated by Hattori's partial and qualified defence of New Japan. Moreover, because of the existence of respectable individuals such as Nishida (and probably Hattori too) who have both old virtues and "modern intelligence", and because of Hattori's description of the malignant state of a farm village, the contrast between a virtuous Old Japan and a vulgar New Japan is blurred.

Hattori represents the voice of Yamada himself. Indeed, Hattori's last line, "modern Japan developed, pushing these things [simplicity, kindness, ghosts, smiles] under the rug. In doing so, we gained much. Yet at the same time, we also lost many other things", closely echoes Yamada's own remarks, "In the process of becoming a world power, Japan has ruined the sensibility that has been formed during its long history". Hattori

29 See, for instance, Anon. ed., *Sarai*, vol. 3, no. 7, special edition, "Koizumi Yakumo ga mita fushigi na Nihonjin" (The Inscrutable Japanese seen by Koizumi Yakumo), Tokyo: Shōgakusan, April 1991. Also see Askew, "The Politics of Nostalgia".

30 Hirakawa Sukehiro, "Lafcadio Hearn's 'At A Railway Station': A Case of Sympathetic Understanding of the Inner Life of Japan", in Louis Allen and Jean Wilson eds., *Lafcadio Hearn: Japan's Great Interpreter, A New Anthology of His Writings 1894-1904*, Sandgate, Kent: Japan Library, 1992, pp. 282-308, at p. 305.

31 See *The Last Samurai*, directed by Edward Zwick, 2003.

32 Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of its Enemies*, New York: Penguin, 2004.

and Yamada take this stance because they understand an ironic aspect of nationalism in modern Japan. That is, the modernization effort in the Meiji period was just as nationalistic as the nostalgia which idolizes Hearn today. To modernize Japan was the major goal of (political) nationalism. Sakuma's remark, "Mr. Hearn, we have no time to participate in your hobby (...) Japan needs to be powerful as a modern state, and combat the colonization of the World Powers", cannot be dismissed as shallow. Modernization at the time of the mid- and late-nineteenth century was not perceived as a matter of taste in Japan, but of national survival. In terms of *Realpolitik*, there was indeed no time for Meiji Japanese to indulge in Hearn's "hobby": his love for Old Japan.

In this context, Sakuma, however unfavourably presented, is relatively blameless, and it is Hearn who ought to be the object of censure for his lack of socio-political considerations. (A similar criticism might be made about Tom Cruise's character in *The Last Samurai*.) Indeed, as Beongcheon Yu notes, "many have questioned whether he [Hearn] really saw Japan in her entirety. Even well-meaning admirers have somewhat apologetically conceded that as a romantic wanderer Hearn failed to do justice to New Japan".<sup>33</sup> Yamada is obviously one of Yu's "well-meaning admirers". In his play, Yamada consistently depicts Hearn as a Romantic lover of the irrational, an admirer of the simplicity and kindness of Japan's common people, and an enthusiast for folkloristic material. His Hearn is a non-political figure who is so infatuated with the irrational culture of pre-modern Japan that he does not understand the socio-political necessity of modernization. It is not just Sakuma who is irritated with his backward-looking advice to "[o]bserve the virtues of Japan". Favourably depicted ambitious youths like Manabe also find inappropriate Hearn's lack of sympathy with the modernization efforts of New Japan. Manabe notes that "now is not the age for Japan [to appreciate the old virtues]. Now is the time for Japan to learn quickly from Western civilization and become a state which is able to resist the West as soon as possible".<sup>34</sup>

Despite his demonstration of biographical knowledge, Yamada does not do justice to the real Hearn. In fact Hearn in real life demonstrated a sympathetic understanding of New Japan. Of course it is true that Hearn grieved over the modernization of Japan. For example, he noted that Japan "is going to become all industrially vulgar and industrially common place".<sup>35</sup> However, it is also true that Hearn was realistic and realized the importance of science in and for modern Japan. He once encouraged his students to specialize in pragmatic areas such as engineering.<sup>36</sup> In his essay on Jūdō, he favourably depicts Japan's modernization as the Jūdō-like use of the power of one's opponent to beat

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33 Beongcheon Yu, *An Ape of Gods: The Art and Thought of Lafcadio Hearn*, Toronto, Ontario: Wayne State University Press, 1964, p. 184.

