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JAPANESE BRANCH REPORT

By Shinsuke Hori

On Saturday 1 December 2012, the Sixteenth Annual Convention of the George Eliot Fellowship of Japan was held at Kansai University of Foreign Studies.

The morning session started with an opening address by Chizuko Watari (Kansai University of Foreign Studies). Three papers were presented in the morning session. The first two were commented upon by Midori Niino (Kobe University of Foreign Studies) and the third by Masayuki Kato (Kobe University).

The first speaker was Ayako Tani (Fukuoka University), whose subject was 'The Idea of a Double in *Daniel Deronda*: Grandcourt's Death and Gwendolen's Rebirth'. Grandcourt's death has been often criticized as an expedient part of the plot. What Tani focused on in her argument was the idea of a double, as seen in Gwendolen's relationship with Grandcourt. When Gwendolen struggles with Grandcourt's aggressive behaviour and overcomes her hardships, her domineering husband (her double) dies. Tani argues that Eliot constructs a relationship of cause and effect between Gwendolen's moral progress and Grandcourt's death as the epitome of male domination. It is interesting to see the adoption of a motif in a story which subtly overturns the conventional idea of male domination. Refuting the critical views of his seemingly coincidental death, Tani analyzed Grandcourt's death from the perspective of Gwendolen's moral progress.

The second speaker was Eri Yoshimura (Kobe College) who discussed 'The Gazes of Female Characters in *Daniel Deronda*: Centring on Gwendolen and Mirah'. Central to her argument were the competitive power struggle between Gwendolen and Grandcourt, the conflicting and resisting way Gwendolen gazes upon Deronda, as seen most characteristically in the scene at the gaming table, and finally the way that Mirah's black eyes enchant Deronda. Her insightful argument sheds light on the male convention of the time, which is sometimes overturned by Eliot's female characters represented here by Gwendolen and Mirah: in short, female characters like Gwendolen and Mirah do not thoroughly submit to male domination.

The third speaker was Yoshiaki Okada (Nihon University), who tackled 'The Competing Ideas of Reason and Passion in *Adam Bede* in Relation to Milton's *Paradise Lost*'. Okada pointed out that in *Adam Bede* (1859), Eliot adapted ideas on reason and passion from Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) while also taking some philosophical ideas from Spinoza's *Ethics* (1677) and Feuerbach. Okada focused on the meaning of 'nature' in the text and, using some excerpts from *Paradise Lost*, revealed that Hetty Sorrel embodies the ideas of passion and low nature while Dinah Morris embodies reason and high nature.

The afternoon session began with an address by Kiyoko Tsuda (Professor Emeritus of Tezukayama University), President of the George Eliot Fellowship in Japan, which was followed by a speech of welcome by Yoshitaka Tanimoto (President of Kansai University of Foreign Studies). After the addresses, the general meeting was presided over by Yoshiko Tanaka (formerly a Professor at Kawamura Gakuen Woman's University). The agenda included the financial reports, the editor's comments upon the publication of the *George Eliot Review of Japan*, and the reports on the George Eliot Tour held in summer 2012 by the members of the Fellowship.

After the general meeting, a symposium entitled 'George Eliot and George Henry

Lewes' was presented by three speakers. After Yoko Nagai (Keio University), the chair of the symposium, had outlined the general and critical history of George Henry Lewes's works, three speakers discussed this theme from separate perspectives. The first speaker, Takumi Kato (Meiji University), examined George Henry Lewes as both a dramatist and a drama critic, and disclosed the ideal images of a drama he envisaged in his mind by looking at *On Actors and the Art of Acting* (1875) and other reviews. The criticism on Lewes has always been overwhelmed by the perspectives of his relationship with Eliot and his influence on her. Among his literary accomplishments, his dramas and plays, including *The Game of Speculation* (1851) in which he imitated and revised a work by Balzac, have been neglected by critics. However, he skilfully deploys a wide range of dramatic techniques by taking advantage of his own experiences as an actor. Although he was harshly aware of his own lack of literary abilities as a dramatist, his passion is evident in his works.

Keiji Yata (Tokyo Kasei University), the second speaker, illuminated the interesting and major features of *Ranthurpe* (1847) and *Rose, Blanche, and Violet* (1848): the crude structure of the plots, the redundant descriptions by the narrators, and the idea of rewarding good and punishing evil. He argued that Lewes's novels are inferior to Eliot's in their completeness as stories, and that he cannot surpass her in the psychological manoeuvres her characters make in her works. However, Yata also claimed that we can evaluate Lewes's works as psychological dramas because of the adroit descriptions and subtle use of words. His argument was of great interest because he scrutinized some of the features which tell much of one of the literary movements of the time, possibly foreshadowing the New Woman, while also pointing out Lewes's poor ability as a novelist, which he himself suspected.

Kimiaki Hara (Nihon University), the third speaker, analyzed mainly volumes 4 and 5 of *Problems of Life and Mind* (The Third Series) ('The Study of Psychology' and 'Mind as a Function of the Organism', respectively) (hereafter, *Problems*) from the perspectives of feeling and duty. What motivated George Eliot after Lewes's death was the completion of the unfinished writing of these last two volumes of *Problems*. In his argument, Hara explored both the idea of feeling as Feuerbach intended and that of duty, a leitmotif in Eliot's works. Fellow feelings turned upon others are innate instincts of human beings, while Eliot construes a sense of duty as living for families, tribes, and the species. Sympathetic feelings towards others can be understood in relation to the universal and ideological meanings of the sadness Eliot suffered from and tried to overcome. After the discussion, which concluded the session, there was a lively exchange of questions and answers about the relationship between Eliot's and Lewes's works.

At the end of the convention, a special lecture on 'George Eliot and Charles Dickens: Four Years of Their Friendship and Sympathy' was given by Masaie Matsumura (Professor Emeritus of Otemae University), introduced by Hiroshi Ebine (Professor Emeritus of Tokyo University). Dickens was the first to see past the anonymity of George Eliot. His words 'if those two Volumes, or a part of them, were not written by a Woman, – then should I begin to believe that I am a woman myself' do not simply come from his curiosity, but from his intention as the editor of *Household Words* (later the editor of *All the Year Round*) to find a talented author, especially a woman, to write for the journal. Focusing on the exchange of the letters between Dickens and Eliot, Matsumura looked at their friendship which continued for four years, but stopped because of a misunderstanding that arose between them. What does the disrupted exchange of their letters mean? Matsumura's special lecture was thought-provoking

in that it made the audience curious to find out the reason.

The convention closed with a speech by Midori Uematsu. After the convention, the members of the Fellowship enjoyed warm and friendly discussion at an informal party.