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JAPANESE BRANCH REPORT

By Keiji Yata

On Saturday, 27 November 2004, the eighth annual convention of the George Eliot Fellowship of Japan was held at Literature Hall in Kobe College (Kobe Jogakuin).

The morning session began with an opening address by Kazuo Fujikawa (Okayama University), followed by a welcome address by Masako Hirai (Kobe College). In the morning, we had three papers. The first two papers were introduced and commented upon by Toshie Maeda (Kansai University), while Hiroshi Oshima (Hyogo University of Teacher Education) introduced and commented upon the third.

Nana Yano (Shirayuri College) read the first paper, 'Hetty and Water Imagery in *Adam Bede*'. Her paper analysed the functions of water imagery in the novel, particularly in connection with Hetty. Ms Yano argued that images like tears, the pond and the sea represent Hetty's feelings in some crucial scenes, while also symbolising the dream world she inhabits.

The second paper was 'A Stylistic Analysis of *Middlemarch*: Effects of "Empathy" and Two Levels of Polyphony' by Masayuki Teranishi (Takamatsu National College of Technology). This paper offered a stylistic analysis of the characterisation of Dorothea Brooke and Mr Brooke in *Middlemarch*. Dr Teranishi explained how surface level polyphony can be distinguished from deep level polyphony, and concluded that this distinction is essential to any polyphonic approach to *Middlemarch*.

The third speaker, Chieko Watanabe (Aoyama Gakuin University) read a paper titled 'The Secret of Success in *Adam Bede*: Its Structural Relation to Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandschaften* (*Elective Affinities*)'. This paper emphasised that, before George Eliot began writing novels, she had studied Goethe's novel in detail. By comparing the structure of *Adam Bede* with that of the German novel, Dr Watanabe pointed out the parallels between the two texts, and concluded that Eliot had established the structure of *Adam Bede* under the influence of the narrative method of *Die Wahlverwandschaften*.

The afternoon session began with a welcome speech by Professor Sonoko Harada, the President of Kobe College, which is one of the oldest women's universities in Japan. The General Meeting of the Fellowship, presided over by Professor Fujikawa, followed. The meeting's agenda included financial reports, publications of the Fellowship, and the future use of the Internet to promote the activities of the Fellowship, among other items, and they were explained by Kimitaka Hara (Nihon University). Shizuko Kawamoto (Tsuda College), the President of the George Eliot Fellowship of Japan, read a message from the Secretary of the Fellowship in UK to the Japanese members, who were greatly impressed by the enormous contribution by the Secretary to the George Eliot readership all over the world.

After the General Meeting, Masatoshi Ogino (Nanzan University) took the chair for the symposium, 'Reading *Romola*'. Professor Ogino, the first of the four panellists, stated that the key to solving the novel's crux is to find why Eliot chose to locate her historical romance in Florence during the days of Savonarola.

Next, Mizue Aida (Teikyo University) presented a new reading of the novel from topographical and historical perspectives, enriching her presentation with a wide range of visual and documentary materials. She suggested that the character differences between Romola and Tito have some parallels to the differences between the northern and southern mentalities in Italy.

Akiko Takei (Seijo University) read a paper titled 'The Limit of Romola as a Learned and New Woman'. This paper examined gender roles and feminist movements in the 1850s and 60s, and characterised Romola as a limitedly new and learned woman, in spite of her strong will and aspiration for learning.

Yusuke Tanaka (Seijo University) was the next speaker. His paper analysed some father-like figures in the text, arguing that we can detect a subconscious desire to kill the father in *Romola*. He stated that, through writing the novel, the novelist had been liberated from the complexities of similar desires she had repressed in her own life.

Yumiko Hirono (Kyoto University), as a commentator, stated that though *Romola* has often been considered to be quite different from Eliot's other novels set in 19th-century England, discussion by the panellists proved that it is possible to place the novel as having a certain continuity within her oeuvre.

The convention ended with a closing speech by Yoshitsugu Uchida (Kansai Gaidai University). After the conference, the members enjoyed warm and friendly talks at an informal party in a nearby hotel. Fifty-four members attended the convention of whom thirty-eight attended the party.