GEORGE ELIOT 2019:
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ABSTRACTS
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PANEL ABSTRACTS

WEDNESDAY 17 JULY

PANEL A (14.30-16.00)

A1: George Eliot’s Philosophical Practices (Oak 1)

Panel Abstract: This panel will consider the practices through which Eliot engaged with philosophy over the course of her career. It will investigate the ways in which Eliot explored philosophical texts and ideas. It will also investigate how she approached philosophical problems, as a philosophical thinker in her own right. Our focus will be on her habits, methods, and modes of inquiry. We will ask how Eliot’s particular approaches to thinking, reading, translating, notetaking, reviewing, fiction writing, and verse writing shaped how she understood and undertook philosophy. We will explore the significance of her experiments with form, style, and genre for her philosophical thinking. And we will consider how she drew upon all these practices of engagement to enable her readers to think philosophically too. Our three papers will address different aspects of Eliot’s philosophical practices, focusing on her dialectical thinking, her translating, and her notetaking respectively, but they also will be complementary, and we will begin the panel with a brief introduction, in which we will suggest why thinking about practice is key to thinking about Eliot’s engagement with philosophy more broadly.

Isobel Armstrong (Birkbeck), ‘George Eliot: Hegel Internalised’

It is clear, when we see the early and quite clumsy attempts of G H Lewes to assimilate Hegelian thinking in the 1840s, that Hegel represented to him a new form of knowledge, comparable to the way people grappled with the new knowledges of the twentieth century, Freud and Marx. By 1870, however, Lewes was more confident, though self-critical, when revising his Biographical History of Philosophy yet again for publication. It is clear, too, from letters, that Eliot read and discussed this work with him. She never translated Hegel, but there is clear reference to his thought when she writes of the ‘unhappy consciousness’ in discussion of Lydgate’s researches in Middlemarch (1872) and a superb instance of condensed paraphrase of the Phenomenology in the famous reference in Chapter 11 to ‘the double change of self and beholder’. Yet Eliot neither psychologised nor thematised Hegelian thought. Instead she gives us the lived experience of an epistemology that puts it under investigation, exploring the dialectic of power relations in a way that both structures the novel and engages in critique of Hegel’s reading of power. Daniel Deronda and Eliot’s poems also have debts to Hegel, but Middlemarch will be my principal focus.

Clare Carlisle Tresch (KCL), ‘Philosophical Formations: Eliot and Spinoza’

Shortly before she began to write fiction under the name George Eliot, Marian Evans translated Spinoza’s Ethics, one of the greatest works in the western philosophical canon. This paper approaches Eliot’s work of translating Spinoza (from her first encounter with his writing in the early 1840s to her intensive engagement with the Ethics in the mid-1850s) as a philosophical practice. It will also ask whether, and in what ways, this work of translation continued in George Eliot’s novels, for example in a transubstantiation of emotional intelligence from logical to literary form.

The peculiar geometrical method of Spinoza’s Ethics is designed to train its readers’ minds to think differently, to break free from the grooves of habit into which their consciousness has fallen. Indeed, Spinoza’s text contains theoretical reflection on how minds can be modified, and their thought-processes reformed, through the activity of reading. The hours Eliot spent immersed in Spinoza’s Latin text – some of
them documented in her journal – can be understood, in this light, as a process of philosophical formation, rather than merely as an occasion for intellectual assimilation. This process will be traced to Eliot’s fiction, giving attention to her own reflections on the question of formation which was so crucial to 19th-century philosophy and science: Eliot thought deeply about the formation of literary works as well as the formation of characters and relationships. The aim of this paper is not to portray Eliot as a Spinozist in any doctrinal sense, but to explore the dynamic philosophical affinity between Eliot and Spinoza that took shape through her translation of the Ethics.

Ruth Abbott (University of Cambridge), ‘George Eliot’s Research Notebooks: Forms of Inquiry’

This paper will focus on the research notebooks that Eliot used throughout her career to transcribe quotations from her staggeringly extensive reading across an extraordinary range of disciplines and in a core eight languages. Scholars who have discussed these notebooks to date have responded to their giddying range of forms, disciplines, genres, and languages by reading them selectively for evidence of particular interests or sources for individual novels. Yet the majority of their contents are too wildly off-topic to be attributable to the emphasis on accuracy for which the realist novel became renowned. This paper will address their obliqueness head on, offering a new way of thinking about how Eliot’s scholarly practices shaped both her philosophical thinking and her literary writing, but non-teleologically, and not as source. It will reconstruct the practices of philosophical reading and note-taking to which Eliot’s notebooks bear witness, and explore what these practices achieved. It will outline her fascinating experiments with different methods for organising her notes, and the new philosophical modes that she generated as she rearranged and recopied them. It will demonstrate that her primary concern in her notebooks was not with any particular area of philosophical inquiry, but with the methods of inquiry itself, both practical and conceptual. Finally, it will suggest that Eliot’s use of her notebooks to test methods for organising knowledge had profound implications for her literary writing. What her notebooks offered her, I propose, was a means for exploring the ways in which different forms of writing reconfigure the ideas that they appear merely to convey. Multidisciplinary, multilingual, formally hybrid scholarship was important to her, not only in itself, but also for the opportunity that it offered to test the power of form as a transformative variable, and thereby to develop new possibilities in literary form too. Her scholarly practices tested the very networks of knowledge that they investigated, enabling an ambitious reconfiguration of literary form and its relation to philosophical inquiry.

