

Intimations of Commonality: Edmund Blunden, “Imaginative Sympathy” and British Romantic Poetry in Japan

Neil Addison
ニール・アディソン

[Abstract] Romanticism has been an important field of study for Japanese scholars (Okada 2006 16) with British Romantic poetry strongly competing with research work undertaken in other literary disciplines. While Blake, Coleridge and Wordsworth were taught to Tokyo Imperial University students by Lafcadio Hearn (Oishi 93), they caught the attention of the wider Japanese public through the efforts of national translators. This was complimented by the creative adaptation of Romantic ideas in Japanese literary works by writers such as Kunikida Doppo. The influence of the British poet Edmund Blunden, who taught at the University of Tokyo between 1924 and 1927, can also be considered significant (Saito 9) and is worthy of more critical attention. In Blunden’s lectures British Romantic poetry was taught by placing emphasis upon its points of human commonality and by encouraging students to read with “imaginative sympathy” (Abe 79). After the Second World War Blunden returned to Japan, travelling all over the country and giving some 600 lectures on Romantic poets such as Keats and Shelley (Fussell 592). Blunden’s lectures and publications inspired a succeeding generation of Japanese academics (Okada 1988 34), and this study discusses his approach and his influence upon British Romantic scholarship in Japan.

I

British Romantic poetry arrived in Japan alongside the works of Shakespeare and Victorian authors during the Meiji Restoration. From this time a number of Western literary works were not just introduced by specialist scholars but were also employed in early English instruction to quickly obtain knowledge of countries such as Great Britain and the United States of America. While Tokyo Imperial University students were introduced to the writings of Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke and Edmund Spenser (Harada 8-9), they also encountered Romantic poetry in the lectures of Lafcadio Hearn (1896-1903). While Kano Hideo has claimed that Japanese English studies “matured with the study of Romanticism” (Cited in Okada 2002 96), it initially caught the attention of the Japanese public through the efforts of national translators and scholars. This scholastic process was complimented by the creative adaptation of Romantic ideas in Japanese literary works by writers such as Mori Ogai and Kunikida Doppo.

The English poet Edmund Blunden, however, who taught at the University of Tokyo between 1924 and 1927 (Saito 9), can be seen as particularly significant in helping to promote Japanese scholastic interest in British Romantic poetry. Blunden placed strong emphasis in his lectures upon some of the major figures from the period such as Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley, encouraging his students to read with a sense of emotional commonality, kinship and “imaginative sympathy” (Abe 79). After the Second World War he

again returned to Japan, this time travelling all over the country and giving some 600 lectures on Romantic poets such as Keats and Shelley (Fussell 592). Blunden's lectures and publications on such figures would inspire a succeeding generation of academics devoted to specialized Romantic literary scholarship. Thus, this study notes how, following the important role of Japanese translators and writers in spreading early knowledge of Romanticism, the lectures and publications of Edmund Blunden also influenced the way in which British Romantic poetry permeated Japan's English literature departments and scholastic societies.

II

British Romantic writers such as Wordsworth and Keats were first introduced to Japan from the 1880s onwards (Ishikura 1). The names of such poets first appeared in Japanese print as early as the 1868 translation of Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help* (1859) by Nakamura Naotaro (Okada 2001 89), but the actual content of British Romantic verse would take a little longer to reach Japanese readers. Okada Akiko notes how the decade following the Meiji Restoration saw foreign texts translated in a somewhat arbitrary fashion (89), so that while "*Shintaishisho (The Collection of New Style Poetry)* published in 1882 is an epoch making work... no Romantic poetry is included" (89). Early Japanese readers of British Romantic texts would therefore first encounter them during formal English study at university.

Acquisition of English became an important part of the Japanese study of Western knowledge, with literary texts taught in tertiary education as a way to achieve dual cultural and linguistic goals. To achieve this end foreigners began to be recruited and employed as English teachers, especially at the University of Tokyo, which "opened its doors to foreign instruction, obliging all the students to learn English in advance" (Brooks 3). One of the first instructors of literature at Tokyo was the American scholar William A. Houghton, and in his English classes it is likely that he introduced his students to some British Romantic writers: certainly Houghton's pupil, the Shakespearean scholar Tsubouchi Shoyo, "translated two of the novels of Walter Scott at a time when access to native informants and even dictionaries was highly limited" (Gallimore 484).

