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The Anatomy of Curiosity and Cosmopolitanism: Lafcadio Hearn's Medical Imagination[1]

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> I have half a mind to study medicine in practical earnest some day. Wouldn't I make an imposing Doctor in the Country of Cowboys? A doctor might also do well in Japan. I'm thinking seriously about it.[2]

A decade before he made a one-way journey to Japan in 1890, in an article entitled 'Travel An Educating Influence' (1880), Lafcadio Hearn, the inquisitive young journalist then working for the New Orleans *Item*, declared his departure from conventional ideas of nationalism, and instead determined to make 'one step toward a new and vast movement' of cosmopolitanism.[3] Rather than abolishing local and historical peculiarities or going back to old nationalistic provincialism, Hearn pleaded for cosmopolitanism by way of curiosity – the insatiable 'desire or inclination to know or learn about anything', especially what is novel or strange.[4] Recent work on Hearn's cosmopolitanism, by Stefano Evagelista and others, has brought to light the manner in which this characteristic curiosity attached itself to the art, literature, and religious practices of the cultures he encountered.[5] However, it has tended to overlook the central place of the medical and the scientific in Hearn's transnational imagination. His cosmopolitanism transcended the traditional boundaries between the literary and the medical; the heightened sensory alertness that underpinned his curiosity was simultaneously that of the aesthete and the empiricist. Indeed, his bookshelf was one on which the works of Gustave Flaubert, Théophile Gautier, and Algernon Charles Swinburne sat alongside those of Herbert Spencer, Henry Maudsley, Wilhelm Wundt, and Francis

Galton.[6] 'It is a singular fact', Hearn noted to Dr George M. Gould in 1887, 'that most of my tried friends have been physicians.'[7]

In one of his little-known articles, 'The Epic of Kings', which appeared in the New Orleans *Times-Democrat* on 22 April 1883, Hearn evoked processes of cosmopolitan literary exchange by turning to tropes from anatomy and botany:

> European literature has reached the apogee of that development given to it by its intrinsic vitality; it needs an invigorating impulse from without, – fresh blood from other sources. The ideas of the Orient are only now being fully understood and fairly appreciated; – they are certainly destined to influence Occidental thought more than superficially. The flowers of Western idealism will be marvellously improved by crossing with Eastern literary growths.[8]

The 'invigorating impulse' of 'fresh blood' figures cosmopolitan cultural exchange both as a blood transfusion and as cross-breeding, ultimately achieving a better understanding and appreciation of the 'ideas of the Orient'. Aspiring towards 'the beautiful fancy of a universal brotherhood of nations', he imagined an authentic cross-fertilizing which would echo what his cosmopolitan contemporaries had already begun to envision on the other side of the Atlantic.[9]

Examining Hearn's varied representations of medico-scientific curiosity allows for a richer understanding of his literary cosmopolitanism. Building on the recent Anglophone critical emphasis on Hearn as 'a truly cosmopolitan writer' or 'the ultimate cosmopolitan aesthete', this article reveals how Hearn reconciled his literary vision with his medical-anatomical curiosity within the global context of aestheticism and decadence.[10] As scholars such as Meegan Kennedy and Lawrence Rothfield have demonstrated, Victorian literature formed a close relationship with contemporary discourses of medicine and pathology. Although it may ostensibly seem that literary and medical cultures were epistemologically opposed, in fact, as Kennedy notes, 'the 19th-century novel and medical writing have much in common',

for 'both novelists and doctors read, and wrote, in some of the same textual spaces and in response to some of the same pressures of the new print media'.[11] Rothfield has likewise observed that 'late Victorian literature is replete with hounded, haunted figures who represent the dangerously pathological'.[12] Taking such work as its starting point, the argument that follows traces the cosmopolitan nature of Hearn's literary-medical imagination from a historical and comparative perspective. In doing so, it focuses on Hearn's works written during his wandering years in Cincinnati, New Orleans, the French West Indies, and later in fin-de-siècle Japan, where he settled from 1890 until his death in 1904.