A2: Eliot and Her Contemporaries (Oak 2)

Beryl Gray, ‘Cara Bray, George Eliot, and The Animal World’

George Eliot’s close friend and fellow writer Caroline (Cara) Bray had a mission to teach and, as Eliot recognized, a gift for teaching. She had published five children’s books (two of which were specifically schoolbooks) before Eliot’s death; these were followed by two more children’s books and, finally, a novel. This paper will review her achievements as a teacher-writer in the light of Eliot’s sympathetic encouragement and promotion of them, and in the light also of Cara’s connection with The Animal World (first issue October 1869), the impressive, pioneering, illustrated, and influential monthly Journal of the RSPCA.

Four of Cara’s eight books were manifestly written to inculcate kindness to animals, but while she is celebrated for having founded the Coventry Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the facts that the publisher of those four books – SW Partridge – was also the publisher of The Animal World, and that three of the books originated as serials in the periodical, seem to have been widely (if not entirely) overlooked.
The Animal World’s advertisement for itself in the preliminary pages of its first volume was able to proclaim that ‘Upwards of 600 Journals have spoken well of it, and no unfavourable criticism has yet appeared.’ Among the ‘Opinions of the Press’ cited in the advertisement is the view of the Anglo-American Times that the ‘literary excellences’ of The Animal World ‘cannot fail to give it extensive circulation’. Cara’s work was already represented in that first volume, and would be represented in future volumes. Her readership was considerably wider than exclusively book-publication references indicate.

Cara’s engagement with The Animal World – edited by John Colam, Secretary of the RSPCA – involved her with the RSPCA itself, and enlarged her sphere of influence. Her founding of the Coventry Society – ‘your Society’, as George Eliot referred to it in letters to her friend – emerged from that connection.

Andrea Selleri (University of Warwick), ‘Charles Bray’s Necessitarianism and The Mill on the Floss’

Charles Bray, along with his wife Cara, was a key figure for Mary Ann Evans’s intellectual development in her Coventry period. Through the Brays’ ‘Rosehill circle’, she was exposed to the conversation of some of the foremost freethinkers of the time, and was commissioned her first published work, her translation of Strauss’s Life of Jesus. Bray was an author in his own right, and my purpose is to reconsider the possible influence of his 1841 book, The Philosophy of Necessity, on George Eliot’s work. While Eliot scholarship is more likely to dwell on Bray in his capacity as a social aggregator and patron, his principal book is among the most thought-provoking nineteenth-century reflections on the millennia-old philosophical problem of the relationship between individual agency and external determinations. The stakes of the problem for Bray were of several kinds, some as ancient as his subject, others owing much of their saliency to the influence of the social reformer Robert Owen. Among the latter are these: if – as Bray fully accepted – the law of causation determines everything that we think and do, then how can we retain a conception of what is morally and politically good? And can we have responsibility without a metaphysically-grounded conception of free action? These sides of the problem were to become prominent in Victorian intellectual culture, and in particular in The Mill of the Floss, in which the question of how much our actions are our own is a central theme. My aims in this talk will be to elucidate the import of Bray’s thought, trace its possible echoes in Eliot’s novel, and more generally reassess the question of Eliot’s relationship with philosophical determinism, famously raised in George Levine’s 1962 article as well as by some more recent writers.

David Taylor, ‘“The Only Novel Father Has Ever Read!”: Adam Bede, Vernon Lushington, and the Choir Invisible’

The invited guests at the funeral of George Eliot on 29 December 1880 included an impressive cross section of the literary and artistic ‘Who’s Who’ of Victorian England. But one whose name is not so well known is that of the lawyer Vernon Lushington.

Lushington was firmly rooted within the ‘Intellectual Aristocracy’ of Victorian England. He had a remarkable circle of friends that included members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and their circle; writers such as Elizabeth Gaskell, George Gissing and Thomas Hardy; and musicians such as Arthur Sullivan, and Vaughan Williams. Lushington and his brother were two of the earliest British admirers of Walt Whitman and are credited as being amongst those who introduced the American’s work to the British public – thereby earning the poet’s thanks. But, above all else, Lushington was a disciple of Auguste Comte and a leading member of the London Positivist Society which welcomed both George Eliot and George Lewis at their meetings.

As a Positivist Vernon Lushington also turned his hand to writing verse for the London Group’s meetings. His work included a reworking of Eliot’s poem ‘The Choir Invisible’, which replaced the Christian doctrine of immortality, or life after death, with the idea of immortality as only being possible by living on in the minds of others. Eliot’s poem had been adopted by the Positivists as their anthem.
It is unlikely that Lushington’s daughter was wholly true when she wrote that *Adam Bede* was the only novel her father had read as he certainly had read his friend Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Mary Barton*.

Using the recently discovered Lushington family article my paper will bring Vernon Lushington out of the shadows and reveal his relationship with George Eliot.

