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The Fellowship's new Patron, the Viscountess Daventry of Arbury Hall.
George Eliot was born at South Farm within the park at Arbury in 1819.

JAPANESE BRANCH REPORT 1999
by Kyoko Kishimoto

The third annual convention of the George Eliot Fellowship of Japan was held at the beautiful Bunka Women’s University in Musashino, Tokyo, on Saturday, 27 November 1999. On the rather cold day with eighty-seven active participants, the morning session began with a welcome speech by Yoko Yanagi, Dean of the Literature Department of Bunka Women’s University. Among the three papers, the first was ‘Eppie’s Innocent Challenge in Silas Marner’ by a graduate student at Edinburgh University, Yuko Nakamura. She thought that Eppie, as an eighteen-year-old woman, challenged mid-Victorian ideology with her marriage by rejecting that system of patriarchy and class society, but that her way of making decisions and her origins showed Eliot’s limitations as a feminist. Next, Rika Igarashi, an assistant professor at Wakkanai Hokusei-Gakuen Junior College, evaluated Daniel Deronda with ‘Seeing More Possibility – Centering on Daniel Deronda’. She felt that the descriptions of Deronda
and the Jewish problems, even if artificial, gave Eliot’s novels a new phase and that Eliot tried
to describe the sorrow and sufferings of all human beings through expanding Deronda’s per-
sonal anguish. The third paper by Harumi Nakazawa, an assistant professor at Bunka Women’s
University, was ‘The Victorian Reception of Middlemarch in the Light of the Discrepancy
Between Masculine and Feminine Interpretations’. Ms Nakazawa imagined Eliot’s views
about her characters, quoting the contemporary criticisms of the men’s point of view.

The afternoon session began with the general meeting presided over by Yoshitsuga Uchida, a
professor at Tezukayama-Gakuin University. Then, Hirishi Ebine, the president of the George
Eliot Fellowship of Japan and a professor at Toyo University, addressed his hopes concerning
our fellowship activities. After that, we had a symposium on Adam Bede by three panelists and
a chairman, Kazuo Fujikawa, a professor at Dokkyo University. In his introduction, Professor
Fujikawa suggested that Adam Bede was written with the aim of being an ideal novel, after
Eliot found the mission of literature through her agonies. Professor Fujikawa was followed by
Toshie Maeda, a lecturer at Kansai University. She considered Hetty’s role, saying that she
embodied the complex nineteenth-century view of nature and that she hastened the collapse of
the old community, transfigured the abstract figure of Dinah into a living woman, and changed
Dinah and Adam into suitable human beings for the next generation. Next, Keiji Tanida, an
assistant professor at Tokyo Kasei University, pointed to the treatment of Arthur’s injury and
Hetty’s eroticism as examples of Eliot trying to escape from the conventional way of thinking
about injury or disease as a punishment, but that actually Eliot gave Arthur and Hetty disease
and death at the end. So he concluded Eliot could not completely deny the absolute. The third
speaker, Kanako Yaneki, a professor at Kobe Nurses’ College, proved that this novel had dou-
ble structures with realistic and mythological parts by analysing Adam, Arthur and Hetty using
the keyword of ‘improvement’, and that Hetty was further developed in Gwendolen as a sis-
ter. Their presentations provoked a lot of discussions. The final special lecture was ‘A
Reassessment of Silas Marner’ given by Shigeru Koike, a professor at Tokyo Woman’s
Christian University. He argued that Silas Marner should be considered as the first of Eliot’s
later mature novels because the theme is the passage of time. While the inhabitants of
Hayslope, who failed to develop, were punished, Silas became happy by changing from a sim-
ple miser who froze the function of money into a townsman recognizing time through invest-
ment in Eppie. So this is not a pastoral novel about a village where time has stopped. The con-
vention was closed with a speech by Ineko Kondo, an emeritus professor Tsuda College. After
that, we enjoyed an informal dinner party at one of the campus restaurants with forty-eight in
attendance.