

Pre-Raphaelitism during the Meiji Period

—A Trial to Understand Different Cultures—

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要 約

1848年ヴィクトリア朝の大英帝国下に結成されたラファエル前派は、画家かつ詩人である Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82) をその中心人物と捉え、明治期の上田敏 (1874-1916) による日本への導入を視座に入れるとき、異文化理解の好例として提示することができる。ヴィクトリア朝下のラファエル前派は、三期に分類されるが、まずその第一期において、中世期イタリアへの共感を示す絵画制作を推進することにより、ラファエロ (1483-1520) を絵画の最高峰と位置づけるロイヤル・アカデミーの権威に抗することから始まった。第二期においては、テキストの絵画における、あるいは詩による「翻訳」を試み、テキストの解釈を拡大するものの、その範疇内に留まることで、帝国の価値観と折り合いをつけたかのように見えた。しかし第三期において、過去の異質な文化の再現様式が、既存のテキストの使用からテキストの創造へと移行した時、その攪乱性は、大英帝国の価値観に反する *Fleshly School of Poetry* として Robert Buchanan (1841-1901) により指摘されるに至った。

日本に Rossetti/ラファエル前派が導入されたのは、1890年代初頭から1900年代初頭にかけてであり、条約改正を念頭においた明治政府主導のイギリス研究、および日英同盟 (1902) を一つの契機としたアジアにおける覇権の追求が、その背景として存在する。こうした状況下において、上田敏により推進された Rossetti/ラファエル前派の導入は、明治政府による一連の近代化と一線を画するものであった。彼はまた、Buchanan による Rossetti 批判が異文化理解に由来すること、すなわちラファエル前派が大英帝国の一元的なナショナリズムと齟齬をきたすものであることを十分認識していた。そのため日本におけるラファエル前派主義は、当初からその原型が持つ攪乱性を帯びていたといえる。上田は Rossetti が文化の多様性を支持する立場から、ヴィクトリア朝のイギリスにおいて中世期イタリアの美学の再現を試みたことに触発され、それをルネサンス (文藝復興) として理解し、明治期の日本における平安・江戸美学の復興を試みた。この日本のラファエル前派が標榜する文化の多様性は、日露戦争 (1904-5) から日韓併合 (1910) へと至る過程で醸成されていった帝国としての日本の一元的なナショナリズムとは、相容れないものであった可能性がある。

本 文

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) is, as generally known, one of the founding members of Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood which was established in Victorian England in 1848. This study will focus on Rossetti as a center of Pre-Raphaelitism, and, through the investigations of both his activities in Britain and his introduction into Japan, will examine what role Pre-Raphaelitism could have toward the two different cultures, and how it could work in Japanese society during the Meiji era.¹ The word, “different,” has double meanings both past and foreign culture. And the stance of Pre-Raphaelitism seems to be questioned more especially through Japan’s process to modernize, from the late Tokugawa period to the whole period of Meiji. In this paper, Chapter 1 will present Japan’s complicated relationship with the British Empire from the late Tokugawa period to the Meiji period, as a background to the introduction of Pre-Raphaelitism into Japan. Then, in Chapter 2, the cultural conflict, that the original Pre-Raphaelitism had with the value of the British Empire, will be discussed. Finally, in Chapter 3, the role of Pre-Raphaelitism

under the Meiji Empire will be examined, referring to its prototype in England.

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Ch.1 Background of the Introduction of

Rossetti / Pre-Raphaelitism into Japan

In 1808, 45 years before the Commodore Perry’s first expedition to Uruga, a British flagship H.M.S. *Phaeton* entered Nagasaki, demanded a supply of stores, and sailed away. According to *Nihon no Eigaku 100 nen (A History of 100 year British Study in Japan)*, *Phaeton*’s visit was a turning point for Japan, because it precipitated the study of British culture by the government.² It was also a moment for Japan to face the threat of Empire by Western colonialism.