**A3: The Mill on the Floss (Chestnut)**

Margaret D. Stetz (University of Delaware), ‘Tullivers’ Travels: Adapting *The Mill on the Floss* for Young Audiences’

George Eliot’s legacy extends into unexpected places, including the world of young readers. This is especially true in the case of *The Mill on the Floss*, which as a novel that looks seriously at the lives of girls and boys would seem to have a particular attraction for publishers hoping to market canonical texts to audiences of different ages. Over the past four decades, the story of Maggie and Tom Tulliver has been issued in a number of formats explicitly designed to appeal to children. But as with all adaptations, the choices of editors, writers, and also of illustrators inevitably alter and reshape the original as it moves into this new sphere. In some cases, significant omissions must occur—to quote the dust-jacket copy of a 1974 ‘Classics for Today’ published by Collins—to make the narrative ‘a length that can be coped with by the child who has many other things to do with his or her leisure time’. But concerns beyond length alone, including those of a more political nature, also appear to have influenced the decisions as to what to discard. Thus, in Oxford University Press’s 1997 version (reissued in 2007), Maggie Tulliver’s controversial encounter with an encampment of gypsies has been replaced with an intentionally unproblematic invention: ‘Meanwhile Maggie only got as far as the next village. There she met a kind old man, who took her home’ (Border 14). This paper will examine five late-twentieth and early twenty-first-century editions for young audiences—three by British publishers and two by Indian firms—and consider both the political and aesthetic implications of how Eliot’s work has been recast, as well as how Eliot herself has been represented in the short (and heavily censored) biographical introductions that often accompany the texts.

**Sara Lyons (University of Kent), “Breeding Stupid Lads and ‘Cute Wenches’”: Heredity and Intelligence in *The Mill on the Floss***

As the science writer Carl Zimmer has recently observed, it is extremely difficult to calculate the influence of environment upon a person’s IQ score because such influences cannot be ‘snapped apart into distinct chunks the way genetic variants can. They ramify into each other, forming the mycelium of experience’.¹ The ‘mycelium of experience’ is a phrase that George Eliot surely would have appreciated; she famously reaches for web metaphors when trying to capture the intricate interrelatedness of social life and individual development.

This paper will suggest that turning to Victorian novels, and in particular to Eliot’s 1860 *bildungsroman, The Mill on the Floss*, can help to renew the stale modern debate about intelligence and heredity. The long-running controversy over the extent to which differences in IQ scores are attributable to genes or environment, nature or nurture, has its roots in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Mid-Victorian scientists and psychologists – most notably Herbert Spencer and Francis Galton – began to conceptualise intelligence as a biological trait, shaped by evolution and largely determined by heredity. Intelligence was thus disentangled, at least in theory, from personality and moral character, and open to objective measurement, just like any other physical attribute. In the same period, intelligence came to be understood not in terms of specific skills or talents but as general ability – the Victorian antecedent to the concept of *g*, or general intelligence, the quality that IQ tests purport to measure.
As a polymathic thinker and deep reader in contemporary science and psychology, Eliot was unusually well-attuned to the implications of the new biologisation of the intellect. Most clearly, *The Mill on the Foss* is a critical response to the fact that mid-Victorian scientists and psychologists dwelled with particular intensity on the supposed innate differences between male and female minds. Beyond this, the novel’s representation of the educations of Maggie and Tom Tulliver is a subtle polemic about the inescapably social and emotional nature of intelligence. In this, Eliot used the resources of the novel form to substantiate the same argument that her common-law husband, George Henry Lewes, would later make in his *Problems of Life and Mind* (1877): ‘All cognition is primarily emotion. We only see what interests us. No phenomenon is interesting until it is illuminated by emotion, and we see, or foresee, its connection with our feelings’.


In a letter of 1866, George Eliot asserts that ‘aesthetic teaching is the highest of all teaching’ in contrast to the more ‘offensive’ offering of a doctrine that abides by ‘the diagram’ instead of ‘the picture’. Here, then, Eliot articulates her belief that fiction should yield instruction for its readers without resorting to didacticism; the mind of the reader should be worked upon affectively rather than deliberately effectively. This paper will explore this idea in the context of the nineteenth century preoccupation with self-help. Eliot writes in *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), on which this paper will focus, that ‘the mysterious complexity of our life is not to be embraced by maxims, and that to lace ourselves up in formulas of that sort is to repress all the divine promptings and inspirations that spring from growing insight and sympathy’. Self-help is to be sought in reflexive emotion and not in the improving manuals that abounded in the age. Having said this, however, Eliot’s desire to confect fiction that offers ‘instruction in observant susceptibility’ is one that displays a great affinity with two philosophical works which she had translated before beginning to write fiction: Spinoza’s *Ethics* and Feuerbach’s *Essence of Christianity*. Her third novel appeals both to the subjectivism of Feuerbach and the emotional passage to perfectionism detailed by Spinoza. Through projecting what might be called the conduct literature of the afore-mentioned philosophers onto a fictional site, Eliot initiates her highly philosophical desire to offer her readers a non-prescriptive, emotive, and elemental guide to self-improvement. It is in the passionate struggle for self-mastery of Maggie Tulliver, and in the ‘transferred life’ that she offers to her lover Philip Wakem, that this project comes to the fore.

**A4: Art and Design (Maple)**

Charlotte Jones (KCL), “‘Something Like Proportions”: Realism in George Eliot and Gustave Courbet’

In the infamous polemical interlude midway through *Adam Bede* (1859), Eliot deploys an analogy with seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting to advocate the ‘faithful representing of commonplace things’. Her choice of genre art as the most conspicuous visual precedent to define, embody and vindicate elements of her work makes it easy to subscribe to the view that this was the primary frame of reference for Eliot’s desire to depict the minutiae of life (Gould 2013, Gunn 1992, Witemeyer 1979), and the realist novel’s wider aesthetic of the quotidian (Yeazall 2008).

At around the same time as Eliot cautioned her readers about the unheroic subject matter she had elected to present in her fiction, however, Gustave Courbet was curating a rebel ‘Pavillon du Réalisme’ near the Paris Exposition Universelle, before publishing the incendiary ‘Realist Manifesto’ (1855). Yet beyond
Murray Roston’s suggestion that Eliot ‘was, within the medium of literature, providing an independent, parallel expression of a trend manifesting itself simultaneously in France’ (1996: 118), there has been little sustained consideration of contemporary French art in the historiography of Eliot’s realism.