Before he was widely labelled the pre-eminent Western interpreter of the Japanese mind, Hearn had already established himself as a curious cosmopolitan journalist in the United States, where he spent nearly twenty years – longer than his fourteen-year stay in Japan – speculating and writing about almost anything available to his inquisitive mind. As Delia LaBarre has suggested, Hearn's inquisitive – occasionally wilfully abrasive – approach to journalism can be understood as akin to that of a surgeon wielding a scalpel.[13] His journalistic sketches, she suggests, can be situated in a longer European satirical tradition, often working within the medical context, in which writers 'have historically seen themselves as providing remedies for social ills which usually require cutting and extraction'.[14] In doing so, LaBarre gestures to the family connection between Hearn and the Augustan physician and satirist John Arbuthnot, observing that '[t]he practice of satire is often implied to be analogous to the medical profession'. 'It is unsurprising […]', LaBarre notes, 'that Hearn took an interest in medical topics and that he may have identified with the great satirist almost as if he were a blood relation.'[15] While it remains unclear whether Hearn was aware of this familial link, as a keen student of Spencerian heredity he was undoubtedly vividly conscious of the medical training of his father, Charles Bush Hearn. Hearn Snr. – a

nephew to Dr Arbuthnot – studied medicine at Trinity College Dublin and subsequently practised as a surgeon in the British Army from 1842 onwards, stationed consecutively in the Mediterranean, the West Indies, the Crimea, and India. It is likewise notable that many of Hearn's contemporary cosmopolitan aesthetes, whose works he read closely, had similar medical pedigrees. Walter Pater came from a long line of surgeons, and his brother, William, was a medical superintendent in psychiatric hospitals. John Addingon Symonds's father, and namesake, was a prominent physician, while his grandfather, John Symonds, was a surgeon-apothecary. Oscar Wilde's father, William, was one of the most eminent eye surgeons of his generation, appointed in 1853 to the position of surgeon oculist-in-ordinary to the Queen in Ireland. These familial connections were matched by their shared fascination with literary precursors, such as Sir Thomas Browne, John Keats, and Gustave Flaubert, who were themselves also immersed in the relation between the literary and the medical.[16]

Hearn's scalpel of satire was often wielded against medical subjects during his Cincinnati years, where he turned both doctors and medical institutions (such as morgues and lunatic asylums) into objects of criticism and ridicule. In 'Giltenan the Ghoul' (1874), for instance, he narrates the story of the relationship between the Scrooge-like Dr Giltenan, 'the heartless old ghoul' and moneylender, and Mrs Margaret Sherwood, the widow of his former patient. Knowing that the penniless widow is not able to pay him back the money she owes, Dr Giltenan mercilessly insists that she should make up for it by letting him dig up 'her husband's infernal body and make a skeleton out of it', adding that the skeleton would be sold at $40.[17] The tale presents an ironic reframing of the notorious Burke and Hare story, in which the production of medical knowledge is revealed as callously inextricable from the profit motive. Around the same time, Hearn constructed an authorial persona that was similarly grotesque, casting

himself as 'The Ghoul' in a self-referential report on his short-lived satirical magazine *Ye Giglampz*, published in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* in October 1874.[18] Here, he aligns his work as a journalist with that of a surgeon (or pathologist), presenting his sensational articles as 'a reeking mixture of bones, blood and hair' which he 'thrust[s] […] under people's noses at breakfast time'.[19]

In a short illustrated contribution to the *Item*, 'Journalistic Dissection' (1880), Hearn adopted a similarly acerbic persona of a professor 'performing surgery on a patient represented as the *Times* with a broadsword labelled "Democrat", which became the *Times-Democrat*".[20] The caption to the piece states that '[t]he Professor of the *Democrat* goeth for the *Times*, scalpel in hand, making deep incisions into the abdominal and thoracic viscera, and exposing much true inwardness'.[21] Hearn's sketch works simultaneously to foreground the strong visual and textual analogy between the discourse of anatomy and the instructive (or satirical) function of his early journalism, while also reflecting his long-lasting interest in hybridity and novelty in subject matter. Hearn was not only an observant commentator on culture and society but was also passionately engaged himself, through words and images, at the heart of contemporary literary, social, and political debates. In this context, this short piece emerges as his own meta-fictional take on contemporary journalism and its politics, in which he was intimately involved. As LaBarre has commented, '[t]he "professor" portrayed in this cut is E. A. Burke, publisher and managing editor of the *Democrat*, also Louisiana state treasurer and one of the most powerful figures in business and politics of Louisiana and New Orleans.'[22] The literary relation between Burke and Hearn should not be neglected; for Burke was to acquire *The Times* the following year, in 1881, and 'quickly made the *Times-Democrat* one of the most formidable newspaper enterprises in the South. (He also hired Hearn away from the *City Item* shortly after the acquisition)'.[23]