By 1896, however, Lafcadio Hearn had accepted the chair of English literature at Tokyo Imperial University and had begun teaching British Romantic poets in his classes. Hearn may not have initially seemed the most appealing or technically qualified person to promote its study. Upon his arrival in Japan in 1890 he was described by the American scholar Ernest Fenollosa's daughter as being "repulsive to look at...he was totally blind, and his food landed in strange places" (Brooks 59). Hearn discovered that teachers of English were in demand in government schools and, having been an instructor of English at a school in Kumamoto, finally became a professor in English literature at the Tokyo Imperial University (59-60). Christopher Benfey notes that Hearn's appointment was "surprising... he had no training or degree in British literature" (226). Hearn was succeeded by the famous novelist Natsume Soseki in the chair of English literature (Benfey 227) and in Soseki's *Sanshiro* the teaching abilities of his predecessor were criticized. Two students at the university discuss Lafcadio Hearn's years there, and intimate that he was hired more

for his skills as a propagandist than due to his literature teaching ability (Cited in Benfey 227).

Yet subsequent scholarship has somewhat rehabilitated Hearn’s reputation as a lecturer and English literary critic. During his tenure at Tokyo Imperial University (1896-1903) Hearn created an exhaustive set of notes for his students, published posthumously in 1927 as *A History of English Literature* after the editor, John Erskine, encountered them and “was impressed with the “extraordinary” excellence of the contents” (Oishi 93). Hearn’s lecture notes reveal how he taught different movements in British and American literature, Oishi Kaz further observing that Hearn taught British Romantic poetry to his students (93). In his notes Hearn argued that William Blake was “the greatest poet of the Eighteenth century” (Cited in Wada 168), imploring his students to remember the importance of “familiarity with a single great author” (168-9). While Oishi observes that Hearn’s lecture notes sometimes fall into “banal moralism,” he also notes Hearn’s intention to teach such literature as “the expression of emotion and sentiment” (95). In particular, Oishi argues that Hearn’s approach to Romantic verse written by poets such as Coleridge and Shelley involved defining a “ghostly” aspect, being “concerned with the “feeling” conjured up by such experiences” (99). While Hearn’s nineteenth and early twentieth-century lectures on British Romantic poetry may have inspired his Tokyo pupils, however, his overall influence would have been limited in range.

III

Romanticism began to be more widely read and creatively embraced by native scholars who had studied in the new universities. Japanese knowledge of Romantic poetry reached a far wider audience during the late 1880s and 1890s, through a series of important publications such as the *Bungakukai (The Literary World)* that “lasted from 1893 to 1898 and played an important role in the reception of Romanticism” (Okada 2001 89). The young writers and translators of such publications were the graduate students of university departments where Western literature was likely taught. In 1889 Mori Ogai, who had graduated from the university of Tokyo and then studied in Germany, translated and published *Omokage (Vestiges)*, an anthology of German rather than British poetry that was to become “a source of inspiration” for Japanese Romantics (Kondo and Wakabayashi 473).

Works of Romanticism were not just translated but used to creatively adapt and transform Japanese literature. From the *Man’yōshū (759)* and *The Tale of Genji (1021)* to the haiku poetry of Bashō, Japanese literature has a history as long as English letters (Keene 19), and yet, as Donald Keene argues, the literature “produced in Japan after the Meiji restoration is of so different a character” (30). Instead, Japan’s literature has been characterized since the early twentieth century by the rise of the *watakushi shosetsu*, or “I” novel, in which the narrative is presented from the narrow perspective of a single narrator. Following Mori Ogai’s 1889 translations of German poetry, his own romantic fiction posited a contemplative narrator as the sole relater of events. His first published story *Maihime (The Dancing Girl)* (1890) played a key role in the establishment of such literature, his novel telling “the love story between a Japanese student and a German dancer” (Frentiu 49) and denoting him as the creator of the *watakushi shosetsu* (49). Mori Ogai’s ‘I’

narrator style, however, and the twenty novels that followed *Maihime*, evolved “from literature of romantic inspiration” (49), just as his novels function as a vehicle for narrative contemplation.