In this paper I wish to trace some of the modes of transmission through which Courbet’s revolutionary aesthetic was exported to and debated in London during the 1850s – from exhibitions at the Dudley, Grosvenor and Crystal Palace galleries, to Ernest Gambart’s annual ‘Exhibition of Pictures by Modern Artists of the French School’, to discussions in periodicals such as the Athenaeum. I want to suggest not only Eliot’s thoroughgoing familiarity with Courbet’s work, but also that her understanding of realism bears several significant correspondences to mid-nineteenth-century French theories. I will conclude by briefly examining Adam Bede alongside Courbet’s canvases ‘A Burial at Ornans’ (1849-50) and ‘The Stone Breakers’ (1849), to compare the formalist strategies both artists deploy in order to radically interrupt the perspectival logic of ‘proportion’. These unexpected irruptions in the realist compositional fabric accentuate the proportional shifts intrinsic to representational processes.

Ailsa Boyd, “‘Real Houses Fit for Human Beings’: George Eliot and Interior Design’

In Middlemarch, Dorothea’s aspiration to build happy homes for estate workers is no ‘fad’, for Eliot’s use of architecture and interior design in her novels is not merely set-dressing. Descriptions of buildings and rooms, and metaphors of interiority reveal a profound engagement with the domestic interior. In the 1860-70s, when Eliot was writing her great novels, design reform was one of the discussions of the age for commentators like Pugin, Ruskin and Morris. Driven by their revulsion to modern industrial society they scrutinised the production of the objects with which we decorate our homes, relating it to the health of society as a whole, resulting in the Arts and Crafts Movement of the 1880s. Eliot had a sophisticated understanding of these debates and this paper will examine how the relationship of her characters to their homes fed into the moral scheme of her novels.

Eliot’s own home was designed by architect Owen Jones (1809-74), one of the leading theorists of the design reform movement who believed that a healthy society required good, honest and beautiful design. His modern, scientific principles became highly influential with the publication of The Grammar of Ornament (1856), which Eliot favourably reviewed. Design history provides a further context to her themes of history, picturesque and poverty, morality, woman’s place, the creation of self-identity, sympathy, and the concept of home, particularly in relation to the trope of the Wandering Jew in Daniel Deronda. Material culture and intangible heritage expands our understanding of Maggie on display at the bazaar in the Old Hall in The Mill on the Floss; the Topping Abbey choirstalls re-purposed as stables in Daniel Deronda; and explains why the faded gentility of homes in Middlemarch have ‘A physiognomy of their own, as our friends have’.

Esther Fernandez-Llorente, ‘George Eliot and the Country House’

In this paper I examine the role of the country house in George Eliot’s novels: from Cheverel Manor in Mr Gilfil’s Love Story to Offendene in Daniel Deronda. I will discuss Eliot’s personal relationship with the idea and the reality of the country house, exploring the use that she made of it within novels, before analysing how this fits into the wider concern with country houses in Victorian society and into nineteenth-century fiction more widely.

George Eliot is not generally regarded as being particularly concerned with country houses in the way that novelists such as Jane Austen or Henry James are, but she could not avoid dealing with the subject in her fiction — particularly in her later novels, Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda, — if she truly wished to chronicle the fullest scope of ‘provincial life’, social politics and the power and limitations in the lives of nineteenth-century women.
I will analyse the level of ambivalence towards country houses, and the society that they represented, within Eliot’s work but the country house was simply too important a signifier in Victorian society and novels for a novelist seeking the broadest possible social and moral scope to eschew. Eliot lived and wrote in an era when the significance of the country house was changing fundamentally: its political importance was waning, but its social and economic importance and its function as the crowning signifier of success in Victorian society was growing. Furthermore, I want to emphasise Eliot’s grasp of the ways in which the quintessentially English signifier, the country house, has many international roots and connections and to explore how her sense of the cosmopolitanism of the country house links her work with other novelists such as Henry James and Edith Wharton.

**PANEL B (16.30-18.00)**

**B1: George Eliot in the Wider World: What Good Can She Do? (Oak 1)**

**Panel Abstract:**

[‘What can I do? ... That little speech of four words ...’]

George Eliot ‘had dared hope’, Philip Davis writes in *The Transferred Life of George Eliot*, ‘in the poem “O My I Join the Choir Immortal”, to be one of those influencers who might live again “in minds made better by their presence”’. That she can indeed be just such an influence is a case that hardly needs making to attendees at a conference dedicated to her life and work. The appeal and value of her fiction is not, however, always self-evident to the much broader audience that embraces endless reiterations and revisions of the novels of Jane Austen and Charles Dickens, or the works of the Bronte sisters – if influence were measured by film and television adaptations, George Eliot would surely be a somewhat distant fourth.

This panel brings together four scholars who have in different ways sought to close that gap (in popularity and in understanding) by directly reaching beyond the academy to engage a wider range of readers, and/or by pursuing research that shows the concrete value of her work in specific contemporary situations.

In the spirit of broader engagement that motivates our panellists, we propose

(i) short individual presentations of up to 10 minutes rather than longer papers, followed by

(ii) a panel discussion with audience participation about the challenges and rewards in showing to as many people as possible how George Eliot matters.

