

INSECT LITERATURE

Lafcadio Hearn

Introduction by Anne-Sylvie Homassel

“The insect-world is altogether a world of goblins and fairies.”

As Lafcadio Hearn observes in his essay “Insects in Greek Poetry”, “the capacity to enjoy the music of insects and all that it signifies in the great poem of nature tells very plainly of goodness of heart, aesthetic sensibility, a perfectly healthy state of mind.” And to this, one might add a keen sense of wonder.

Insect Literature collects twenty essays and stories written by Hearn, mostly in Japan, a land where insects were as appreciated as in ancient Greece. With a witty gentleness bordering on the eerie, Hearn describes in these pieces the song of the cricket, the spectral flight of dragon-flies, quotes the entomological haiku of classical Japan, and recalls Buddhist tales in which the souls of insects and men are never far one from the other.

REVIEWS

“Reading Insect Literature was refreshing and invigorating; so many new interests were piqued, so many theories were sparked. Almost every page holds some titbit of insect life or insect symbolism that I had either overlooked or never come across.”

– Dublin Inquirer

“[Insect Literature] is gorgeous little illustrated hardcover reprinting twenty essays by the Irish-Greek writer who made his name in Japan, where he lived and died. It’s definitely a wonderful book to dip into.”

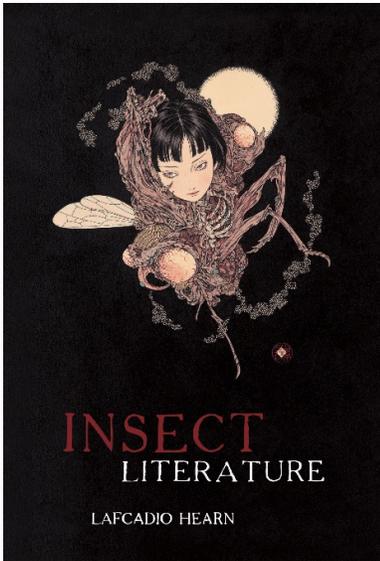
– Ellen Datlow

“Something for everyone would seem to have been the guiding principle in putting this collection together and it works splendidly well, both as a showcase for Hearn’s writing and by offering us an insight into little known aspects of Japanese culture.”

– Black Static

“For Hearn, the lifelong quest for ‘other-worldliness’ that ultimately led him to Japan was exactly the same impulse that drew him to the world of insects.”

– Japan Times



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LAFCADIO HEARN (1850-1904) was born on the Greek island of Lefkada and brought up in both Ireland and England. At nineteen he emigrated to the United States where he became a journalist. After a sojourn in the French West Indies, he sailed for Japan in 1890. Hearn wrote extensively about his new homeland, its tales, customs, and religions, acting as a bridge between Japan and the Western world. He died in Tokyo where he is buried under his Japanese name, Koizumi Yakumo.