After the overthrow of Tokugawa regime, the Meiji administration continued their precursor’s studies in a different way. At this time the political situation with Britain had completely changed, and the studies of Britain came to bear another meaning of “the Japanese enlightenment.”³ In the early Meiji years, many students were sent to Britain by the recommendation of the Meiji govern-

ment. According to the historical data in 1870, the foreign experts from Britain were 119, and surpassed the 50 from France and 16 from the United States.⁴

These governmental supports made Japanese intellectuals aware of British culture, and some intellectuals began to publish articles in journals to meet readers' demand. Among a series of literary works they introduced, there was *Poems* (1870) by Dante Gabriel Rossetti who is known today as one of the founding members of Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Since Rossetti was also a painter, a large number of his works were introduced in a short time, and the vogue for Rossetti appeared from the early 1890s to the early 1900s.⁵ In this era, Japan won the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95/M27-8) after the establishment of the constitution (1889/M22),⁶ and then achieved its long-sought goal of treaty revision (1894/M27). At the same time, the Russian move to expand hegemony to the East Asia became noticeable both for Great Britain and Japan, and it led to an alliance between these two empires (1902/M35).

This study based on the assumption that the policy of Empire, that is, the policy of colonialism was generated through the incorporation of others' cultures. If so, to investigate the evaluation of Rossetti/Pre-Raphaelitism may have some meaning to it.

Ch. 2 Rossetti / Pre-Raphaelitism and the British Empire

Before discussing the introduction of Rossetti into Japan, it is necessary to investigate the critical condition of Rossetti in England. In this study, I regard Rossetti as a center of Pre-Raphaelitism and examine the three stages of his activities. The common feature of these stages is a sympathetic feeling to the past, especially in his case, medieval age in Italy. Such a past was not only distant but also different and unfamiliar for most people under the British Empire.

In 1848, at the first stage of Pre-Raphaelitism, Rossetti founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood with John Everett Millais (1829-96) and William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), and executed paintings which conjured up reminiscences of the past and foreign, that is, medieval Italy. However, their revival of a painting style before Raphael (1483-1520) was regarded as a challenge to the Raphaellesque painting style in the Victorian Royal Academy. As for Rossetti's paintings at this stage, there is *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (1848-49) which bears the

P.R.B. initials in public for the first time, and its sequence, *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* (1849-50). It is important that the latter picture was criticized not only for its methodical crudeness but also for its relation to the pope,⁷ as if it reflected a British antipathy to the pope Pius IX (1792-1878).⁸ The true reason is not known yet, however, many scholars pointed out Rossetti that refrained from exhibiting his paintings after this. Instead, he launched the issue of the Pre-Raphaelite Journal the title of which was *The Germ*. It was published on the first of January in 1850.

Although *The Germ* was a very short lived periodical, after this, in 1856, Rossetti began to contribute to *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* with William Morris (1834-96) and Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98). It happened 3 years after Millais' election as Associate of the Royal Academy of Art. Therefore, *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* was a turning point for Rossetti to start new stage activities.

In this second stage, Rossetti tried a kind of "translation" of literature both in pictorial and poetical form. First, as an example of a pictorial "translation," there is an illustration of "Palace of Art" which was composed by Alfred Tennyson (1809-92). Until this time, Tennyson had been already an honorable Poet Laureate, and his poem was, in a sense, the representative of the Victorian aesthetics. It is this Tennyson whom Rossetti made puzzled by his interpretation,⁹ since Rossetti empathized physical intimacy between St. Cecily and an angel which remained suggestive in its original.

A similar interpretive "translation" is also admitted in his poetical "translation." In 1861, Rossetti published his translated volume, *The Early Italian Poets*, and its overflowing concept was, as its cancelled illustration suggests, love. This volume also included his translation of Dante's *La Vita Nuova*, which dealt Dante's desperate love for Beatrice. Like his pictorial "translation," Rossetti gave priority to the literary effect, and he sometimes paraphrased the original rather than literal in his poetical "translation."¹⁰ Although some critics regarded the expression of this volume as erotic, most of them highly appreciated it since it was the first translation of early Italian poems in Victorian England.¹¹

In this way, Pre-Raphaelitism at the second stage seemed to be accepted in the British Empire. However, this only depended on its translated form. This fact came to be clear, when Rossetti attempted to revive the past foreign aesthetics in his own

works. When he published *Poems* as a practice of his Pre-Raphaelitism, the rebellious side of Pre-Raphaelitism was pointed out in public again, and Rossetti became the object of severe criticism. This third stage opened in 1871 together with “the Fleshly School of Poetry” criticism started by Robert Buchanan (1841-1901).¹² According to Buchanan, the sensuality in Rossetti’s *Poems* (1870) was originally admitted in Dante’s *La Vita Nuova* and it had a similarity with Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du mal*. Buchanan regarded Rossetti’s poems as a challenge to the Victorian genteelness, and suggested it would undermine the present Victorian social system. Since Buchanan regarded himself as a representation of the moral code of the British Empire, the rebellious features of Rossetti’s poems became crucial. Buchanan also pointed out that the paintings by Rossetti had the same tendency as *Poems*. Finally, Buchanan came to regard its sensuality as a feature of Pre-Raphaelite circle. Among his critical targets, Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909) was included, for his revival of the ancient Greek aesthetics.