Such aspects can also be seen as the dominating features of British Romantic poems such as “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” (1807) by William Wordsworth, and are characterized by what M.H. Abrams refers to as the “Greater Romantic Lyric,” typically consisting of “the first-person utterance of a thoughtful, sensitive and perceptive speaker” (Cited in Clausson 111). It is also likely that Mori Ogai was aware of Wordsworth’s poetry, and he may even have read about his work before he published *Maihime*. In the year prior to the publication of Mori’s translated German poems Wordsworth was first introduced to the Japanese reading public. A short essay entitled “*Shin Nihon no Shijin*” (*The Poet of the New Japan*) was written in 1888 by Tokutomi Soho, who was educated at a Christian school in Kyoto, “the predecessor of the present Doshisha University” (Ishikura 3). Wordsworth was the first of the five major British Romantic poets to catch the attention of the Japanese public, and Miyazaki Yaokichi’s *Wordsworth* (1893) was the first independent book written by a Japanese scholar on Wordsworth (Okada 2001 90). This was followed by one of the “outstanding translations of Wordsworth” (Ishikura 4) located in Kunikida Doppo’s novel *Koharu* in 1900. Kunikida had previously studied in the English department of Tokyo Senmon Gakko (now Waseda University) and befriended and influenced Katai Tayama. Katai’s translation of Keats’s verse, entitled *Poetry of Keats*, followed in 1905 and contained twenty-three poems (Okada 2001 96).

By the beginning of the twentieth century, therefore, British Romantic poetry finally began to catch the attention of the wider Japanese public. The publishing success of such texts illustrated that the themes and ideas underpinning British Romanticism resonated sympathetically with Japanese readers. The reasons for this are complex but, in the case of Wordsworth, his success in Japan, Okada Akiko argues, can be partly attributed to the fact that “his nature poetry was congenial to the Japanese readers” (2001 103), proving popular as Japan changed from a rural society into an urban one. Wordsworth’s poetry, therefore, such as “The World is Too Much With Us” (1807) represented for Meiji and Taisho period Japanese a literary articulation of the threats posed to nature by a rapidly modernizing industrial world.

Many of Wordsworth’s poems celebrate the values of rural hearth and home, and such verse anticipated the ways in which the planners of the Tokyo suburbs attempted to achieve their own designs. The *den'en toshi*, or garden cities, built on the outskirts of Tokyo between 1912 and 1926 reflected the twin desire to preserve nature and also build modern homes. Yet such constructions were partly precipitated by literature that contributed greatly to “the discovery of the aesthetic and poetic qualities of the suburb through an interpretation of Western romantic literature” (Yui 139). Kunikida Doppo’s *Musashino* (*The Musashi Plain*) (1901) was a key text that employed the British Romantic poets amongst Japanese sources to poetize the new Tokyo suburbs. Angela Yui argues that:

What Doppo does in Musashino is to borrow the traditional poetic association of the Musashi plain and the romantic descriptions, as well as the spiritual communion between man and nature, in Western literature, from the English romantic poets to Turgenev, to transform Shibuya from the re-

mote and still underdeveloped outskirts where he lived between autumn and spring of 1896-7 to an imaginary poetic space that bridges city and country. (319)

The countryside surrounding the outskirts of Tokyo was therefore transformed into a series of gardens, yet such developments, particularly on the higher Western rim of the city, saw universities invited to build campuses, and the cultural image of a garden “town with a university” was established (Takeuchi 101). Takeuchi Yuichi notes that this is “how the current Tokyo Institute of Technology, Keio University, Tokyo Metropolitan University, Tokyo Gakugei University and Hitotsubashi University found their locations” (101). One can thus understand the foundation of many Tokyo academic campuses as being established within the romanticized and poetic context of Kunikida’s work.

Yet during the *Taisho* years the most popular British Romantic poets became “Byron and Shelley; they were often classed together” (Okada 2001 97). The revolutionary writings of these poets became briefly, but significantly, enormously popular in a period of great social change. While the Meiji era government’s chief preoccupation had been to modernize, the “Taisho era was the time when every class of people yearned for political and cultural liberty and rights” (97). One of the key events during this period was the *Kome Sodo*, or rice riots of 1918, where increases in the price of rice had caused severe economic hardship that provoked mass-protest (Smith 48). Such privation was not necessarily accepted or obeyed during the *Sakoku* (closed state) era, when there were, as Patrick Smith lists, around “three thousand peasant uprisings during the Tokugawa centuries – one a month on average, though they gained in frequency as time went on” (48). During the riots of 1918, however, a key difference was the participation and support of academics influenced by revolutionary Romantic writers such as Byron and Shelley who “felt obliged to play a role in the social change” (Okada 2001 97).