**Panellists:**

**Rohan Maitzen (Dalhousie University)**, is the creator of the website *Middlemarch for Book Clubs* and author of numerous essays about George Eliot’s fiction aimed at the ‘common reader’. She will discuss what has motivated her to bring George Eliot’s work to a wider audience as well as the challenges and rewards involved, with particular relation to Eliot’s secular ethics; her emphasis on the moral significance of seeing alternative points of view, and the demand she places on us to think hard as well as feel.

**Philip Davis (University of Liverpool)** author of *The Victorians* (Oxford English Literary History, 2002), *Why Victorian Literature Still Matters* (2008) most recently, *The Transferred Life of George Eliot* (Oxford, 2017), editor of *Scenes of Clerical Life* (World’s Classics, 2015) and Josie Billington, Reader in English Literature, Deputy Director of the Centre for Research into Reading Literature and Society, University of Liverpool, editor of *Scenes of Clerical Life* (World’s Classics, 2015) and author of *Is Literature Healthy?* (Oxford, 2016). In light of their work together they will discuss the role of George Eliot in both the formation and the practice of *The Reader*, an outreach organisation which brings serious literature, read live and aloud, to often hard-to-reach communities, concentrating on two relationships:
the relation between democratic width of reach and serious depth of understanding, as reflected in GE’s tense and arduous ambitions for literary realism

the relation between literature and mental health with particular relation to George Eliot’s counsel (offering, through both the person of her own creation and free indirect discourse, an alternative language to articulate on behalf of her characters, and their modern-day readers, thoughts and feelings they themselves hardly know they have)

Alison Liebling (University of Cambridge) will speak on ‘Finding George Eliot in Prison: Reflections on its Moral Life’, arguing that

- her description of loss, and its relationship to the fundamental, describe what is unique about the experience of imprisonment and its effects on moral thinking;
- there are powerful links between her commitment to authentic description and the methods and purposes of social research;
- most of her most important ideas about moral life are reflected in the findings of detailed empirical research on the moral grammar of prisons and the prison experience;
- these applications are generalisable to life beyond the prison.

B2: Myth (Oak 2)

Molly Youngkin (Loyola Marymount University), ‘Egyptian Mythology in Eliot’s Major Works’

This paper traces Eliot’s reading of key sources about ancient Egypt and her use of Egyptian mythology in her major fictional works. In these works, Egyptian mythology is used in contrast to Christian, Hebrew, and Greek mythologies, and Eliot associates Egyptian imagery with the symbolic, giving it an important role in her realistic fiction. Further, Eliot uses Egyptian mythology to develop new kinds of ‘heroes’, an element of character development important in critical mythological readings of her work. I extend readings by earlier critics such as Joseph Wiesenfarth, Felicia Bonaparte, and Avrom Fleishman that focus on symbol and myth. I more fully emphasize how Eliot’s references to Egyptian mythology enhance our understanding of the ways in which diverse mythologies structure fictional narratives.

In *Adam Bede*, the narrator’s use of an Egyptian sorcerer image confirms that the symbolic has a place in realist storytelling, and the novel’s hero, Adam, can be associated with multiple mythologies, including the Judeo-Christian but also Egyptian Moses. In *Mill on the Floss* and *Spanish Gypsy*, Eliot merges Egyptian mythological references with Christian ones to construct female heroes, Maggie and Fedalma, who are willing to sacrifice for others. Although *Romola* and *Middlemarch* make the least use of Egyptian mythology, Eliot shows that ordinary women can be heroes by contrasting the ‘living saints’ Romola and Dorothea to other characters, who are like Egyptian ‘dead mummies’ and do not engage the world as actively as these women do. With *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot returns to the symbolic and uses the myth of exile to explore the role of hero across cultures. Daniel is presented as a Moses-like figure, a positive representation of Egypt that is placed against negative references to Egypt via Gwendolen and Mirah, who are more like Egyptian mummies or Egyptian Cinderellas.


Among the many subtexts George Eliot engaged with in her writings, those on slavery and the ‘Negro Question’ play a small but still a significant role – a discourse which appears in different guises in all her fiction from *Silas Marner* onward; this includes the earlier commissioning of articles on the subject when she was editor of the *Westminster Review*. In a discussion of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s slavery novels she
confessed to ‘glowing with indignation’ at the ‘terrible representation of chartered barbarities’. This subject is salient in *The Spanish Gypsy* above all, even though here the enslaved Gypsies themselves double as negroes, in this frankly mythopoetic, idealist epic in verse. Indeed, the poem was referred to above all others in Eliot’s oeuvre by radical Afro-American writers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, because they felt a powerful resonance in the necessity described by Fedalma and Zarca to rescue Gypsies because (like Africans) they suffer terrible abjection in the narrative. In her personal *Notes on The Spanish Gypsy*, Eliot moves straight from discussing Gypsy slaves and intermarriage between Fedalma and Silva – a union of ‘distant’ racial types, whose intermarriage she finds socially problematic - to discoursing in 19th-century terms concerning negroes and ‘miscegenation’: ‘A woman, say, finds herself ... with an inherited organisation: she may be lame ... or ... she may be a negress, or have the marks of race repulsive in the community where she is born...’ Her allusions to ‘inherited misfortunes’ and ‘repulsion’ for the black woman’s offspring refer primarily to prejudice ‘in the community where she is born’, not to a personal distaste. But: ‘It is almost a mockery to say to such human beings, “Seek your own happiness”.