During his formative years, the medical aspects of Hearn's journalism were nurtured by his close relationship with a young Spanish–American medic, Rudolph Matas (1860–1957), who graduated with a degree from the University of Louisiana in 1880. In later years, Matas developed notable expertise in neurology, and also made significant contributions to public health in his efforts to combat the spread of yellow fever in New Orleans.[24] Their friendship started soon after Hearn's employment at *The Times-Democrat* and Matas's appointment as the editor of the *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* in 1883. Edward Larocque Tinker has suggested that Hearn's friendship with Matas must have excited Hearn's literary, scientific, and historical imagination and engendered an ethnographical sense of curiosity:

> They often stayed up most of the night to wander miles all over the city in search of some stray incident or adventure that would serve to fire Hearn's imagination. As they walked they discussed, interminably, all sorts of queer subjects that appealed to Hearn's peculiar curiosities and trend of mind.[25]

Like Hearn, Matas the cosmopolitan polyglot 'had an intense curiosity about many things'.[26] Their relationship eventually led Hearn to dedicate his first novel, *Chita: A Memory of Last Island* (1889), to Matas. It is not coincidental that *Chita* features a New Orleans Creole physician, Julien La Brierre, who is called to Last Island (L'Île Dernière) to treat a man with yellow fever.[27]

In a letter of 1885 to H. E. Krehbiel – a journalist friend from his Cincinnati days – Hearn enthuses about his keen interest in 'comparative human anatomy and ethnology', which he had by then already shared with Matas, a 'warm friend of several years' standing – a young Spanish physician and professor', who 'is greatly interested in this new science'.[28] Matas in turn reveals the collaborative nature of their friendship, recalling Hearn's literary vision of curiosity merging into that of medical practice:

> He often came to me to get information about medical points which he needed in some of his work. He was deeply interested in Arabian studies at that time, and I was able to give him some curious facts about the practice of medicine among the Arabs, which happened to be exactly what he was seeking. Not only did he read every book on Arabia which he could find, but he

> actually practised the Arabic script, and he used to write me fantastic notes, addressing me as if I had been an Arab chief.[29]

Elsewhere, Matas assumed the role of Hearn's personal physician, never failing to record the pathological anomalies that he perceived in his life and writing: '[b]oth in taste and temperament he was morbid, and in many respects abnormal.'[30] This 'morbid' taste and temperament, 'unconventionality', and 'an obsession of persecution' that Matas diagnosed in his friend did not, however, prevent his appreciation of Hearn's achievements. Matas continues, 'I listened to the brilliant, erratic, intemperate outpourings of his mind, aware of his eccentricities without allowing them to blind me to the beauty and value of his really marvellous nature.'[31] Hearn is constantly seen by Matas as a curiosity, displaying such faculties of mind as singularity and inquisitiveness. He is represented as curious not only when his abnormal and impatient nature is under consideration but also even when his modesty or diligence are present: '[h]e was singularly and unaffectedly modest about his work – curiously anxious to know the real opinion of those whose judgement he valued, on any work which he had done, while impatient of flattery or "lionizing".'[32]

A New Orleans letter from 1887, sent to another physician, the ophthalmologist George M. Gould (1848–1922), reveals the deep psychological impact that his relationship with Matas had on Hearn's medico-artistic imagination:

> Reading your letter, I was strongly impressed by the similarity in thought, inspiration, range, even chirography, with the letters of a very dear friend, almost a brother, and also a physician, – though probably less mature than you in many ways. A greater psychological resemblance I have never observed. My friend is very young, but already somewhat eminent here; – he has been demonstrator [sic] of anatomy for some years at our University, and will ultimately, I am sure, turn out a great name in American medicine. But he is a Spaniard, – Rudolph Matas. I first felt really curious about him after having visited him to obtain some material for a fantastic anatomical dream-sketch, and asked where I could find good information regarding the lives and legends of the great Arabian physicians. […] I trust you will meet him some day, and find in him an ideal *confrère*, which I am sure he would find in you. It is a singular fact that most of

my tried friends have been physicians.[33]

Hearn's intellectual curiosity draws two established medics, Matas and Gould, together into an alliance of scientific knowledge.[34] Just as Matas seems to have felt 'curious' about Hearn's morbid nature, saying that 'I was able to give him some curious facts about the practice of medicine among the Arabs, which happened to be exactly what he was seeking', so Hearn's letter to Gould expresses how the sender's literary sense of curiosity was being aroused by Matas. Hearn's representation of an ideal community consisting predominantly of physicians reflects his views of a cosmopolitan curiosity that simultaneously embraces both the medico–scientific and the aesthetic.