IV

The spread of British Romantic texts that occurred in early twentieth-century Tokyo print culture began to have an effect upon the academic study of both the English language and English literature. 1929 saw the foundation of the English Literary Society of Japan which became the centre of Japanese literary academic work (Okada 2002 100) but rising Japanese expertise in English literary studies was complemented by Tokyo Imperial University and other Japanese institutions hiring increasingly qualified foreign literary scholars. The poet Ralph Hodgson arrived from England in the early 1920s to teach at Tohoku University in Sendai (Okada 2002 94) while in 1931 William Empson, the student of I.A Richards, started lecturing in Tokyo. Along with his famous teacher, Empson is credited, as Clark and Suzuki note, “with establishing the discipline of literary criticism in Britain and the Anglophone world through the twentieth century.” The arrival of these foreign academics caused Japanese literary scholars to turn their attention towards the work of the New Critics such as I. A. Richards (Okada 2002 94). Kudo Yoshimi, for example, published *Coleridge’s Literary Theory*, which was influenced by Richards’ methods (Okada 2006 48). While Emp-

son's influence upon Japanese scholarship was significant, his approach, which involved the close reading of literary texts, paid less attention to Romantic works, or indeed the role of emotion and feeling in reading as Hearn's Tokyo lectures had earlier done.

Instead, it was Edmund Blunden, who arrived in Tokyo in 1924, and was professor at the University of Tokyo until 1927, who contributed more significantly to the scholastic study of British Romantic poetry in Japanese universities (Saito 9). Okada argues that Blunden "successfully changed the quality of English literary studies in Japan" (1988 34), his emphasis upon Romantic poetry in his lecture classes underpinning a critical approach which was unlike that of Richards, Empson or F. R. Leavis. Elaine Yee Lin Ho further notes that:

Blunden was no Leavisite. From the start of his teaching career at Tokyo Imperial University, Blunden adopted an approach to English literature and literary studies as transnational discourse that hinged on an acute perception of cultural and locational differences. (80)

In particular, Blunden's "transnational" lecture approach focused upon the role of emotion and sympathy in reading to establish a sense of commonality which could navigate around cultural problems. This attitude reflected his interest in the British Romantic poets and can be further detected in both his scholastic criticism and his own poetic style.

Blunden can be considered among a group of Georgian poets, including Edward Thomas and W. H. Davies, who held the poetry of "Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and the other English Romantics...as the "classic" norm" (Perkins 215). Further, as David Perkins argues, the Georgian poets "received from Romantic poetry and accepted without question an attitude in which poetry and nature were inextricably associated" (215). While Blunden's early poetry focused on the First World War, his poetic model, Nils Clausson contends, can be seen, along with the work of Owen and Rosenberg, as constructed out of "the Romantic nature lyric" (111). Blunden's poetic style, therefore, even when conveying the tragedy of war, draws upon earlier Romantic poetry, so that nature serves to provoke the imagination and emphasize moments of sorrow and beauty.

Clausson, in his analysis of Blunden's "Vlamertinghe: Passing the Chateau," composed in 1917 and published in *Undertones of War* (1928), notes the poet's direct quoting of Keats' "Ode to a Grecian Urn" (1820) and, in his examination of "Illusions", he has identified the influence of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth (118). The later sonnet, also published in *Undertones of War*, was composed when Blunden was teaching at Tokyo Imperial University and, in its focus upon the moonlight, references Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight" (1798), "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1798), and Wordsworth's "Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known" (1800) (118). In these poems, moonlight transforms the visually unedifying into forms of beauty, while in Blunden's "Illusions" the narrator remembers wartime "Trenches in the Moonlight" (l.1) but also notes moments of beauty. Here, however, both "animal and angel" (l.12) exist together, visually jostling "For the moon's interpretation" (l.14).

