

# KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL LIBRARY SERVICE

## LAFCADIO HEARN

### Wanderer and Storyteller



**T**hroughout the year, many of us living in Kilkenny like to take a trip to Tramore and have a walk along the beach. Since 2015, Tramore has had a special treat to offer visitors - the Lafcadio Hearn Japanese Gardens, an intriguing and tranquil oasis overlooking Tramore Bay.

#### So just who was Lafcadio Hearn?

Patrick Lafcadio Hearn was born in 1850 on the Greek island of Levkas (also known as Lefkada). His mother Rosa was Greek and his father Charles was an Irish officer in the British Army. Lafcadio was brought to Dublin at the age of 2 but his parents' marriage did not survive and his mother returned to Greece. He was brought up by his great-aunt Sarah Brenane and spent many happy childhood summers in the seaside town of Tramore with her.

Unfortunately Sarah lost her fortune and Lafcadio had to leave school at the age of 16. He spent some time living in London with one of Sarah's former maids, mostly in the company of vagabonds and thieves. A relation of his father gave him a one-way ticket to the United States and he ended up in Cincinnati.

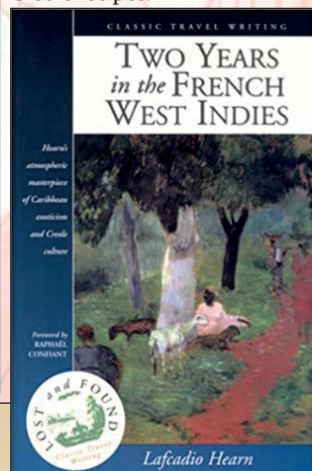


Lafcadio worked at odd jobs and then met Henry Watkin, an English printer and socialist who gave him work in his printing business and lent him books from his library. Lafcadio was also an en-

thusiastic member of Cincinnati Public Library!

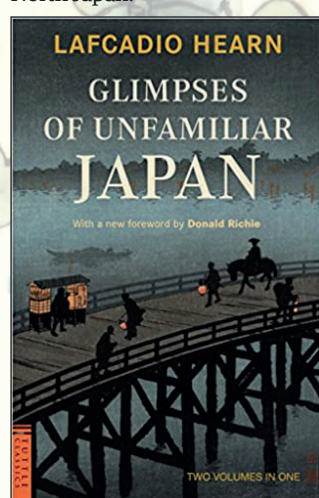
He got a job as a reporter firstly with the Cincinnati Enquirer and then with the Cincinnati Commercial. He became known initially for his lurid and sensational articles, but also wrote sensitive accounts of the lives of disadvantaged people in Cincinnati. Fluent in French, he also translated works at this time.

In 1874 Lafcadio married Alethea "Mattie" Foley, a young African American woman and former slave. This was illegal at the time. The marriage was short-lived and they had divorced by 1877 when Lafcadio went to New Orleans. While there he wrote a wide variety of articles on many topics including religion, science and foreign literature. He brought New Orleans to a wide audience and even compiled a collection of Creole recipes.

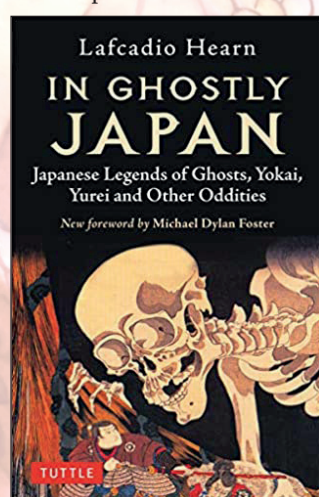


From 1887 to 1889, Lafcadio lived in the West Indies, working for Harper's Magazine. During this time he wrote "Two Years in the French West Indies" and his novel "Youma", a story about a slave insurrection.

In 1890 he travelled to Japan for Harper's. He soon fell in love with the country. After leaving the magazine, he got a job teaching in North Japan.

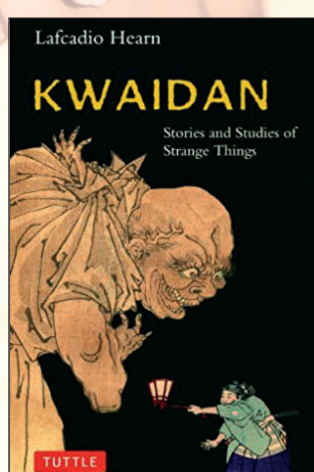


He continued to write and his articles on Japan appeared in newspapers in the U.S. and other countries. A lot of his writings from this time were published in 2 volumes as "Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan".



Lafcadio became Professor of English Literature at the University of Tokyo in 1896. He wrote several books over the next years, including "In Ghostly Japan" and "A Japanese Miscellany". These volumes informed the world about the customs, religion and literature of Japan and offered a glimpse into a fascinating culture. Lafcadio was a master of the macabre and became fascinated with Japanese folklore and ghost stories. His translations brought these tales to the English speaking world. Some of them were adapted for the 1964 film Kwaidan.