When Hearn writes about 'a fantastic anatomical dream-sketch' and 'the lives and legends of the great Arabian physicians', he refers to 'Three Dreams (Edited from the Note-Book of an Impressionist)', a short sketch published in *The Times-Democrat* on 11 April 1885.[35] The piece's titular dream visions are each narrated in the first person and followed by the initials of their respective dreamers ('M. R.', 'W. H. H.', and 'L. H.'). As 'L. H.' suggests, the third dream most explicitly (if in a disguised way) features the relation between Hearn and Matas. Here, the first-person narrator 'dreamed of a lofty and opulent dwelling in a strange city [...] and of a Man that waited there for the coming of a Physician, most learned of all Jews: wisest of those mighty in modern science' while also possessing 'the lost Arabian arts of Abu 'l-Kasem and Ibn Zohr, of Achmed Dhiaëddin and Ibn Roschd and Ibn Sina, who knew not only to heal the body but likewise to cure the soul'.[36] The dreaming man then assumes he is also 'aware of two sounds, – the ticking of a clock, the beating of a heart', and 'in the solemn stillness of the high dim room, the beating of the heart could be heard, like a sound of reverberation deadened by intervening walls, – like an echo of pulsant tapping, smothered, rapid, irregular'. The piece clearly recalls Edgar Allan Poe's

short story, 'The Tell-Tale Heart' (1843), which links a guilt-ridden murderer's psychological disintegration to his perception of the gradual amplification of 'a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton'.[37]

Hearn's medical and anatomical imagery draws not only from Poe's story but rather represents a more intricate composite of English literary responses to the bodily grotesque, from the Pre-Raphaelites to Robert Browning and Walter Pater. In his characterization of the above-mentioned male dreamer, Hearn sketches out how his beating heart has been desperately entrapped by the mysterious power of an anonymous, serpent-like female figure, as is suggested by 'the Physician' who approaches this male patient to auscultate, and whispers:

> *Older than the world is Her name, – old as Night; yet even the Rabbonin have forgotten Her secret…. But I have not forgotten!* […] *Aye! Her loop is fast within…* These are the same obstructive murmurs, – the same desperate straining of the valves: strangling in the aortic, – in the pulmonary, – in the mitral, – in the tricuspid! […] *He cannot know; but I know, – even by diagnosis alone, – how tightens the fine noose, made of the living gold that never breaks, strong as Death – aye, stronger far against this science of mine!* […] *Thinner than sunbeam Her snare is, – lighter than woof of the spider; but is there a steel can sever it? – is there a force can fracture it?*[38]

Here, Hearn creates a bifurcated narrative voice in which well-known imagery of the *femme fatale* is set alongside frequent use of medical and anatomical terminology. He ultimately concludes the piece with a description of the death of the male patient, which is followed by the vivisection of his corpse:

> [T]here came a sudden, dull, snapping sound, as of a wine-skin bursting; and with never a groan the Man sank heavily down, – and his ghost went out from him….
>
> Then the Physician summoned his servitors; and they lifted the dead Man, and laid him all unclad upon a table of a marble.
>
> And without a word they severed the integuments of the dead Man's breast, and opened it, and took out his heart that they might examine it.
>
> And still it quivered feebly in their hands, and the darkening blood dripped warm from its ruptured cavities to thicken upon the stone. And lo! All around it, and intertwined about the stems of its severed pipework, about the crimson stumps of its arteries and of its veins, there clung fast something lucid and fine, something yellow and thin as a fiber of silk, – one thread of light, – one line of gold, – one long bright strand of woman's hair.[39]

There is an unmistakable link between Hearn, aestheticism, and decadence here. The sketch alludes to one of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's sonnets, 'Lady Lilith' (1868), collected in *The House of Life* (1870) under the title 'Body's Beauty'.[40] Although Hearn never mentions her name in his article, Rossetti's Lilith (as in Poe's short story) incessantly haunts his dream-sketch, where the male patient, as if following the same path trodden by the youth in 'Body's Beauty', is snared by 'her enchanted hair' until his 'heart and body and life are in its hold'. A sequence of imagery in Hearn's last paragraph, from '[a]nd lo! all around it' to 'one line of gold, – one long bright strand of woman's hair', combined with 'the same desperate straining of the valves: strangling in the aortic, – in the pulmonary, – in the mitral, – in the tricuspid', is intricately entangled with Rossetti's final image of 'one strangling golden hair' round the youth's heart. Hearn briefly alludes to Poe's influence on Rossetti in his article 'A Definitive Rossetti' (1887), writing that: '[o]f English poets, Coleridge probably exercised the first powerful influence on Rossetti, but he read Poe, Tennyson, and Keats together.'[41] Much later, in his university lecture in Japan, Hearn refers to Poe's 'The Tell-Tale Heart' and his other stories, claiming that they 'represent the very highest expression of Poe's genius' and 'a very morbid condition of mind'. For Hearn, Poe produced 'some of the most splendid work in all modern literature, – work which has suggested new artistic effects and possibilities to hundreds of writers, – work also which taught us new values of words and new capacities of the English language'.[42]

