

GLOBAL TALK

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

■ *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: the man, the poet, the painter*

今月のGLOBAL TALKは、仙台校のMarianne先生のエッセイです。British ItalianであるMarianne先生が子どものころに出会った本の作者の話です。

I first came across the name Dante Gabriel Rossetti during a hot summer day in Rome; I probably was about twelve years old. I was looking for something to read when, quite by chance, I opened a book entitled “Victorian poetry”. As I started reading it, a whole new world open right before my eyes and I was instantly **enthralled** by this poet who wrote in English but had an Italian name. Over the years my interest in Rossetti and the **Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood** has become a true passion, so here is a brief and by no means **exhaustive** introduction to Dante Gabriel Rossetti: the man, the poet, the painter.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was born on 12 May in 1828 in London. His father, Gabriele Rossetti was an Italian **political exile** and a Dante scholar (even if **controversial**), who was forced to flee from his native country and settle in London. Mr. Rossetti married Francesca Polidori, of Italian origin and they had four children: Maria Francesca, William, Christina and Dante Gabriel. They grew up in a bilingual environment where both English and Italian were spoken daily. The four **siblings** were surrounded by poetry, literature, art and most importantly by the **omnipresent** influence of the Italian poet Dante Alighieri [\[a\]](#)



From a very early age the children were encouraged to **pursue** their artistic tendencies, especially Dante Gabriel, who seemed to be the most gifted. His interests in writing and painting appeared early and he attended Sass's drawing school in 1841 and in 1845 moved to the Antique School of the Royal Academy. The works of Dante Alighieri had a huge impact on the **moulding** of Gabriel's artistic spirit, as his name suggests: in 1848 he translated portions of Alighieri's Vita Nuova, which details Dante's **unconsummated** love for Beatrice, a theme that also runs through the Divine Comedy [\[b\]](#).

Dante Gabriel is remembered as one of the founders on the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) and as a very sensual painter, easily recognizable by his unique style and themes, but what many do not know is that Gabriel was also a poet, and a good one too. In 1848 three young artists John Everett Millais, William Homan Hunt and Dante Gabriel Rossetti founded the PRB: as the name suggests they wanted to bring about a revolution in art by rejecting the **static** and traditional art of the Royal Academy and by bringing art back to its formal **medieval** purity of spirit.

Gabriel decided in 1848 he would become a painter despite his lack of formal training (since he never completed his studies at the Royal Academy). Although writing was probably his real passion, he knew he could never make a living out of it, but if he worked as a painter, he might even become rich.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti: the man, the poet, the painter

He continued writing all his life but only published five books during his lifetime. The most personal and **revealing** publications are Poems (1870), Poems, A new Edition (1881) and Ballads and Sonnets (1881). The public was shocked by Rossetti's poems and openly criticized them : for Victorian society these poems were too sensual, too **explicit**, too **daring**, too "fleshly". Rossetti never recovered from these attacks and became a **recluse**, addicted to **laudanum**, haunted by nightmares and hallucinations, more than once trying to commit suicide.

All his life he **strived** to **reconcile** the idea that women with their inner and outer beauty could be both spiritual and physical entities. That is why most of his paintings **depict voluptuous** and sensual women and the reason why his poems address the issues of love, passion, loss and beauty. His magnetizing personality attracted many women, he did indeed have many, but three stand out as his models and muses: Elizabeth Siddal, who became his wife, Fanny Cornforth and Jane Morris. He loved each of these women for their bodies but also for the spiritual beauty they **emanated**. The tragic and sick relationship with Elizabeth Siddal scarred Rossetti for life: she was his first all inspiring muse whom he just could not get enough of. Sadly they were both doomed to be united in a relationship of oppressing obsession and dissatisfaction.

Rossetti **[c]**, the poet and the painter, the dark and attractive Italian looking man who walked the streets of London, the passionate artist and the **relentless** lover, the artist Victorian society never understood or appreciated, this complex yet **intriguing** man, died on Easter Sunday on 9 April in Burchington-on-Sea (Kent) in 1882. He was only 54 years old.

[a]Dante Alighieri: (1265-1321)author of The Divine Comedy and La Vita Nuova. **[b]**It is at this time that Gabriel changed his name into Dante Gabriel Rossetti. He was born Charles Gabriel Dante Rossetti. He changed the arrangement of his name so as to closer identify himself with the great 13th-14th century Italian poet.**[c]**Elizabeth Siddal allegedly died of a laudanum overdose, but Rossetti was questioned by the police after her death and there were rumours regarding the whole affair.

読み解きのヒント:

be enthralled – 魅了される
 Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood
 –ラファエル前派
 exhaustive – 余すところのない
 political exile – 政治亡命
 controversial – 賛否両論のある
 siblings – (男女の別なく)きょうだい
 omnipresent – 常にどこにもある
 pursue – (道を)たどる、遂行する
 moulding – 型、造形
 unconsummated – 未完の
 static – 静的な、活気のない
 revealing – 暴露的な
 explicit – きわどい

medieval – 中世の
 revealing – 暴露的な
 explicit – きわどい
 daring – 衝撃的な
 recluse – 世捨人
 laudanum – <かつての鎮痛剤>
 strived – 努力する
 reconcile – 分からせる
 depict – 描写する
 voluptuous – 官能的な
 emanate – 発する
 relentless – 冷酷な
 intriguing – 興味をそそる

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