34 Yamada, *Nihon no omokage*, p. 103.

35 Lafcadio Hearn, letter to Basil Hall Chamberlain, dated 7 June 1893, in Lafcadio Hearn (Elizabeth Bisland ed.), *The Japanese Letters of Lafcadio Hearn*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910, pp. 130-32, at p. 132.

36 Lafcadio Hearn, letters to Ōtani Masanobu, dated 4 March 1894 and 28 June 1896. Cited in Ōtani Masanobu, "Kojin to shite no Koizumi Yakumo sensei" (Mr. Koizumi Yakumo as an Individual), in *Teikoku bungaku* (The Imperial Literature), vol. 10, no. 11, pp. 84-108, at pp. 102, 103.



him (or her). Hearn argues in favour of Japan's acquiring Western knowledge, saying, "Now in all this she [Japan] has adopted nothing for a merely imitative reason. On the contrary, she has" adopted Western civilization in order "to increase her strength".<sup>37</sup>

Why then did Yamada avoid shedding light on the pragmatic aspects of Hearn? One possible answer is that by creating a sentimental character who mourns over the loss of culture, Yamada was better able to highlight the costs of modernization. This explanation, however, is not satisfactory. For Yamada could have achieved the same purpose without reducing Hearn to a Romantic lover of the irrational. His Hearn could have been a more balanced character like Hattori who realizes the necessity of modernization in the Meiji period as well as its great cost. The real answer has more to do with the main argument of this paper: Yamada wanted to confine Hearn to cultural nationalism. I will further develop this argument in the sections below.

### Demilitarizing Old Japan

In his *Vestiges of Japan*, Yamada follows the tradition of many researchers in seeing Hearn's disillusionment with Japan as due to Japan's modernization.<sup>38</sup> He also follows the convention of attributing Hearn's dislike of Kumamoto to its modernization and Westernized elite. In real life, Hearn did in fact dislike Kumamoto, at least at first. Yet his dislike is directed not only to the Westernized elites such as Sakuma, but also to the common people of Kumamoto. In a letter, he complains about the perceived savageness of peasants and the lower classes in Kumamoto, a savageness which does not live up to his image of an idyllic Old Japan.<sup>39</sup> His negativity about Kumamoto can therefore not be attributed exclusively to modernization. Moreover, Hearn's attitude to Kumamoto was not completely negative. For he realized that Kumamoto also represents respectable aspects of Old Japan, namely the *samurai* tradition.

Though both *The Last Samurai* and *Vestiges of Japan* are identical in criticizing the vulgarity of New Japan, they do not necessarily agree as to what kind of society pre-industrial Japan was. The Old Japan in *The Last Samurai* is depicted in terms of a militaristic society of honorable *samurai*, a community of warriors which is contrasted to the world of commerce represented by the West and New Japan. On the other hand, the Old Japan in *Vestiges of Japan* is a peaceful and non-martial society of innocent common people which is contrasted not only to the industrial society of New Japan but also to the stoic and militaristic society of the *samurai*.

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37 Lafcadio Hearn, "Jiu-jitsu" in Lafcadio Hearn, *Out of the East: Reveries and Studies in New Japan*, reprinted in Lafcadio Hearn (Elizabeth Bisland ed.), *The Writings of Lafcadio Hearn*, vol. 7, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1922, pp. 141-85, at p. 148.