'Three Dreams' is not only a good example of Hearn's keen interest in the interaction between the literary and the medical, but also of his crystallized ideas of post-romantic influence, imagination, and intertextuality. Furthermore, the discovered 'woman's hair' is not only a curious reminiscence of fair femininity, as was popular in the nineteenth century, but also a more threatening symbol of post-romantic agony – with a recognisable precursor in Robert Browning's 'Porphyria's Lover' (1836) – as

caused by a venomous Medusa or a rebellious Lilith, emerging from the decadent tradition of *femmes fatales*. It is also worthy of note that Rossetti's characterization of Lilith, in particular the phrase '[a]nd still she sits', inherently corresponds with Pater's verbal portrait of the Lady Lisa, who 'is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire', appearing in 'Leonardo da Vinci' (1869) a year after this sonnet.[43] Echoing all of these and participating in a tradition of Gothic fiction with its gendered dynamics of the male gaze and female sexuality, 'Three Dreams' is all the more important because of its semi-autobiographical elements that reveal the nature of the intellectual debt Hearn must have owed to Matas. It also offers a fine specimen of the moment of alchemy when contemporary medical and anatomical discourses were absorbed into Hearn's literary imagination in the fragmented form of supernatural dream sketches.

These medical and anatomical writings are also intricately connected with Hearn's aspiration to establish an ideal community of medico-literary *confrères*. As Charles Woodward Hutson has noted, Matas himself was similarly 'cosmopolitan' in outlook; fluent in several languages, his medical practice served a diverse mix of French, Spanish, and Filipino settlers in the region around Grand Isle.[44] Matas's close engagement with these communities meant that he was well placed to respond to Hearn's own interests in the cultural and linguistic hybridity of the region. With Matas's assistance, Hearn's journalism participated in the growing literary cross-pollination of medical, ethnographical, and archaeological discourses in late nineteenth-century America. Hearn paid tribute to his intellectual kinship with Matas in an article entitled 'The Creole Doctor: Some Curiosities of Medicine in Louisiana' (1886).[45] The essay demonstrates the sophisticated manner in which Hearn assimilated the two intellectual fields of literature and medicine into a combined vision of curiosity. His interest in Creole medicine is closely linked to his

keen awareness of a 'natural art rapidly becoming obsolete', and thus also of the urgency of the need to save the tradition from cultural oblivion by collecting and publishing it.[46] This aim drove him naturally to plunge into the more domestic spheres of Creole medicine as well as to investigate its distant origin and peculiarity. In his writings, Hearn traces the roots of Creole medicine back to its African origin and 'the old slave-days', where, he imagines, 'in many cases the African slave was able to teach his master'.[47] Although he admits his own experiences have not enabled him 'to make any noteworthy observations of the more purely African features of this somewhat occult art', his sympathetic remarks on the tradition of Creole medicine, or 'those strange practices generally classed under the name Voudooism [sic]', are ultimately subversive in that they overturn the racial, hierarchical, and didactic tension between the master and the slave by enabling the latter to teach the former and so import his profound knowledge of Creole medicine.[48] It is in this context that Hearn reintroduces Matas to the reader as an important Creole friend who has helped to fill this crucial gap between the growing knowledge of a curious foreign enquirer and the secret of local Creole medicine:

> The greater number of the recipes cited in this article I could not have obtained but for the aid of Creole friends; and I am especially indebted to a scholarly Spanish physician, Dr. Rodolfo Matas, now president of the New Orleans Medical Association, for many valuable facts and suggestions. He called my attention to the fact that a patient scientific inquirer might discover under the fantastic surface of Creole empiricism material of larger medical importance than that which formed the pharmacopeia of those old Arabian pharmacists and practitioners whose treatises have only been carefully studied by Europeans within the last few years.[49]

As a curious 'scientific inquirer', Hearn maintains at the end of the article that 'the herb medicine of the Creoles deserves some scientific attention', and that '[m]any of these prescriptions and ideas are of negro origin; and but few of them are now ever used by the educated French-speaking people of Louisiana, with the exception of certain tisanes the medical value of which has been latterly recognized by

physicians'. Writing on 'some curiosities of medicine in Louisiana' and their almost forgotten origin, Hearn comes to grips with one of the central cultural concerns regarding the survival of ancient culture: 'the question of African survivals in the West Indies and America'.[50] 'The Creole Doctor' is not merely a token of Hearn's active collaboration with Matas, but also, more importantly, a literary–scientific attempt to publish and reinvigorate a vanishing collective knowledge of old Creole medicine.

