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Japanese Branch Report

By Mizue Aida

On Saturday 3 December 2011, the Fifteenth Annual Convention of the George Eliot Fellowship of Japan was held at Ferris University.

The morning session began with an opening address by Hidetada Mukai (Ferris University). Three papers were presented in the morning: the first two were introduced and commented upon by Hiroshi Ikezono (Yamaguchi University) and the third by Mie Abe (Shoin University).

The first paper 'Sensitivity and Materiality in "The Lifted Veil"' was presented by Mari Takumi (Tokyo University). She focused on Latimer and his supernatural ability to look into the minds of others and see the reality through his previsions, and she discussed the two different approaches to epistemology that can be seen in 'The Lifted Veil' when Latimer attempts to approach and identify the external world.

The second paper was 'The Framed Heroines and the Miniature in Eliot's novels' by Nana Yano (Shirayuri College). She analyzed the relations between the Miniature and heroines in Eliot's novels. The heroines are Milly in 'The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton' (1858), Caterina in 'Mr Gilfil's Love-Story' (1858), Dorothea in *Middlemarch* (1871-2) and Leonora in *Daniel Deronda* (1876). She concluded that the destruction of the enclosed (framed) picture, especially the miniature, suggests a release of heroines from the static and conventional world.

The third speaker, Masako Kimura (Kyoto Women's University) read a paper on 'Daughters Who Hunger for Affection in *The Mill on the Floss* and "The Moorland Cottage".' She examined the development of heroines hungry for the affection of their families – Maggie Tulliver in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) and Maggie Browne in Elizabeth Gaskell's 'The Moorland Cottage' (1850) – in the context of mother-daughter relationships. She pointed out that Gaskell seeks understanding through bonding between women underpinned by mutual sympathy, while Eliot turns to a man who does not try to dominate women in the perspective proposed by Adrienne Rich.

The afternoon session began with an address by Yoshitsugu Uchida (Professor Emeritus of Tezukayama Gakuin University), President of the George Eliot Fellowship of Japan, which was followed by a Welcome speech by Tomomi Fujimoto (Head Professor of the Department of English, Ferris University). After the addresses, the general meeting was presided over by Yoko Nagai (Keio University). The agenda included financial reports, publications of the Fellowship, and the election of the board of Trustees and steering committee. In addition to the re-elected trustees and committee, Kiyoko Tsuda (Professor Emeritus of Tezukayama Gakuin University) was elected as the new President and Midori Uematsu (Wayo Women's College) and Shintetsu Fukunaga (Okayama University) were elected as new Vice-Presidents. It was reported that the publication of *The Complete Works of George Eliot* commemorating the fifteenth anniversary of The George Eliot Fellowship of Japan was being begun and that the George Eliot Tour (England) is scheduled for August 2012.

After the general meeting, Masayuki Teranishi (Hyogo Kenritsu University), chair of the symposium, gave a paper on 'Polyphony and George Eliot' which summarized the past studies of polyphony in Eliot's fiction and suggested future directions in the field. Following

this introduction, two speakers discussed this theme from a separate perspective. The first speaker, Shota Nakajima (Tokushima Bunri University), examined polyphonic aspects in two adaptations of George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*. Although Mikhail Bakhtin declared that polyphony in a novel cannot be reproduced in filmic adaptation, remarkable developments and refinements in technology have made it possible to reproduce the polyphonic aspects of novels even in film and television adaptation. Nakajima compared the 1978 and the 1997 television adaptations of *The Mill on the Floss*, examining how polyphony in the novel is reproduced differently in each version.

Tetsuko Nakamura (Nippon Medical School) discussed how inner voices are presented in Eliot's first full-length novel, *Adam Bede*. In this third-person narrative novel, the narrator often addresses the reader directly, and sometimes abruptly, to reveal his / her own thoughts regarding the characters and their lives. The narrator also skilfully employs Free Indirect Thought in particular, and different types of conversational response to express his / her views of the main characters, Arthur, Hetty and Adam. Based on stylistics and discourse analysis, Nakamura clarified some early examples of Eliot's employment of polyphony, sophisticated usages of which are widely recognized in her later novels. In the lively exchange of questions and answers that concluded the session there was further examination of the nature of polyphony in George Eliot's novels.

At the end of the convention, the Fifteenth Anniversary Memorial Lecture of the George Eliot Fellowship was given by Hiroshi Ebine (Professor Emeritus of Tokyo University), introduced by Kiyoko Tsuda. The title was 'These things are a parable – reality and unreality in George Eliot'. The sentence, 'These things are a parable', appears in the preface to *Felix Holt* and chapter 27 of *Middlemarch*. The purpose of Ebine's lecture was the perusal of her novels, employing this sentence as a probe. Eliot has been considered to be a novelist of realism who writes things as they are without any glamorization. However, Ebine regarded her as a novelist who observes the surreal world which can be glimpsed behind the 'real' world. He showed how the 'unreal' world comes to the surface in her works, giving good examples from 'The Lifted Veil' but mainly from *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*. His minutely detailed reading revealed a labyrinth of entangled obsessiveness which lies beneath her exquisite description based on realism, a state of mind like that of someone wandering through catacombs or of human beings who resemble carnivorous plants or reptiles creeping in search of prey. He concluded his lecture with the proposition that the novels of George Eliot describe unreality embedded in the reality of everyday life and take us into a huge laboratory of realism which contains a lot of new elements and throws light on the conventional concepts of realism.

The convention ended with a closing speech by Kiyoko Tsuda. After the convention, the members of the Fellowship enjoyed warm and friendly discussion at an informal party. Sixty-five people attended the convention, and forty-two of them attended the party.