38 Koizumi, *Minzokugakusha Koizumi Yakumo*. Makino Yōko, *Rafukadio Hān – Ibunka taiken no hate ni* (Lafcadio Hearn: Beyond His Intercultural Experience), Tokyo: Chūkō shinsho, 1992, p. 48.

39 Lafcadio Hearn, letter to W. B. Mason, dated 1 November 1892, in Lafcadio Hearn (Elizabeth Bisland ed.), *The Writings of Lafcadio Hearn*, vol. 16, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1922, p. 314.

Here, we must remember that in real life Hearn depicted the Japanese as “essentially a fighting race” or as a nation of the “militant type”.<sup>40</sup> In his last work, *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation* (1904), he even praised the “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” in Yasukuni Shrine.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Starrs notes that there is very little in Hearn’s *Japan*, “that would seem out of place in the works of the leading Japanese nationalist writers of the day” such as Hozumi Yatsuka (1860-1912) and – I would add – Inoue Tetsujirō (1855-1944).<sup>42</sup>

Such was his respect for fighting prowess that Hearn was later to be reconciled with Kumamoto due to its traditional Spartan spirit. For Hearn, what Kumamoto (or Kyūshū) represents is not only New Japan, but also the traditional martial virtues. In his “With Kyūshū Students”, Hearn notes:

Kyūshū still remains, as of yore, the most conservative part of Japan, and Kumamoto, its chief city, the center of conservative feeling. This conservatism is, however, both rational and practical. Kyūshū was not slow in adopting railroads, improved methods of agriculture, applications of science to certain industries; but remains of all districts of the Empire the least inclined to imitation of Western manners and customs. The ancient samurai spirit still lives on.<sup>43</sup>

Hearn’s depiction of tradition in Kumamoto as a *samurai* culture does not match Yamada’s depiction of the city as New Japan. Moreover, it does not match Yamada’s identification of traditions as peaceful and irrational. Of course, Yamada does not completely ignore *samurai* tradition, inserting *kendō* scenes and mentioning Setsu’s *samurai* origin. Still the Old Japan he depicts is a country of “simplicity, kindness, ghosts, [and] smiles” which has little to do with the stoicism of warriors.

Yamada’s omission from the Kumamoto era of Mr. Akizuki, an old respectable ex-*samurai*, can be understood in this context. Akizuki is a teacher of Chinese classics who works for the same high school as Hearn. He represents the respectful warrior tradition – the “ideal of all that was brave, true, [and] noble”, and Hearn once extolled him as “a Kami-Sama” or a god.<sup>44</sup> This ex-*samurai* blurs Yamada’s contrast of a peaceful (non-martial) Old Japan and a militaristic New Japan. Moreover, the Chinese classics constitute a disturbing element in Yamada’s depiction of Old Japan as irrational. After all, in the nativist (*kokugaku*) discourse, Chinese classics represented a rationality

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40 Lafcadio Hearn, letter to Page M. Baker, dated 1894, in Lafcadio Hearn (Elizabeth Bisland ed.), *The Writings of Lafcadio Hearn*, vol. 14, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1922, pp. 284-86, at p. 285. Hearn, *Japan*, pp. 342, 451.

41 Hearn, *Japan*, p. 440.

42 Starrs, “Lafcadio Hearn as Japanese Nationalist”, p. 190.

43 Lafcadio Hearn, “With Kyūshū Students”, 1895, in Hearn, *The Writings of Lafcadio Hearn*, vol. 7, pp. 24-53, at p. 25.

44 Hearn, “With Kyūshū Students”, pp. 50, 51.

(therefore coldness) that is contrasted to the irrational (and therefore humane) Japan.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, Akizuki is also an agent of political nationalism, advocating filial piety in his *Chokugo enzetsu* (On the Imperial Rescript on Education, 1891).<sup>46</sup>

Although some might claim that Yamada's omission is accidental because he is neither a Hearn specialist nor a biographer, Yamada obviously researched Hearn, and was aware of biographical details non-specialists are unfamiliar with. There is little doubt that he chose to demilitarize Old Japan and instead present it as an idyllic world of the irrational.