Blunden's "Intimations of Mortality," published in *Masks of Time* (1915), contains a more direct, titular reference to Wordsworth's poetry, but also connects thematically to the works discussed above. While the poem's title reminds the reader of "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" (1807), Blunden's narrator turns Wordsworth's ideas upon their head. The narrator is reminded, through recollections of his childhood, not of eternity but, as the title relays, mortality. This was a common theme in Blunden's work; he was haunted throughout his life by his First World War memories and wrote about the effect that such a devastating experience, such as the death of friends and comrades, can have on the human mind years later. The poem's ghostly aspects, and the way in which the poet's feelings are provoked by such experiences, also remind us of Hearn's identification of such qualities as Romantic. In this Wordsworth inspired poem, however, ghostly sensations of mortality are intermixed with moments of beauty, and stanza by stanza, take different forms. In the first stanza, intimations of death are remembered through "the phrase / Of an unknown musician" (ll.1-2), in the second, from "the glowing / of a dead afternoon" (ll.9-10), and in the third "the bloom / Of an apple-tree's roses" (ll.17-18) which, like the tree upon which it grows, is transient.

In the concluding stanza, youth is replaced by maturity, the narrative voice taking place in the present tense. Like Wordsworth's poem, in which the older narrator looks backwards, Blunden's speaker implores such ghostly reminders of the past to persist in their presence:

-You phantoms, pursue me,
Be upon me, amaze me,
Though night all your presence
With sorrow enchant me;
With sorrow renew me!

Songless and gleamless I near no new pleasance,
In subtle returnings of ecstasy raise me,
To my winding-sheet haunt me!
(ll.25-32)

Blunden's narrator reminds us of Wordsworth's speaker, who bemoans "That there hath past away a glory from the earth" (l.18), and who draws upon recalled intimations of immortality to sustain him in maturity. Yet Blunden's narrator draws upon ghostly intimations of mortality to provide himself with present moments of sorrowful but heightened and imaginative sensibility. This deeply imaginative, sympathetic and emotional aspect of Blunden's poetry was identified by a number of the Japanese scholars that he taught and influenced. Saito Takeshi, for example, described Blunden's poetic style as possessing a quality that exemplifies "an affinity with Wordsworth" (9).

Blunden's criticism of other First World War poets appeared to follow the same Romantic vein as his own poetry. James Najarian notes that Blunden's 1931 "Memoir" of Wilfred Owen "beatifies Owen by

deploying Keats” (20), establishing Owen as the twentieth-century version of Keats “both because Owen’s lushness derived from Keats’s lushness and because Owen’s fate seemed similar to Keats’s” (20). Further, Blunden’s literary studies tended to focus upon poets and writers from the Romantic period. In doing so, Blunden’s studies of figures such as *Leigh Hunt* (1930), *Lamb* (1934) and *Shelley* (1946) rowed against the critical tide of his own cultural milieu; the academic reevaluation of the late 1920s and 30s saw Romantic poets like Shelley subjected to criticism by figures such as W. H. Auden and T. S. Eliot. In his essay “Shelley and Keats” (1933) Eliot dismissed Shelley’s poetics as the “ideas of adolescence” (89) famously adding rather bluntly, “I find his ideas repellent” (89). However, Robyn Marsack notes that Blunden made “major contributions to knowledge of the Romantics, especially of Shelley” (7). Blunden thus bucked powerful critical trends and was, as E. W. F. Tomlin further observes, “rehabilitating a group of Romantic personalities at a time when this was far from being a popular pursuit” (130).

V

The British Romantic poets were also the favoured subject of Blunden’s classroom lectures at Tokyo Imperial University during the 1920s. Blunden’s former pupil, the novelist and Byron critic Abe Tomoji, notes that “‘Essayists of the Romantic Period’ was my first experience of Blunden’s lectures” (80). Another of his former pupils, Sone Tamotsu, professor of Ochanomizu Women’s College from 1935-52, reminisces about how “Prof. Blunden’s appreciation and study of Keats were wonderful and unique...I confess I came to like Keats the better for his lecture” (Sone 25). The primary method of literary instruction in Japanese universities at this time was translation and memorisation, and Hani Keiko, later Principal of Jiyu Gakuen, remembers Blunden encouraging his students to learn and memorise poems by heart; “three were ‘Daffodils’, ‘My heart leaps up when I behold a rainbow in the sky’, by Wordsworth, and ‘La Belle Dame sans Merci’ by Keats” (Hani 35). In addition, however, Hani remembers Blunden teaching students not just to translate and memorise such poems but to learn the Romantic poets’ specific cultural virtues as “makers of opportunities” (43), of “Shelley, the idealist, and Keats, again an idealist, but more philosophical than Shelley, who was a man of action, essentially” (43). Charles Lamb was also, like Keats and Shelley, an “Open Sesame, a name to bring us into new company almost throughout the world” (43).