Lafcadio Hearn's works continue to be studied in his adopted homeland. Generations of Japanese school children have grown up learning English while reading his translations of Japanese folklore, mythology and tales of daily life in turn-of-the-century Japan.



Lafcadio married Koizumi Setsu, the daughter of a Samurai. They had 4 children. He became a naturalised Japanese citizen and took the name Koizumi Yakumo. He also became a Buddhist.

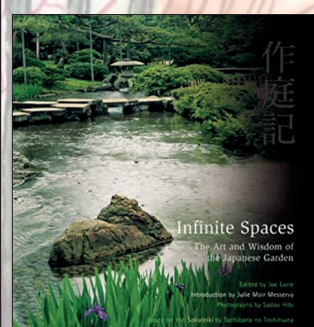
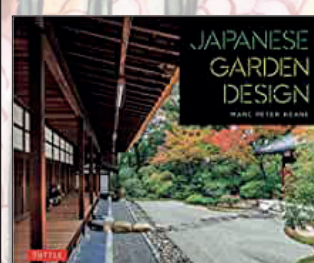
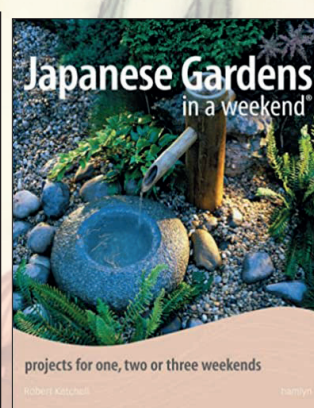
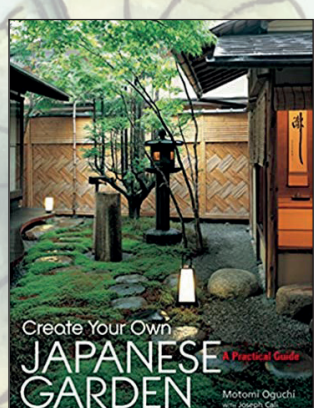
Patrick Lafcadio Hearn died in 1904. An international migrant with a keen interest in people and places, he was ahead of his time in his attitudes and beliefs. Little known in Ireland, he became a celebrated writer and journalist worldwide and a beloved cultural icon in Japan.



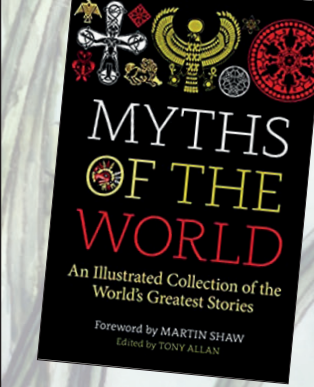
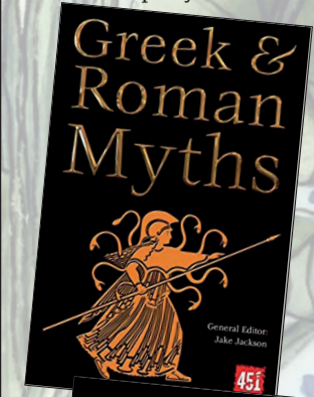
#### Lafcadio Hearn Japanese Gardens

The idea for the gardens first arose when the great grandson of Lafcadio Hearn, Professor Bon Koizumi and his wife Shoko visited Tramore to retrace the footsteps of his famous ancestor.

The gardens are designed to tell the unique tale of the life of Patrick Lafcadio Hearn, beginning with a Victorian Garden to commemorate his happy summers in Tramore. The gardens are set on a hillside, include elements of Japanese folklore and incorporate a traditional Japanese Tea House and a Tea Garden.



If you are interested in Japanese gardens or would even like to create your own, Kilkenny County Council Library Service has lots of titles to inspire you!



Lafcadio Hearn was a writer with Greek myths and Celtic Folklore in his blood who fell in love with Voodoo tales in New Orleans and embraced the ghost stories of Japan. Kilkenny County Council Library Service can offer you a huge selection of folklore, fairy tales and ghost stories from around the world.



Irish writer Jean Pasley spent many years in Japan and now lives in Dublin, next door to one of Lafcadio Hearn's childhood homes. Her novel Black Dragonfly tells the story of Lafcadio Hearn's remarkable life and is an absorbing and atmospheric read.

#### A few interesting facts:

- The city of Matsue in Japan opened a Lafcadio Hearn Memorial Museum in 1934.
- Lafcadio Hearn is credited with creating the word "zombie".
- He was the first westerner to be given full Buddhist funeral rites in Japan.
- Ian Fleming mentions him in his 1964 novel "You only live twice".
- James Bond answers his nemesis Blofeld's question of "Have you ever heard the Japanese expression 'kirisute gomen'?" with the retort "Spare me the Lafcadio Hearn, Blofeld"