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JAPANESE BRANCH REPORT

By Yuko Nakamura

On Saturday 26 November 2005, the ninth Annual Convention of the George Eliot Fellowship of Japan was held at Tokyo Kasei University.

The morning session began with an opening remark by Kazuo Fujikawa (Okayama University), followed by a welcome address by Keiji Yata (Tokyo Kasei University). In the morning, we had three papers presented. The first two papers were introduced and commented upon by Miwa Ohta (Chuo University), and the third by Yoko Nagai (Keio University).

The first paper, “‘Janet’s Repentance’ – The story of an unhappy, married couple –’ was presented by Naomi Ohno (Toyo University). She focused on the two main characters, Janet Dempster and her husband Robert Dempster, and analysed the story from the viewpoint of their unhappy married life. Furthermore, she focused on Mr Tryan, a zealous Evangelical clergyman, concluding that Eliot gives him the important role of connecting people in Milby and of supporting Janet in particular with his human love and sympathy.

The second paper was ‘The Process of Counselling in “Janet’s Repentance”’ by Horuho Murayama (Saniku Gakuin College). He analysed Eliot’s psychological realism in his presentation: Janet has come to believe in ‘the message of mercy’ to be recovered from suffering since she expects ‘some message of comfort’ from Rev. Tryan who knows the ‘secrets of sorrow’, and she goes through ‘the initiation of suffering’. Murayama concluded that Eliot’s ideas on goodness and sympathy were finely crystallized in this process of Rev. Tryan’s counselling.

The third paper, ‘*Adam Bede* – Hetty’s Nature and Sorrow’, was presented by Hideo Takano (Komazawa Junior College). He discussed the substantial relationship between human beings and their society from a universal perspective in *Adam Bede*. Hetty’s self-destructive daily life was analysed in terms of human nature, ‘a luxurious and vain nature’, and her sorrow was cut out in the image of Medusa in Greek Myth. He came to the conclusion that Eliot’s concept of human nature – that ‘human nature is lovable’ – may be related to that of Buddhist and Oriental culture found in ‘Jihi’, the Japanese terms for Mercy.

The afternoon session began with the general meeting, presided over by Fujikawa. The meeting’s agenda included financial reports and publications of the Fellowship. Shizuko Kawamoto (Tsuda College), the president of the George Eliot Fellowship of Japan, read a message from Mrs K. Adams, the Secretary of the Fellowship in the UK to the Japanese members. Hikaru Kataoka, the president of Tokyo Kasei University offered a speech of welcome. The board of trustees and steering committee were re-elected. The Japanese Branch elected Yoshitsugu Uchida (Tezukayama Gakuin University) as new president, Kiyoko Tsuda (Tezukayama University) as new vice-president, and Kimitaka Hara (Nihon University) as vice-president, as well as new head of the steering committee and Secretary of the Japanese Branch.

After the general meeting, we had a symposium on ‘George Eliot and Her Critical Writings’,

presided over by Shigeo Tomita (Koshien University). First, Tomita surveyed George Eliot's critical career, especially her energetic works in 1855-56. In order to cast more light on her essays and reviews which have been overshadowed by her novels, the following papers were read.

Hiroshi Ohshima (Hyogo University of Teacher Education) addressed George Eliot's view of human beings and women's education with reference to her main educational essays, 'Woman in France: Madame de Sablé' and 'Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft'. He pointed out that Eliot's claim for sexual equality in education was based upon Feuerbach's vision of androgyny as the ideal state which Eliot shared, and that Eliot's 'marriage of minds', or her vision of androgyny as the ideal state, is three-fold, consisting of individual, the male-female, and the social level.

Tomita discussed 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists' from the standpoint of the natural history of the conventional novels by women writers in the 1850s, and examined the situation of author, reader, critic and publisher in the Victorian fiction market.

Fumiko Nishiyama (Kobe University) discussed Marian Evans's views of art, society, and history expressed in 'The Natural History of German Life'. She suggested that Evans regarded Riehl's sociological study of the German rural people very highly, and that his method of truthful observation and perspective on the imperceptibly slow change in society or history were what George Eliot made use of in her fictional works such as *Silas Marner* and *Middlemarch*.

Shintetsu Fukunaga (Okayama University) read a paper titled "'R. W. Mackay's *The Progress of the Intellect*" – George Eliot and Biblical Criticism'. He retraced the process of George Eliot's study of German Higher Criticism and her subsequent translation and refinement of its basic assumptions into her essays and novels.

The convention ended with a closing speech by Uchida. After the conference the members enjoyed warm and friendly talks at an informal dinner party. Fifty-four members attended the convention.