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Japanese Branch Report

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JAPANESE BRANCH REPORT
By Itsuyo Shimizu

The sixth annual convention of the George Eliot Fellowship of Japan was held at Tezukayama University in an ancient city, Nara, on Saturday 30 November 2002. Before the opening, the members who arrived early enjoyed Romola (a silent film directed by Henry King, 1924) and opera music (arranged by Kiyoko Tsuda, a head official of the Japanese branch).

The morning session began with an opening address by Kiyoko Tsuda, a professor at Tezukayama University. In the morning, four members read their papers under the chairmanship of Professor Yoshiko Tanaka and Professor Shigeko Tomita.

The first paper, ‘Women in Scenes of Clerical Life’, was presented by Mariko Asano, a part-time lecturer at Konan University. She pointed out that the gradual moral progress in Milly, Caterina, and Janet was the prototype of women’s lives represented in George Eliot’s later works. The second paper, ‘Birth and Significance of Felix Holt, the Radical: George Eliot’s Groping and Challenge’, was presented by Teiko Hashimoto, an assistant professor at Showa Pharmaceutical University. She suggested that G. H. Lewes’s influence on Felix Holt was clearly seen in the challenge George Eliot took up in creating the political problems, the mottoes in each chapter, the dramatic plot and the real characters. The third paper, ‘A Consideration of Middlemarch on Farebrother’, was read by Michiko Kobayashi, a part-time lecturer at Doshisha University. She remarked that we could see George Eliot’s ability to create the minor characters in the description of Farebrother, in which his sense of value was set against Lydgate’s and Casaubon’s. And the last paper, ‘George Eliot in Japan: as a Woman Novelist’, was read by Kyoko Kishimoto, an assistant professor at Kyoto Sangyo University. She introduced the reception history of George Eliot in Japan, based on reliable materials which show the first introduction of George Eliot into Japan to be in 1885 and the first abridged translation into Japanese in 1901.

The afternoon session began with the general meeting, presided over by Yoshitsugu Uchida, the vice-president of the Japanese Branch and a professor at Kansai Gaidai University. The Japanese Branch elected Shzuko Kawamoto, the former vice-president and an emeritus professor at Tsuda College, as the new president and Kimitaka Hara, a professor at Nihon University, as the new vice-president. And it appointed Hiroshi Ebine, the former president and a professor at Toyo University, as an advisor. After the election, the former and new presidents made speeches, and the president of Tezukayama University, Suezo Ishizawa, gave a welcome address.

After the general meeting, a symposium on ‘Reading Felix Holt, the Radical: Cross-Sections of the Old and New Ages’ was held with Nobutetsu Fukunaga, a professor at Okayama University, in the chair. First, the chairperson surveyed the aspects of English culture in Felix Holt. Next, Miyuki Amano, an assistant professor at Hiroshima Prefectural Women’s University, gave a paper on ‘The Shift of Gender Paradigm: Repetition and Difference in G. Eliot and V. Woolf’. She observed the change of the relationship between Esther and Felix as the shift of gender paradigm from ‘the man’s cult by a woman’ to ‘the woman’s leadership of
a man', and explained that it was differently repeated in *To the Lighthouse*. Thirdly, Masayuki Kato, an assistant professor at Kobe University, argued on the subject of 'Felix Holt, a Clockmaker: *Felix Holt* and Working-Class-Consciousness'. Comparing the metaphor of machine in G. Eliot with it in E. P. Thompson, he argued that G. Eliot regarded the self-conscious reformation in working men as the highest priority among social reforms. Finally, Fumiko Nishiyama, a full-time lecturer at Kobe University, discussed the description of the criminal trial in *Felix Holt* from the viewpoint of 'Transfiguration of Realism and a Role of Court'. She suggested that realism in G. Eliot developed from the enumeration of facts into the disclosure of fictitiousness. After the lively discussion between the panelists and the audience, the chairperson concluded that the organic community represented in *Felix Holt* provides many important clues to our understanding of English culture.

The final special lecture on 'G. H. Lewes as a Novelist: on *Ranthorpe*’ was given by a professor at Otemae University, Masaei Matsumura. He observed that Lewes obstinately criticized a lack of intellect in Dickens's works, but that Lewes’s *Ranthorpe* revealed the want of novelty and interest, in spite of his creation of Ranthorpe as the first English bohemian. He moreover argued that the advice from Lewes to Charlotte Brontë deserved her refutations and revealed his limitations, because it was based on the principles he applied to his criticism of Dickens. His lecture held the audience spellbound.

The convention closed with a speech given by Masatoshi Ogino, an emeritus professor at Nanzan University. After that, the members enjoyed an informal dinner party at the campus restaurant. Seventy-two members participated in the convention and fifty-eight attended the party.