Conservative, reactionary Victorian writers on race often saw racial inequalities as permanent and unchangeable because in evolutionary terms, various ethnicities were, they alleged, unrelated ‘species’, with little power to influence each other except by force. James Hunt in England, and Josiah Nott and George Gliddon in America, for instance, admitted in their voluminous ‘scientific’ writings (1840s and ’50s) - not always without some subterfuge since Nott owned 9 slaves - that they felt ‘the negro's place in nature’ to be naturally that of a bondsman - as proof of which they referred to the slave-like abjection of black characters depicted in ancient Egyptian paintings: a virtual pre-historic precedent for a ‘natural’ white society with slaves. They objected strongly, said Gliddon in *Ancient Egypt* (1843), to the notion that ‘we, who trace back to Egypt the origin of every art and science known ..., have to thank the sable negro ... for the first gleams of knowledge and invention’, which were transformed into the glories of Greece and Rome. Black males were, furthermore, denigrated by Nott and Gliddon as corrupt because ineradicably ‘feminine’, as opposed to the aggressive, enterprising European, Saxon male – a discourse with misogynist implications.

Eliot counters their arguments with allusions, in *The Spanish Gypsy*, to the writings of the polymath, negrophile writer and poet Gerald Massey – a man well known to her during her days in Coventry and also at the Westminster. Later, in his magnum opus, *A Book of Beginnings* (1881-3), a frankly myth-making but serious venture, Massey – in ways that recall Casaubon – drew on his vast knowledge in an attempt to demonstrate the African, including Egyptian, origin of humanity’s growth over aeons to high culture: ‘Egypt for the mouthpiece, and Africa as the birthplace’. Possibly Egypt, Eliot implies, expelled the Gypsies, so their journey to Africa would be a ‘return’. Massey exalts the alleged ‘femaleness’ of very early black societies by claiming that primeval African culture was matriarchal and, therefore, relatively benign. People had been nurtured into uncorrupted sexuality by the mother and her fertility. Gradually this form of society was undermined by what Massey calls a ‘Phallic’, degrading, male-dominated cult. He refers to the presence in subsequent Egyptian paintings to the ‘leer of Priapus’ – an ‘altogether later expression’. The primary ‘mother-mould’ developed into the ‘root’ of phallic culture. In *The Spanish Gypsy*, George Eliot seems to argue for Massey, and has her heroine, Gypsy by birth but raised in Spanish culture, reverse this trend. Since the Gypsies had long been socially denigrated, ‘warred on like rats’, Fedalma, as part of a ‘matriarchal myth’, leads the Gypsies back to Africa following her father’s death, even though this work explores the breakdown of this enterprise. Massey states: ‘The features and hair of the earliest representations of Buddha belong to the black race ... - features as negroid as those of the black Isis of Egypt', and subsequently, in later iconography, as a ‘negroid Diana of Ephesus’. In Eliot’s poem these goddesses become – as might be expected of Feuerbach’s translator – embodied as a human, living, ‘black-haired mother [who] steps/ Athwart the boat's edge, and with open arms,/ A wandering Isis outcast from the gods, leans toward her lifted little one’. Eliot connects this Gypsy woman journeying to Africa with a national, matriarchal deity of Ancient Egypt, who was to become an inspirer of religious devotion in Greek culture. The probable deduction may well be that Africans were the spring of Western civilisation – a
narrative that acts as an obstruction to the theories of Nott and Gliddon. However, this Isis-figure remains ‘lost’ and ‘wandering’ while seeking her primordial home, implying with deep pessimism that, in fact, the world’s – and the West’s - female, African primogeniture is lost. Eliot’s poem is therefore a deeply pessimistic text, suggesting too that advances in both female and ‘negro’ emancipation in the modern world would be no easy matter.

When the Gypsy was completed, Eliot wrote to her publisher with what had become a rare request for her: ‘Kindly order a copy of the Poem to be sent to Gerald Massey’.

**Alessandra Grego (John Cabot University, Rome), ‘What’s the Good of an Unvisited Tomb? George Eliot’s Mythical Method’**

George Eliot, whose last text was published 45 years before T.S. Eliot’s article ‘Ulysses, Order, and Myth’ appeared, and who no Modernist would have compared to James Joyce, made ample use of her own ‘mythical method’. Through that method, Dorothea’s unvisited grave must be understood less as a site of society’s failure and more as Eliot’s monument to a collective ethics: her investment in the need to move beyond the celebration of the individual life to acknowledge a supraindividual shared conception of what is ‘the growing good of this world’. This good has no divine origin, but is embodied in, as Eric Csapo defines myth, ‘socially important narrative[s] told in such a way as to allow the entire social collective to share a sense of [their] importance’.

George Eliot’s mythical method consists of absorbing every meaning-making system into her novels to fight against what Hans Blumenberg calls ‘the absolutism of reality’ and its potential to lead to nihilism. In her creation of liveable and thinkable worlds, Eliot rejects any hierarchical ordering of these systems, while acknowledging what Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth calls the ‘systemic limitations’ of each. Therefore, there is no ‘key’ to Eliot’s mythology: as Ladislaw shows Dorothea, when a balance is found between the conflicting systems, they will illuminate and signify through combination with and allusion to each other. George Eliot’s mythical method weaves a web in which multiple narratives can coexist. While I argue that this mythical method is working in Eliot’s novels from the first text she published, and that we can find its origins in her translation of Spinoza and her rejection of D.F. Strauss’ definition of myth as primitive thought, I propose to focus on Middlemarch as the most successful of George Eliot’s experiments in myth making. In her ‘study of provincial life’ she weaves a text that does not unravel, despite the pull of its disparate threads.