While Blunden’s poetic style can be seen as drawing from the influence of British Romanticism, being compared to Wordsworth (Saito 9) due to its focus upon emotion, feeling and intimation, his Tokyo lecture style also placed importance upon such qualities. Blunden often emotionally expressed his sympathetic reaction to literature in front of his Japanese pupils, and this “readiness to express emotions openly” (Okada 1988 36) made a deep impression upon their learning. Okada notes that former scholar of Tokyo University “Professor Sakai was much moved by Blunden’s tears when he was talking about John Clare” (36). Such sensibility towards literature, however, was not just displayed but also advocated pedagogically.

Abe Tomoji remembers that Blunden used the Romantic expression “‘imaginative sympathy’...in connection with the difficulty of us Japanese students in learning English literature” (Abe 79). Due to the

different ways in which meaning is conveyed in Japanese and English literature, a lecturer might be expected to encounter difficulties when comparing a Japanese poem with a sonnet by Keats or Shelley. Yet Abe remembers how Blunden taught his students that differences of language and culture could be overcome if they “used the power of imagination and sympathy” to therefore, “reach the heart of any people, however remote they might seem to be. It was, so to speak, the secret of literary study” (Abe 80). Blunden further encouraged his students to draw on Romantic empathy similar to Wordsworth’s “Imagination! lifting up itself” in their reception of Romantic writers, so that his pupils would realise that the spirit of Basho, Issa and Shiki was near to poets such as Shelley and Wordsworth (Abe 89). Blunden’s focus upon kinship and commonality thus “exercised a deep and lasting influence on his students, many of whom—such as Tomoji Abe, Yoshio Nakano, and Toshitaka Sakai—later became eminent scholars and men of letters” (Hirai and Milward vii).

This lecture approach appears reflected in his poem “The Author’s Last Word to His Students” published in *Japanese Garland* in 1928. Here Blunden directly addresses, as referenced in the poem’s footnote, the students of “the school of English literature, at the Tokyo Imperial University, 1924-1927” (57). The four stanza poem affectionately salutes his Tokyo pupils, “Remembering how, deep-burdened, eager-eyed, / You loved imagination’s commonwealth” (ll.20-21). Blunden’s use of the word commonwealth may have been a political reference to the Anglo-Japanese alliance which was terminated in 1923, his poem instead sustaining it in an imaginative, romantic sphere. Elaine Yee Lin Ho observes that Blunden’s conception of an “imagination’s commonwealth” differs considerably from the modernist and Anglocentric poetics of more notable contemporaries like T. S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis” (78). She continues, arguing that:

imagination develops a collectivizing momentum beyond individual and national boundaries. It is socially and culturally transformative, for it has the capacity to mobilize individual empathy and bring a “commonwealth” into existence. (81)

The phrase “imagination’s commonwealth” can also be seen as implicitly connected to the language of British Romanticism, as, like “Intimations of Mortality,” Blunden’s “The Author’s Last Word to His Students” appears to reference Wordsworth’s most famous poem. In the concluding part of “Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood” (1807), Wordsworth’s mature narrator describes the process, part imaginative, part-remembered, through which fully-grown adults may remember their childhood, and, in doing so, gain intimations of heaven:

Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the Children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

(II.163-167)

Blunden's poem develops this more corporeally, the narrator poetically imagining voices from Japan, rather than from heaven, positioning himself as a "frail guide" (l.24) looking backwards and listening. The final stanzaic couplet describes Blunden's speaker as one "Who hears beyond the ocean / The Voice of your devotion" (ll.23-24). In this poem, therefore, which reflects Blunden's approach to teaching British Romantic poetry in Japan, the relationship between the teacher and his pupils relies on intimacy and imaginative sympathy.