Ch.3 Rossetti / Pre-Raphaelitism and the Meiji / Japan Empire

The Pre-Raphaelitism in England was regarded as a challenge when its sympathy for the past created a conflict with the value of the British Empire. The next question is what meaning Pre-Raphaelitism could have when it was introduced into the Meiji/Japan Empire. From now on, this study will focus on Ueda Bin¹³ (1874-1916/M7-T5) as a main introducer of Pre-Raphaelitism into Japan. When Ueda introduced Rossetti, he was a student of Tokyo Imperial University, the predecessor of the present Tokyo University, and he was one of the editors of the university journal, *Teikoku Bungaku (Imperial Literature)*, from its first volume. The first reference to Rossetti by Ueda was the obituary notice of Christina Rossetti (1830-94). In 1895 (M28), Ueda introduced her “as a younger sister of that famous poet of this century, Dante Gabriel Rossetti,” under the title of “Kyonen no Eibungaku (The English literature of last year)” (vol. 3 p.632 Underline original, Translation mine).¹⁴

It should be well remembered that Ueda’s introduction of Rossetti was not a series of government leading “enlightenment.” Furthermore, Ueda recognized that Rossetti was not highly appreciated in England. He even knew that the art of Rossetti conflicted with the taste of the British Empire. Since he introduced the biography of Rossetti

which included a chapter concerning Buchanan’s “Fleshly School” criticism in “Rossetti Kyodai no Shincho (New books concerning Rossetti siblings)” (1896/M29),¹⁵ Ueda’s introduction of Rossetti was, from the beginning, very challenging.

Further, Ueda recognized that the criticism of Rossetti came from his deep sympathy to different cultures of the past. This view of Ueda was represented in his appreciation for Swinburne’s *Atalanta in Calydon*. In 1897 (M30), Ueda paid attention to the Buchanan criticism in “Gendai no Eikoku Shiika (The Contemporary Poetry in England),” referring to his stubbornness as follows:

The literary world in these years criticized this work [*Atalanta in Calydon*] as the worst of unhealthiness and immorality. Among such critics, especially Buchanan blamed not only Swinburne but also Rossetti as the Fleshly School of Poetry. (vol. 3, p.139, Underlines original, Translation mine)

And he pointed out the ultranationalism of Buchanan’s criticism which excludes the foreign culture of the past for the reason of its differences from his own culture.

In this way, on his introduction of Pre-Raphaelitism, Ueda was certain of Buchanan’s “Fleshly School” criticism, and introduced Rossetti, by merit on his own value. With this antiauthoritarian perspective, Ueda started his Pre-Raphaelite movement with the members of Bungakukai, Hirata Tokuboku (1873-1943/M6-S18) and Togawa Shyukotsu (1870-1939/M3-S14). I would like to call them the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in Japan.¹⁶

Ueda also took a sympathetic view of the different culture of the past as its prototype, and his renaissance corresponds to the revival of the past aesthetics of its original. With being greatly inspired by Rossetti’s medieval Italian aesthetics or Swinburne’s ancient Greek aesthetics, Ueda’s renaissance involved not only the revival of the Heian era but also the Genroku era as the years to cultivate. As for the cultural similarities of these past cultures, Ueda pointed out the worship of love and the worship of bodily beauty both feminine and masculine. Therefore, for Ueda, the renaissance not only remains the revival of the Heian/Edo era but also the revival of its aesthetics. In “Bijyutsu no Gansho (The Appreciation of Art, 1895/M28),” Ueda calls to the literary leaders of the Meiji period as follows:

Do cultivate your aesthetic taste and make Japanese tradition develop to a much higher level than Heian-Genroku culture in Japan, or much higher than the Elizabethan Culture in England, or the Medici Culture in Italy. (vol. 3 p.49, Underline original, Translation mine)

As was clarified by his response to Buchanan criticism, Ueda's view did not remain as an expression of nostalgic feeling, nor xenophobic feeling, either. Rather than these, Ueda wished his renaissance to influence the artistic development of his country, and what his renaissance expected was the fusion of currently imported foreign culture with traditional Japanese culture.