### Historical Perspective

By depicting Old Japan as a non-martial and peaceful country, Yamada attributes modern martial achievements such as victories in the Sino-Japanese and the Russo-Japanese Wars to New Japan. This view makes a sharp contrast with the early twentieth century Western view of Japan which attributed Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War to *bushidō* (the way of the warrior, or chivalry).<sup>47</sup> Hearn also attributed modern achievements such as victories in various battles of the Russo-Japanese War to "the long discipline of the past". It was to this, Hearn continues, that "she [Japan] owes the moral strength behind this unexpected display of aggressive power".<sup>48</sup>

When Nitobe Inazō (1862-1933) first published his book on Japanese chivalry in English, *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, in 1900, it was not necessarily welcomed with enthusiasm. Yet after Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War, the book sold "explosively" (*bakuhatsuteki*) in the West.<sup>49</sup> Western readers saw in Nitobe's book an argument about the *continuity* of culture, that is, the idea that New Japan draws strength from its past. What Yamada is trying to stress, on the other hand, is a *discontinuity*, that is, the idea that modern military achievements are the products of New Japan and have nothing to do with Old Japan.

This peculiar demilitarization of Old Japan is not just a simple matter of Yamada's individual taste, but is related to postwar war-guilt. After the Second World War, *bushidō* came to be regarded as 'dangerous' in the West (and postwar Japan). As is typically seen in Edward Russell's *The Knights of Bushido: A Short History of Japanese War Crimes*

45 Yoshikawa Kōjirō, "Motoori Norinaga no shisō" (The Thought of Motoori Norinaga), in *Kaisetsu* (introduction), *Nihon no shisō 15 – Motoori Norinaga shū* (The Thought of Japan vol. 15, Collected Works of Motoori Norinaga), reprinted in Yoshikawa Kōjirō, *Jinsai – Sorai – Norinaga* (Jinsai, Sorai, Norinaga), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1975, pp. 287-308.

46 Maruyama Manabu, *Koizumi Yakumo Shinkō* (New Thoughts of Koizumi Yakumo), Tokyo: Kōdansha gakujutsu bunko, 1936/1996, p. 94.

47 Tōda Masahiro, *Zuzō no naka no Chūgoku to Nihon – Bikutoria chō no Oriento gensō* (China and Japan in Illustrations: The Image of the Orient in the Victorian Era), Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppansha, 1998, p. 165.

48 Hearn, *Japan*, pp. 439-40.

49 Tsuchiya Naoto, "Hān no hen'yō" (Hearn's Transition), *Mugendai* (Infinity), no. 88, 1991, pp. 137-144, at p. 138.

(1958), *bushidō* was treated with disdain as a source of the brutality of the wartime Japanese army.<sup>50</sup> As a result, postwar Japanese were eager to forget the *bushidō* heritage and instead tried to stress softer traditions such as the tea ceremony. (Needless to say, this ‘feminization’ of Japanese tradition is exactly the trend against which Mishima Yukio (1925-1970) spoke.<sup>51</sup>) Yamada’s demilitarization of Old Japan and his depoliticization of Hearn is thus the product of a postwar sensitivity to martial traditions.