**B3: Silas Marner (Chestnut)**

**Sara Malton (Saint Mary’s University, Halifax), ‘Exhuming the Past, Weaving the Future: George Eliot’s Sacramental Fiction’**

So often in Eliot’s fiction the confessional act is subverted, marriage is but a parody, and the image of resurrection offers not redemptive new life but merely points out prior abandonment and deceit. Focusing on Silas Marner (1861) and Romola (1862-3), Eliot’s sweeping historical novel of Renaissance Florence, this paper shall consider how aesthetic production, in particular the act of weaving, and the realm of creation with which both Silas and Romola are aligned, offer a tonic to such nihilism and sterility.

In Silas Marner, Eliot links both financial deceit and sympathetic failure to the desecration of the physical body. The novel is structured by a series of deaths, each of which is linked to literal crimes of theft, as well as acts of deceit and denial. The dead male body often leaves behind a void into which others insert their own narrative, revising their participation in histories of betrayal. Only when its exhumation takes place does the truth of history insist on its revelation.

Likewise, in Romola the absent or dying male body frequently allows for the destructive violation of history and relationships. The departure of Romola’s brother, Dino, who left his family to become a Dominican
monk, grants Tito Melema the opportunity to insert himself into the void. Tito’s own abandonment of his adoptive father, Baldassare, likewise violates the bond between father and son, serving as it does his own narcissistic aims. This pattern inverts the redemptive adoptive relationship at the centre *Silas Marner*. For, rather than offering redemption through their resurrection, dead, absent, or abandoned bodies in *Romola* represent opportunities for Tito to carry out his plans of deceit, which, as I shall show, merely further embroil him in a destructive web of his own making.

**Rory McKnight (University of Dallas), ‘Silas Marner, the Weaver of Raveloe: A Novel Mythology’**

Whereas *Silas Marner; The Weaver of Raveloe* was once widely received along with *Adam Bede*, *Felix Holt: The Radical*, and even *Middlemarch* as a novel of philosophical and moral substance, the novel is now invariably described as a fairy tale, and because of its apparent simplicity its proper audience is become mainly young readers. Although critics have often noted themes common between *Silas Marner* and George Eliot’s principle novels, few, if any, have challenged this seemingly universally held notion that *Silas* is a hiatus from Eliot’s ‘serious’ work. In this paper, I will argue that Silas ought to be considered the narrative expression of the philosophical ideology at the root of Eliot’s principle novels. A careful reading of *Silas* in light of the main premise which Eliot obtained from Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity*—viz., *Homo homini Deus est* (Man is God for man) will show that for humans to become truly Human, they must practice true religion, i.e., someone must begin to act according to the human instinct of religion and bestow all glory and honour once reserved for the Divine upon another human person. True religion being necessarily relational, the two sides of this relation are the Pope Angelico and the Angel—concepts derived respectively from *Romola* and *Middlemarch*; Silas and Eppie as angelic father and daughter, brought together by a seemingly magical, but historically necessary confluence of circumstances and events, become the source of the ‘pure human relations’ which spreads abroad to the inhabitants of Raveloe by exciting their own latent religious instinct. By gathering together major concepts from Eliot’s novels and the author’s seminal philosophical principles, my argument will demonstrate Silas’s position of importance in Eliot’s thinking and among the rest of Eliot’s principle novels.

**Efraim Sicher (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev), ‘George Eliot’s “Glue Test”: Illegitimacy, Cohesion, and Sympathy in *Silas Marner*’**

A neglected aspect of Chapter Six of George Eliot’s novel *Silas Marner* reveals the hidden connections of cohesion and coherence in the author’s familiar doctrine of sympathy. When applied to correspondences in Marian Evans’ biography, the ‘glue test’ makes it possible to discern a desire to work through traumatic experiences by achieving similar cohesion. The ‘glue test’ is of particular relevance to marital status and anxieties about legitimacy in the author’s own life which affected both the authority of authorship and Eliot’s notion of language as effecting bonding in law and in interpersonal feeling. I apply speech act theory to what has previously been taken to be a light-hearted example of rustic realism, the narration of a marriage ceremony in *The Rainbow* pub, but which I show to have significance for the ‘glue test’ of language in the novel, as well as of personal relations in a fragmented society. The question of what makes conjugal relations binding and its implications for the authority of the writer to make fictional relations binding is relevant also to other nineteenth-century British novels (for example, the aborted wedding scene in *Jane Eyre*, or Gwendolen’s discovery of Grandcourt’s illegitimate family in *Daniel Deronda*).

**B4: Global Dimensions (Maple)**

**Leila Aouadi (University of Tunis), ‘Migration, Femininity, and the Orient in Eliot’s Fiction’**

The intersection of the sexual, racial, and political in the representations of Victorian women’s plight has always been a rich field of study in George Eliot’s fiction. But nowhere has she put a particular slant on otherness, femininity and the plight of ‘darker’ races than in her last and most contemporary of her fiction
works, *Daniel Deronda* (1876). Imbedded in the characters’ everyday lives and grounded in the social and historical setting of the novel, colonial violence and domestic brutality lurk in her male characters’ thirst for dominance and female characters’ obligation for submission. This paper explores how Eliot’s fiction, poetry, and essays demonstrate the evolutionary process she underwent to construct pioneering conceptions on foreignness, Empire, and migration and focuses primarily on *Daniel Deronda* (1876), *Romola* (1862-63), and *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868) to evidence such a claim. It argues that the inclusion of the Jewish plight in Europe, which dates back to the inquisition and serves as the backdrop of the three compositions, underscores Eliot’s comprehensive artistic project, that of stirring the fibre of sympathy to people who are most different from us. Though mentioned fleetingly in *Romola* and *The Spanish Gypsy*, the persecution of Jews that coincided with the collapse of the Arab Islamic Empire in the Iberian Peninsula in the late fifteenth century, is pivotal in *Daniel Deronda*’s study of Jewishness, an oriental presence in Western Europe.

