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JAPANESE BRANCH REPORT

By Masako Kimura

On 10 December 2016, the Twentieth Annual Convention of The George Eliot Fellowship of Japan was held in Otani University. The morning session, moderated by Hiroshi Oshima (Hyogo University of Teacher Education), began with an opening address by Yoriko Murase (Otani University). Thereafter, two papers were presented.

The first paper 'The Influence of Adam Smith's Discussion of Sympathy on George Eliot: Reading *Silas Marner* with *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*' was read by Chiyo Fujiwara (Kobe College). A discussion on some philosophical passages in the two authors' works followed, with the hypothesis that the 'sympathy' described in *Silas Marner* was possibly greatly influenced by *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Comparing the Silas-Eppie relationship with the Godfrey-Eppie relationship, Fujiwara considered the former to be a successful case of the bonds of sympathy surpassing the bonds of blood; which holds good with Smith's theory of sympathy. However, as she remarked, such a bond can also be a product of simpler human relationships in a small community.

The second paper 'Women's Education in *Adam Bede*' was read by Chiyuki Kanamaru (Aichi Bunkyo University). She asserted that what separates the fates of two women—Dinah and Hetty in *Adam Bede*—is not only the differences in their characteristics, but also an institutional fault in the social education for women at that time. Since the current social conventions decreed that a woman should be dependent on her husband after marriage, Hetty aims to marry into wealth, and, therefore, treats her beauty as a commodity. This, however, results in her downfall. In contrast, Dinah looks for a proper way of life through her faith in God, and not through the conventions of the region. However, Kanamaru pointed out, Eliot tries to find salvation in the conversation between Dinah and Hetty in which they express sympathy for each other, and not conflict.

The afternoon session began with the presidential address by Midori Uematsu (Professor Emeritus, Wayo Women's University), followed by the General Meeting that was chaired by Toshie Maeda (Kansai University). The proceedings advanced smoothly with the reading of a report on the preceding year's activities and the accounts, the editor's report on *The George Eliot Review of Japan* vol. 18, and *The Newsletter* No. 20. Announcements followed—of a project (publication of a textbook on *Silas Marner* for Japanese university students) for the twentieth anniversary of The George Eliot Fellowship of Japan, of the next year's convention (to be held on 2 December 2017 at Daito Bunka University), and about some personnel changes in the Fellowship administration.

After the meeting, a symposium entitled 'Seeking for New Readings of *Romola*' started. The first speaker was Yohko Nagai (Keio University), who presented a paper, '*Romola*—Searching for the Relations with Others', that focused on the position of *Romola* in Eliot's literary history. She noted that *Romola* was influenced by Feuerbach's theory of relationships between oneself and others, and that the delineation of the protagonist's attainment of self-knowledge through her dealings with other people forms the foundation of relationships in which fraternity is cultivated out of self-love in Eliot's later works.

The next was Keiko Kubota (Otsuma Women's University Junior College), who presented a paper on 'Two Points of View in *Romola*—Historical Romance and Travel Writing'. One of these points of view is the exploration of the city of Florence in 1492-98; the story proceeds as if it is an actual sequel to Machiavelli's *Florentine Histories*, and it tells of people's life in a community. The other aspect that was discussed is that one can see Florence in this book from a nineteenth century English traveller's point of view, for whom *Romola* would be just like a guidebook that provides so much knowledge about the history of a place and its tourist spots. As such, the book seems to have met travellers' needs during the boom in overseas travel in the nineteenth century.

The third speaker was Kazuko Hisamori (Professor Emeritus, Ferris University), the chairperson of this symposium, who presented her paper, 'Two Cosimos—a Fictitious Character in *Romola* and a Real Artist'. Based on historical materials and research by art historians, Hisamori explored how Eliot established an image of Cosimo that was borrowed from reality and incorporated it into the plot. Moreover, a PowerPoint presentation on the real Cosimo's paintings made a good impact, for they showed the painter's refined skills—his minuteness, precision, and precognitive representation, which, as Hisamori pointed out, are similar to Eliot's writing skills in her novels.

The last speaker was Akemi Yoshida (Kinki University), who focussed on the character of Tito in her paper, '*Romola* in Literary History—An Analysis of a Sinful, Good-Looking Man'. Yoshida noted that Eliot's work succeeds in re-examining the literary heritage that contributes to the basis of her writing, and in passing her creative efforts down to future generations. In comparing Tito's deceitful nature (his good looks and his bad faith) with that of his counterparts in Eliot's contemporary works and in succeeding writers' works, Yoshida emphasized Eliot's uniqueness.

After the symposium, Toshiro Nakajima (Konan University) gave a special lecture on 'George Eliot and *The Westminster Review*'. He began by introducing the history of a book, a research study, which explores the age, society, culture, and other aspects of a certain book, and then, moved to the discussion of the day's main topic—the historical development of *The Westminster Review*. One important factor that Nakajima referred to was that the publisher had come across the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment at the Strand in London, and that his publications were naturally influenced by them. Further, that in the 1830-40s, *The Westminster Review* had a marketing strategy that targeted the intelligentsia to act against the current notions of writing vulgar books for the lower social stratum. Those are essential pieces of information to consider while discussing the background to Eliot's work. In the latter half of the lecture, Nakajima explained how the foundations of 'George Eliot the novelist' were laid and strengthened at that time by citing some quotations from her writing.

The convention concluded with a closing address delivered by Shintetsu Fukunaga (Professor Emeritus, Okayama University), after which the participants attended a gathering, where they enjoyed holding discussions and deepening their friendships.