This point is clarified if we compare the play with Okado Buhei’s wartime novel on Hearn, *Shōsetsu – Koizumi Yakumo* (Novel, Koizumi Yakumo, 1943).<sup>52</sup> In this novel, Japan is depicted as “a country of *bushidō*” which is spiritually superior to the Western “material civilization”.<sup>53</sup> The Japanese ethos such as “filial piety” was inherited from Old Japan, and makes a sharp contrast with the “egotistic” individualism of the West.<sup>54</sup> (Needless to say, Okado’s claim goes hand in hand with the wartime nationalism which advocated the spiritual superiority of Japan over the West.) Hearn too is depicted as an admirer of the martial tradition of *bushidō*. Indeed, one of the reasons he married his wife, Setsuko, is attributed to the fact that she is the daughter of a *samurai*. Moreover, Hearn is depicted as a supporter of state nationalism, singing the Japanese national anthem, *Kimi ga yo* (literally, You Are the World), and showing an admiration for the culture of loyalty and self-sacrifice for the Emperor.<sup>55</sup> Okado’s depiction of Hearn again matches the biographical facts. Yet Yamada seems to have found this aspect of Hearn to be unsavory and omitted it from his play. Thus his Hearn is determinedly non-political.

Of course, Yamada did not completely depoliticize Hearn. At the end of the play, Hearn can no longer ignore socio-political realities and makes a comment on the politics of modern Japan. As we have already seen in a conversation with Hattori during the Russo-Japanese War, he notes, “I am not totally divorced from reality”. What is noteworthy here, however, is that this interest in politics has little to do with the political nationalism seen in Okado’s novel. On the contrary, it has more to do with the postwar hatred for militarism (and love for pacifism). Yamada’s Hearn warns about the danger of Japan’s growing arrogance, saying “if they [the Imperial Army and Imperial Navy] continue to gain power, the government will no longer be able to control them. Frustrated by the pressure applied by the Powers, they will start a war they cannot win”.<sup>56</sup> Though Yamada’s Hearn is discussing the Russo-Japanese War, it is obvious for any postwar (Japanese) audience that Yamada is actually talking about

50 Edward Russell, *The Knights of Bushido: A Short History of Japanese War Crimes*, London: Greenhill Books, 1958/2002.

51 See, for instance, Mishima Yukio, “Bunka bōei ron” (On Defence of Culture), *Chūō kōron*, August 1968, reprinted in Mishima Yukio, *Bunka bōei ron* (On Defence of Culture), Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 2006, pp. 33-86.

52 Okado Buhei, *Shōsetsu – Koizumi Yakumo* (Novel: Koizumi Yakumo) Tokyo: Dai Nihon Yūbenkai, Kōdansha, 1943, reprinted as Okado Buhei, *Shōsetsu – Matsue no Koizumi Yakumo* (Novel: Koizumi Yakumo in Matsue), Tokyo: Kōbunsha, 1995.

53 Okado, *Shōsetsu – Matsue no Koizumi Yakumo*, pp. 44, 45, 34.

54 Okado, *Shōsetsu – Matsue no Koizumi Yakumo*, p. 115.

55 Okado, *Shōsetsu – Matsue no Koizumi Yakumo*, pp. 118, 143-44.

56 Yamada, *Nihon no omokage*, p. 355.

the Second World War which is often described as “a war that Japan could not win”.<sup>57</sup> From the 1930s on, the Japanese government did in fact lose control of the military which rushed to battle.

It is not just Yamada who reads Hearn’s warning as a sort of prophesy of the future tragedy of wartime Japan. For example, Kudō Miyoko notes, “Just as Hearn predicted, an overconfident Japan fought and won in the Russo-Japanese War and the First World War, and rushed into the unwinnable Second World War”.<sup>58</sup> Tsukishima refers to Hearn’s warning and notes that Hearn’s warning sounds like “a prediction that Japan is going to rush into the Pacific War and lose”.<sup>59</sup> Some Western critics such as William Clary also read in Hearn a prophesy about the danger of Japan’s growing military power.<sup>60</sup> What is distinctive about Yamada, however, is that he is determined to impose the responsibility of wartime brutality on the militarism of New Japan which, he claims, has nothing to do with Old Japan.

Thus Yamada emphasized the discontinuity of culture, attributing Japanese wartime behavior to the New Japan which had turned its back on the ideals of Old Japan. The last scene in the play, in which Hearn dies, is followed by images of the Russo-Japanese War, and can be read as depicting the death of Old Japan and the emergence of a militant New Japan. By divorcing Old Japan from the brutality of wartime Japan, Yamada can now safely celebrate Japan’s past.