Hearn's hybrid notion of literary–medical curiosity also strongly characterized some of the lectures he delivered at the Imperial University of Tokyo during his tenure as Professor of English Language and Literature between 1896 and 1903. In 'Notes on American Literature', a series of his special lectures given in the summer of 1898, he introduced Nathaniel Hawthorne's 'Rappaccini's Daughter' (1844), the 'Hoffmanesque fantasy' (as Fred Botting has called it) later collected in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846).[51] It is a story, as Hearn explains, where a 'rich Italian physician, entirely devoted to botany, conceives the idea of nourishing his daughter on poisonous food'.[52] As an enthusiastic disciple (and perceptive translator) of the French Romantics, Hearn was likely aware of the extended comparison that Théophile Gautier made between Hawthorne's story and Charles Baudelaire's works in his 1867 obituary notice: 'We never read *Les Fleurs du mal* by Baudelaire, without thinking of that tale by Hawthorne: it has those sombre and metallic colours, those verdigris blossoms and heady perfumes.'[53] Before he settled in Japan, Hearn had referred to the story in a letter to Matas from St Pierre, Martinique, dated 25 July 1887, in which this 'cursed land' represents 'a monstrous creation of ridiculous trees, and phantasmal grasses': 'Everything has a queer shape and a queer name. […] At present seems to me as if the Poison-plant Garden of Rappacini [sic] must be somewhere around.'[54]

Hearn's reflections on Hawthorne's 'Rappaccini' are followed in his lectures by his discussion of another text which reflects his fascination with the dynamics of medical curiosity – Oliver Wendell Holmes's *Elsie Venner: A Romance of Destiny* (1861). Psychological and medical notions of curiosity permeate the work, whose thirteenth chapter is entitled 'Curiosity'. It first appeared serially in *The Atlantic Monthly* in December 1859 under the title of 'The Professor's Story', and concerns the story of a young woman who manifests snake-like characteristics. It is narrated from the perspective of a medical professor, echoing the author's profession, as Holmes later admitted in calling the work 'a medicated novel' in his second preface (1883).[55] As Hearn himself explains, Holmes

> was sent to France to study medicine, distinguished himself as a student, and afterwards became Professor of Anatomy and Physiology at Harvard University. He kept this position until 1883, when he abandoned it for literature, and the private practice of medicine.[56]

Hearn praises Holmes's novel as 'not only the most extraordinary book that Dr. Holmes wrote; it is also one of the most extraordinary novels of the 19th century.'[57]

Having described Hawthorne's literary temperament as 'remarkable for [its] gloom', Hearn then interprets Holmes as Hawthorne's 'antithesis', as a writer with 'cheerful, light, sparkling mind'. In this respect, Holmes appears to Hearn to be 'a medical writer' who manages to reconcile the literary with the scientific without losing 'emotional feelings' or 'impulses of sympathy':

> His professional studies are reflected in nearly all his work, but only in the very best way. The higher study of medicine develops, as perhaps no other scientific study does, the habits of observation and of thinking in relations; – perhaps it is for this reason that the literary work of doctors is nearly always marked by very solid qualities. In the case of Dr. Holmes, we have a medical writer who uses the best results of his studies without troubling the reader by scientific details. One might say that medical knowledge has a tendency to blunt emotional feelings and to chill impulses of sympathy. But Dr. Holmes' work affords us charming proof of the contrary. Warm sympathy and fine emotion are always there; but they are tempered by perception and comprehension such as can only be obtained through scientific study. A beautiful voice, he has shown us, does not touch the heart less because he happened to understand the mechanism of the vocal chords [sic]; and the pathos of grief need not be diminished because the observer has

familiarized himself with its physiological accompaniments.[58]

Hearn's literary sympathy with doctors and his confidence in the possible function of medicine as a curative literary tool manifest in his appreciative description of Holmes. Paying attention to Holmes's skilful anatomy of one's own mind and feeling, and also even of one's 'faults or weaknesses or prejudices or hobbies, beautifully dissected and gently ridiculed', Hearn the cosmopolitan critic – and now professor of English – looks back on one of the major literary modes adopted during his journalist years in the 'Country of Cowboys'.[59] He suggests how this physician's gentle satire manages to save itself from being criticized, and illustrates the continuity underlying the harmonious relation between literature and medicine:

> Dr. Holmes never went far enough, or spoke harshly enough, to make people seriously angry. Everybody quickly forgave him and began to recognize that he was not mocking people merely for amusement, but as medicine; – that he was a physician of souls as well as of bodies. The books are full of what we might call moral tonic; – they make stronger and healthier the mind of everybody that reads it.[60]

Thus, by weaving numerous intertextual threads between literature and medicine, from his journalism through his dream sketches to his university lectures, Hearn managed to create a highly cosmopolitan space based on varied, vernacular representations of literary–medical curiosity with full awareness of its linguistic limits and possibilities. Hearn's cosmopolitanism remains distinctive not merely because of his remarkable global mobility, but because – with an imaginary microscope and scalpel in his hands – he cultivated a literary style that allowed him to attend carefully to the unseen and the seemingly 'anomalous', and to stay perpetually curious.

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[2] Lafcadio Hearn, Letter to H. E. Krehbiel (January 1885), in *The Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn*, ed. by Elizabeth Bisland, 2

vols (Houghton, Mifflin, 1906), I, p. 338.
[3] Hearn, 'Travel An Educating Influence', *Item* (6 February 1880), in *Buying Christmas Toys and Other Essays*, ed. by Ichiro Nishizaki (Hokuseido, 1939), pp. 31–34 (p. 32).
[4] See the entry 'curiosity' (I.5.b) in the *Oxford English Dictionary* <https://www.oed.com> [accessed 10 July 2025].
[5] Stefano Evangelista, 'Lafcadio Hearn and Global Aestheticism', in *Literary Cosmopolitanism in the English Fin de Siècle: Citizens of Nowhere* (Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 72–116.
[6] See *Catalogue of the Lafcadio Hearn Library in the Toyama High School* (Toyama High School, 1927) <https://toyama.repo.nii.ac.jp/record/7521/files/CatHearn-Lib.pdf>
[7] Hearn, Letter to George M. Gould (1887), in *The Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn*, I, p. 395.
[8] Hearn, 'The Epic of Kings', in *Essays in European and Oriental Literature*, ed. by Albert Mordell (Dodd, Mead, 1923), pp. 315–19 (pp. 318–19).
[9] Ibid., pp. 318–19.
[10] Evangelista, 'Lafcadio Hearn and Global Aestheticism', p. 77; Evangelista, 'Symphonies in Haze and Blue: Lafcadio Hearn and the Colours of Japan', in *The Colours of the Past in Victorian England*, ed. by Charlotte Ribeyrol (Peter Lang, 2016), pp. 71–94 (p. 72); Catherine Maxwell, 'Scent, the Body, and the Cosmopolitan *Flaireur*: John Addington Symonds and Lafcadio Hearn', in *Scents and Sensibility: Perfume in Victorian Literary Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 135–81 (p. 161).
[11] Meegan Kennedy, 'The Victorian Novel and Medicine', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Victorian Novel*, ed. by Lisa Rodensky (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 459–82 (p. 462).
[12] Lawrence Rothfield, 'Medical', in *A New Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture*, ed. by Herbert F. Tucker (Wiley Blackwell, 2014), pp. 172–85 (p. 179).
[13] Delia LaBarre, 'Introduction', in *The New Orleans of Lafcadio Hearn: Illustrated Sketches from the Daily City Item*, ed. by Delia LaBarre (Louisiana State University Press, 2007), p. xviii.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., pp. xviii–xix.
[16] The significance of tropes of medicine, disease, and illness has been widely explored in scholarship on decadence and aestheticism. For examples of recent work, see 'La Maladie Fin de Siècle: Decadence and Disease', Birkbeck, University of London (June 2019) <https://decadencedisease.wordpress.com/programme/>.
[17] Hearn, 'Giltenan the Ghoul', *Cincinnati Enquirer* (1 November 1874). I am grateful to Victoria L. Norman of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County for kindly sending me a scanned file of this article together with many other Cincinnati articles (including 'Dr. J. G. Holland') attributed to Hearn upon my request.
[18] Hearn, 'Giglampz!', *Cincinnati Enquirer* (4 October 1874); repr. in *An American Miscellany*, 2 vols, ed. by Albert Mordell (Dodd, Mead, 1924), I, pp. 13–28.
[19] Ibid., p. 16.
[20] Hearn, 'Journalistic Dissection', *Item* (21 October 1880), in *The New Orleans of Lafcadio Hearn*, p. 109; LaBarre, 'Introduction', pp. xxxviii, 161.
[21] Hearn, 'Journalistic Dissection', p. 109.
[22] Ibid., p. 161.
[23] Ibid.
[24] LaBarre, 'Introduction', p. xix. For a concise biography of Matas and his friendship with Hearn, see John Ochsner, 'The Complex Life of Rudolph Matas', *Journal of Vascular Surgery* 34.3 (September 2001), pp. 387–92 (pp. 389–90). I am grateful to Fraser Riddell for kindly sharing with me this useful information, together with some other materials that touch upon Hearn's relationship with Matas and Gould.
[25] Edward Larocque Tinker, 'Dr Matas', in *Lafcadio Hearn's American Days* (John Lane, 1925), pp. 227–37 (p. 228).
[26] Steve Kemme, *The Outsider: The Life and Work of Lafcadio Hearn, the Man Who Introduced Voodoo, Creole Cooking and Japanese Ghosts to the World* (Tuttle, 2023), p. 127.
[27] Kemme, pp. 140–41; Hearn, *Chita*, in *American Writings*, ed. by Christopher Benfey (Library of America, 2009), pp. 73–148.
[28] Hearn, Letter to H. E. Krehbiel (1885), in *Life and Letters*, I, p. 339.
[29] Charles Woodward Hutson, 'Introduction', in Lafcadio Hearn, *Fantastics and Other Fancies,* ed. by Hutson (Houghton, Mifflin, 1914), pp. 1–28 (pp. 16–17).
[30] Ibid., p. 18.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., p. 19.
[33] Hearn, Letter to George M. Gould (1887), in *Life and Letters*, I, p. 395.
[34] For a short biography of Gould, see Howard F. Hansell, 'George Milbry Gould, A.M., M.D.', in *Transactions of the American Ophthalmological Society* 21 (1923), pp. 15–20. For the relationship between Hearn and Gould, see John Antony Goedhals, 'Lafcadio Hearn and George Gould's "Philosophy of Spectacles": The Story of a Buddhist–Christian Encounter', in *Diasporic Identities and Empire: Cultural Contentions and Literary Landscapes*, ed. by Anastasia Nicéphore and David Brooks (Cambridge Scholars, 2013), pp. 199–212.
[35] Hearn, 'Three Dreams', in *An American Miscellany*, ed. by Albert Mordell, 2 vols (Dodd, Mead, 1924), II, pp. 66–73.
[36] Ibid., p. 71.
[37] Poe, 'The Tell-Tale Heart', in *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. by J. Gerald Kennedy (Penguin, 2006), pp. 187–91 (pp. 189).
[38] Hearn, 'Three Dreams', pp. 72–73.