Then, how did Ueda perform his renaissance practically? First, he proclaimed the existence of Pre-Raphaelitism in public by the initials P.R.B. as Rossetti did in *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* in his first stage. In the front page of Ueda's first translation volume *Miotsukushi* (1901/M34), there is a dedication as follows:

For our memory of the days when we talked about P.R.B.,
I dedicated this book to my friend Tokuboku Hirata.
How well I remember the days!
(vol.2, Translation mine)

The title word, *Miotsukushi* connotes a desperate love, which Rossetti likes to express, and the literary source of the word, "miotsukushi" can be traced back to medieval literature, such as *The Tale of Genji*.¹⁷ And in *Miotsukushi*, Ueda included translated foreign love stories and his original love short story. All of them are written using old Japanese usage. Therefore, *Miotsukushi* seems to be a practice of Ueda's renaissance.

Next, as for Pre-Raphaelite Journal, it should be remembered the existence of *the Geien* (1902/M35). This journal was edited by Ueda himself after his declaration of P.R.B. Ueda started the memorial first number with the appreciation of Rossetti's *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* In this same number, Hirata also emphasized the artistic effect of Rossetti's St. Cecilia.

Finally, as his Pre-Raphaelite achievement, Ueda published his translated volume *Kaichoon* (*The Sound of Sea*) in 1905 (M38). This volume seems to have three significant meanings. First, as Ueda makes clear in the preface, this volume follows Rossetti's translating method, and explores

aesthetic effects (vol. 1, p.28). Second, in order to find more suitable expressions, this volume uses the old Japanese language. Third, this volume collects three love poems by Rossetti, one poem by Dante, and five poems by Baudelaire as if he challenges Buchanan criticism.

However, it was this time that Pre-Raphaelitism in Japan experienced the vicissitudes of the criticism. *Kaichoon* was published under the martial law at the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), and first it was appreciated in the *Imperial Literature*. However, after this number of this volume, the journal was prohibited from sale,¹⁸ things completely changed. As if corresponding to a trend for war worship literature, this aesthetic work was ironically judged militaristic, and forced to be incorporated into the literature. As for Ueda's effort to adopt the old Japanese usage, it was pointed out that its genteel expressions were unsuitable for the French erotic poems such as the poems by Baudelaire, and as if fighting against Ueda's association of French culture with the past Japanese culture, the critic emphasized the differences of Japan's past, with French culture, and insisted on present Japanese moral superiorities just like Buchanan's "Fleshly School" criticism.¹⁹

Again Ueda tried to raise a challenge against this mono-centric nationalistic trend. From January to March in 1910, Ueda contributed his love novel, *Uzumaki* to the newspaper, *Kokumin-shinbun*, and published it as a volume in June in the same year. The title *Uzumaki* means "scroll" in English and it was one of the last two possible titles together with *The Germ*.²⁰ However, Ueda's Pre-Raphaelite novel was not understood at all at that time. Not only by his critics but also by his sympathizers it was regarded as a failure.²¹ It was the same year the Great Treason Incident (1910) happened, and in May of this year, Kotoku Shusui (1871-1911), the socialist who opposed the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), was arrested without the proof on suspicion of the attempt to assassinate the Meiji emperor. This rash action by the government silenced left-wing activists, and in August Japan annexed Korea, and arose as an Empire.

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In this article, I have proposed that Pre-Raphaelitism is a representation of cultural diversity. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the epicenter of Pre-Raphaelitism, tried to revive the medieval Italian aesthetics in Victorian era. Rossetti's activities enhanced the cultural diversity in England, and this diversity conflicted with the mono-centric nationalism of the

British Empire advocated by Robert Buchanan.