In the early twentieth century, Nitobe made an effort to make the West acknowledge how ‘civilized’ and ‘rational’ Japan was by introducing its martial traditions. The desire to gain this acknowledgement is by no means unique to Nitobe. As discussed in Yamada’s play, Meiji Japan made a concerted effort to acquire it. What is unique about Nitobe, however, is that he rejected the definition of Old Japan as irrational, arguing that Japan *had been* ‘civilized’ well before modernization. Thus he combated the Orientalism not only of Westerners but also of those Japanese who attempted to combat Orientalism by constructing a modern country, New Japan. (As noted above, Nitobe’s attempt was rewarded at the time of Russo-Japanese War when people around the world started to agree that modern Japan’s military achievement owed much to its martial traditions.)

In the late twentieth century, however, as a backlash to wartime Japanese brutality, Yamada has reversed Nitobe’s accomplishment and emphasized how irrational and non-martial (or non-brutal) Old Japan was. In other words, Yamada readily accepts the Orientalist view of Old Japan as irrational and finds solace in the old ideology. Ironically, just as Orientalism became increasingly out of date (and

57 See, for instance, Kuroha Kitotaka and Ikegaya Mahito, *Nichibei kaisen – hakyoku e no michi* (The Opening of Hostilities between Japan and America: The Road to Catastrophe), Tokyo: Akashi shoten, 2002.

58 Kudō Miyoko, *Kamigami no kuni – Rafukadio Hân no shōgai* (The Country of the Gods: The Life of Lafcadio Hearn), Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1995, p. 207.

59 Tsukishima Kenzō, *Rafukadio Hân no Nihon kan* (Lafcadio Hearn’s View of Japan), Tokyo: Keisō shobō, 1964, p. 236.

60 William W. Clary, “Japan: The Warnings and Prophecies of Lafcadio Hearn”, *Claremont Oriental Studies*, no. 5, April 1943, pp. 1-17.

irrelevant) in the West, it started to give hope to contemporary Japanese like Yamada. After the war, Orientalism has been the only way they could enjoy traditions without being labeled as militarists.

## Conclusion

This paper has examined Yamada Taichi's *Vestiges of Japan*, focusing on the politics of nostalgia. Conscious of the postwar sensitivity to wartime nationalism, Yamada differentiates political nationalism from cultural nationalism (nostalgia), and attributes the latter to Hearn. Hearn is depoliticized and Old Japan is Orientalized as irrational. The play may function as escapist literature; the audience is able to forget about the hectic industrial society of modern Japan, and enjoy the romantic world of Old Japan at least for a short time. Yet it does not bring about any long term solution to the troubling issues of cultural loss and moral decline which Yamada attempts to tackle in the first place.

In his *A Political Philosophy* (2006), Roger Scruton makes a distinction between "a backward-looking nostalgia" and "a genuine tradition", and extols the latter.<sup>61</sup> While the former is a mere attachment to the past, he argues, the latter "grants us the courage and the vision with which to live in the modern world".<sup>62</sup> If we follow Scruton's distinction, Yamada's *Vestiges of Japan* is the product of "a backward-looking nostalgia". A more hard-headed stance, Scruton's "genuine tradition", is necessary. That is, "the courage and vision" with which to examine constructively the pros and cons of modernization, and more fundamentally to tackle the issues of cultural loss and moral decline. Paradoxically, when the Japanese people start to do so, they will no longer need to rely on the cultural crutch of "Lafcadio Hearn". I believe that Hearn himself would be pleased to see the dawning of that day.

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61 Roger Scruton, *A Political Philosophy: Arguments for Conservatism*, London and New York: Continuum, 2006, p. 194.

62 Scruton, *A Political Philosophy*, p. 194.

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