After the Second World War Blunden returned to Japan in 1947 as the cultural adviser to the United Kingdom Liaison Mission in Tokyo (Bush 71), where, Lewis Bush claims, his house "became the veritable Mecca for all Japanese interested in English language and literature studies" (Bush 72). Blunden's post-war mission was to reintroduce the Japanese public to English literature such as British Romantic poetry, but, unlike his first visit, his teachings weren't restricted narrowly to the capital. Bush notes that Blunden, during the three years of his second term, "must have lectured at every university in the country" and additionally "to all manner of associations and clubs, for the general public under the sponsorship of the *Asahi* newspaper" (72). In addition, Saito Takeshi remembers how he "devoted himself wholeheartedly to the revival of English studies in Japan" and recalls how "he gave about six hundred lectures in various cities, tremendous work" (cited in Hiramatsu 54).

This great endeavour "attracted huge audiences not only of students in English literature but of the reading public in general" (Hiramatsu 54) and once again Blunden chose British Romantic poets whose ideas would connect with his listeners. Hiramatsu Mikio, member of the Japan Ministry of Education, remembers Blunden's lectures at Keio University in 1948: the second of his lectures, "'P.B Shelley: Essays (Collected, 1840)', discussed the prose writings of the Romantic poet-idealist such as "'Declaration of Rights'" (55) at a time of "great political reforms in Japan" (56). Blunden thus "communicated his thought, using Shelley's essays, concerning the existing big change" (56). Shelley's writings on political rebirth thus chimed with Blunden's audience at a time when Japan was undergoing drastic reform. Blunden's influence also involved contributing to the popularisation of Keats scholarship in Japan both inside the classroom (Sone 25) and in his essays, ranging from "free thoughts on the biography of John Keats" and "'Coleridge, Shelley and Keats...published in 1926 (*Studies in English Literature*)" (Okada 2006 83), to the later "Keats' Letters, 1931" (Saito 17). Keats' poetic sensibility, Okada argues, chimed with the Japanese public (2006 16), noting that, by the late 1970s, Keats scholarship in Japan had become profuse (86-87).

VI

British Romanticism has maintained a powerful and enduring presence within Japanese English literary scholarship. Okada documents that in "1975, the *Japan Association of English Romanticism* was founded with about 100 members" (2002 96) updating that in 2002 to "450 members" (96). Further, *The Kenkyusha*

Eigo Nenkan 2015 (Yearbook of English) recorded in its “Shuyo Kenkyu Dantai” (main research group section) that the *Japan Association of English Romanticism* had 300 members (178), opposed to 165 seventeenth-century (183), 67 eighteenth-century (183), 353 Victorian (187), and 164 Dickensian scholars (185), while the English Literary Society of Japan contained 3500 members (190). Romanticism scholars therefore make up 11.6% of the total number of registered literature academics in Japan, with Okada previously noting, “English romantic poetry in particular, is popular among scholars” (2001 88). British Romanticism has therefore been, as Okada notes, “a major field of study for Japanese scholars (2006 16), strongly competing with research work undertaken in other literary disciplines.

The enduring presence of British Romanticism in Japanese English literary scholarship can be seen as representative of more than a study of literature or English. As Okada observes, “post-war democracy and the modern humanistic thought were seen most remarkably in the study of Romanticism” (2002 95). The influence of Romanticism in Japanese academia is therefore partly the result of its suitability within its local and cultural context. Further, the poetic ideas of Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Byron and Shelley have been creatively appropriated and transformed by Japanese scholars, novelists, professors, translators, protestors and suburban campus planners. At the same time, Western lecturers such as Lafcadio Hearn also played an early part in the gradual dissemination of such works.

In particular, the influence of Edmund Blunden on British Romantic scholarship in Japan can be considered significant and worthy of further critical attention. Blunden’s poetic homage to his former students, noting how he heard, or rather imagined, “beyond the ocean / The voice of your devotion” (ll.23-24), underpins his lecture approach in which Romantic poetry was taught by placing emphasis upon its points of commonality, and accessing “imagination’s commonwealth” (ll.20-21). This poem was later referenced by Peter Milward, former emeritus professor of English Literature at Sophia University in Tokyo, in his own recollections of Blunden’s important influence. Milward remembered personally hearing “that “voice of devotion”” from Blunden’s “Japanese disciples – many of whom have since come to occupy prominent positions in the academic and literary world” (157).

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