Ueda Bin, a prominent introducer of Rossetti into Japan, had well known how the controversies between the Pre-Raphaelites and the opposites in England were provoked. The revival of the past aesthetics by Rossetti was so influential for Ueda that he recognized the revival of the Heian-Edo aesthetics as a representation of the cultural diversity in Japan. When the mono-centric nationalism of the Meiji Empire was rampant, Ueda would be blamed for his renaissance movement, in the same way as Rossetti had been criticized. In my doctoral dissertation, more details will be investigated for the political impact of Pre-Raphaelitism on Japanese culture in the Meiji era.

Notes

I have attempted a slight revision of this paper, spoken at SOAS/Ochanomizu University Joint Faculty and Graduate Student Seminar on 19 March, 2009.

- 1 For an earlier version of this study, see, Ezawa Mitsuki "Meiji Jidai no Raphael Zenpa Shyugi: D.G. Rossetti no *Shishyu* Juyo no Haikei (Pre-Raphaelitism during the Meiji Period: the Background of the Introduction of D.G. Rossetti's *Poems*)" in Politics of Cultural Representations: Reassessment of Histories of Women in Japan & Korea (Tokyo: Project D: Theories and Representations "Frontiers of Gender Studies" (F-GENS) 21st Century COE Program Ochanomizu University, 2007) 36-43.
- 2 Nihon no Eigaku 100 nen Henshubu ed. Nihon no Eigaku 100 nen Meiji hen (Tokyo: Kenkyusya 1968) 5.
- 3 Andrew Cobbing, The Japanese Discovery of Victorian Britain (Richmond: Japan Library, 1998) 30.
- 4 Nihon no Eigaku 100 nen Hensyubu ed. (see note 2) 22-23.
- 5 For the previous studies of the introduction of Rossetti, see the references of my earlier study (cf. note 1).
- 6 The abbreviations in the subsequent parentheses in this paper are as follows: M indicates Meiji. T means Taisho, and S is Showa.
- 7 William Michael Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti: His Family Letters, Vol.1 (Elibron Classics, 2006) 161.
- 8 Cf. Denis Mack Smith, "Britain and the Italian

Risorgimento" Britain and Italy from Romanticism to Modernism, ed. Martin McLaughlin (Oxford: Legenda, 2000), 13-31.

- 9 Cf. Bethan Stevens, The British Museum Pre-Raphaelites (London: British Museum P, 2008) 48-49.
- 10 Cf. D.G. Rossetti, "Preface" The Early Italian Poets (London: Smith, Elder, 1861) viii.
- 11 Ezawa Mitsuki, "19 seiki oyobi Gendai Igrisu ni okeru Raphael Zenpa no Hyoka to Teikokushyugi (Reassessment of Pre-Raphaelitism and Nationalism)" Developing International Communication Skills in Japanese Cultural Studies (Tokyo: Ochanomizu U, 2008) 67-71.
- 12 Cf. Thomas Maitland, "The Fleshly School of Poetry: Mr. D.G. Rossetti" Contemporary Review 18 (1871): 334-50, Robert Buchanan, The fleshly School of poetry and Other phenomena of the day. (London: Strahan, 1872).
- 13 In Japanese, the family name is followed by the given name. I will follow this pattern in this paper.
- 14 The volume numbers attached to the subsequent citations depend on the following volumes: Teihon Ueda Bin Zenshyu (Tokyo: Kyoikutosho Center, 1979).
- 15 [Ueda Bin], Teikoku Bungaku Vol.2 no.5 (1896): 111-13. This article came to be included as an supplement in "Rossetti no Shihen (The Poetry of Rossetti)" Bungei Ronshyu in 1901. Cf. Teihon Ueda Bin Zenshyu vol.3 (Tokyo: Kyoikutosho Center, 1979) 225-229.
- 16 Ezawa (2007) 38, n.8.
- 17 Shimada Kinji, "Kaisetsu" Teihon Ueda Bin Zenshyu vol.2 (Tokyo: Kyoikutosho Center, 1979) 613-14.
- 18 Ezawa (2007) 40, n.12.
- 19 Ibid. 40, n.17.
- 20 William Michael Rossetti, 152.
- 21 Yasuda Yasuo Uedabin Kenkyu (Tokyo: Yusei-do, 1969) 250.

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- Gordon, Andrew, A Modern History of Japan. New York: Oxford UP, 2003.
- Treuhertz, Julian, Elizabeth Prettejohn and Edwin Becker, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. London: Thames & Hudson, 2003.