[39] Ibid., p. 73.
[40] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'Body's Beauty', in *Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Jerome McGann (Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 161–62.
[41] Hearn, 'A Definitive Rossetti', *The Times-Democrat* (17 April 1887), in *Essays in European and Oriental Literature*, pp. 221–28 (p. 224).
[42] Hearn, 'Notes on American Literature', in *A History of English Literature*, 2 vols (Hokuseido Press, 1927), II, pp. 863–914 (p. 882).
[43] Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry: The 1893 Text*, ed. by Donald L. Hill (University of California Press, 1980), p. 99.
[44] Hutson, 'Introduction', pp. 21–22.
[45] Lafcadio Hearn, 'The Creole Doctor', *New York Tribune* (3 January 1886); repr. in *Occidental Gleanings* (Dodd, Mead, 1925), II, pp. 195–207.
[46] Ibid., p. 198.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., p. 199.
[49] Ibid., p. 201.
[50] Ibid., p. 208.
[51] Botting, *Gothic*, 2nd edn (Routledge, 2013), p. 110. Botting discusses Poe's tales and stories, including 'The Tell-Tale Heart', alongside 'Rappaccini's Daughter', grouping them into the same category of 'Homely Gothic' (p. 113).
[52] Hearn, 'Notes on American Literature', pp. 898–99.
[53] Theóphile Gautier, 'Charles Baudelaire', *Le Moniteur* (9 September 1867), cited in Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility*, p. 103.
[54] Hearn, 'Newly Discovered Letters from Lafcadio Hearn to Dr. Rudolph Matas', *Ochanomizu University Studies in Arts and Culture* 8 (March 1956), pp. 85–118 (p. 100). I am grateful to Catherine Maxwell for kindly drawing my attention to this publication.
[55] Holmes, *Elsie Venner* (Houghton, Mifflin, 1892), pp. vii, ix.
[56] Hearn, 'Notes on American Literature', p. 900.
[57] Ibid., p. 904.
[58] Ibid., pp. 900–01.
[59] Ibid.,. 903.
[60] Ibid., pp. 903–04.