In *Daniel Deronda*, just before Daniel, the protagonist meets his mother, the cosmopolitan Jewish artist, the narrator compares the migration of birds to that of humans, and in so doing ponders its vital necessity as an obligation rather than option. The theme of suffering as epitomised by Jewishness, mentioned briefly in *Romola* and *The Spanish Gypsy*, is revisited in *Daniel Deronda* with different, if not new, understanding to the thorny issue of Jewish migration and assimilation within the English society of Eliot’s epoch, and the implication of that on the society as whole. The encounter with the foreignness within and without connects the human psyche with his/her worst fears and agonies and the ambivalence of the narrative discourse regarding imperialism, women’s plight, and racial assimilation, the argument this paper aims at engaging, is dramatized in the lives of female characters and projected, to a formidably new dimensions, in the characters of Gwendolen and Grandcourt, the latter seems to encapsulate power/violence within the domestic and colonized space. He, far from being an exception or an anomaly in *Daniel Deronda*, shares many of the characters’ belief in the colonies as a land of opportunity for young men to grasp and tame and for young women to dream about or go to as male companions and helps.

Wang Wanying and He Chang (Hangzhou Normal University), ‘George Eliot in China’

**THURSDAY 18 JULY**

**PANEL C (09.00-10.30)**

**C1: Approaches to Teaching George Eliot at 200 (Oak 1)**

Jennifer L. Holberg (Calvin College), “‘Signs Are Small Measurable Things, but Interpretations Are Illimitable’: *Middlemarch* and the Modern Undergraduate’

With reading habits and abilities changing, the long Victorian novel seems to pose ever more of a challenge to today’s undergraduates. In response perhaps, the number of long novels in Victorian courses appears to be trending downward. Put another way: in the age of the ‘skim’, how do we teach both the rich content of novels and strategies to successfully engage them? My proposal: the use of *Middlemarch* as the foundational text in courses about the Victorian period. Or as I call it in my class: ‘the novel about everything’. I’ll trace the ways that *Middlemarch* is especially suitable among all Victorian novels to give students the context they need as well as the hermeneutical stratagems to be effective as readers of *Middlemarch* itself as well as Victorian literature more generally.

Steven J. Venturino, ‘George Eliot’s Narration and Serial Reading’
Serial reading allows readers to appreciate—long before they have finished the story—the distinct narrative shape and character that George Eliot creates for each of her novels. In this presentation I explore how this basic method has been employed in my college and adult-learner classrooms and how serial reading fundamentally reshapes a reader's experience. My focus is on the opportunities for readers to see Eliot's blending of form and theme as a vital aspect of the meaning of her novels.

When long novels are assigned in parts (whether or not the given work was originally published in instalments), readers are able to identify Eliot's “brushstrokes” and storytelling register beginning with the novel's initial chapters, then pause to discuss these features before proceeding to the rest of the novel. Readers simply read more comprehensively as they become aware of a novel's own narratological lessons.

For example, serial readings of the narrative emphasis on learning-from-experience (real and fictional) in Adam Bede, the fairy-tale references and structure of Silas Marner, the attention to web-like interconnection in Middlemarch, or the philosophically stretched realism of Daniel Deronda allow readers to make active use of what they have learned about Eliot's particular style when it counts, which is as they are reading the novel.

Consequently, matters of narrative become intimately associated with the action of the plot, so that readers can more clearly see that what 'happens' in the novel is more than the sum of what the characters do. This narrative ear-training even helps readers see how Eliot prepares us for what some critics have seen as the 'surprise' or 'rushed' endings of her novels. In my presentation, I will highlight Adam Bede, along with references to other novels.

Anita Turlington (University of North Georgia), ‘Teaching George Eliot and the New Woman Writers in the “New Luddite” Classroom’

Emerging cognitive research indicates that our students, digital natives, struggle to sustain focus in complex reading tasks and writing assignments. In recent discussions of excerpts of William Powers’ Hamlet’s Blackberry: Building a Good Life in the Digital Age and Nicholas Carr’s The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains, my students have confessed that they find it difficult to engage with lengthy and complex texts, to manage challenging projects, and, particularly, to sustain productive social interactions. Because many of the English majors in my classes intend to teach high school, these emerging characteristics are a concern.

In an upcoming course on the 19th century novel, the ‘new Luddite’ pedagogy I plan to implement will immerse students in the complex, painterly, challenging texts of George Eliot and the sprawling, experimental novels of Sarah Grand and Olive Schreiner. Studying these novels will offer students rich opportunities to discuss themes of ethics and gender as well as evolving generic structures.

We will focus on reading together sections of the texts in class, on journal writing, and on response pieces that students will read to each other. Eschewing the technology that has shaped students’ classroom experiences and social lives, I hope to reinforce their enjoyment of handling and reading books as well as renew their pleasure in talking and working with their peers.

C2: Scandal, Shame, and Swindle (Oak 2)

Nancy Marck Cantwell (Daemen College, Amherst), “‘Still Invited to Dinner’: George Eliot and the Advantages of Scandal’

George Eliot was no stranger to scandal, and my paper argues that her status as a controversial figure actually helped to advance not only her career but allowed her to address scandal and its consequences in her works. Margot Backus, in her study of scandal in James Joyce, points out that scandal serves as ‘a
locus of distortion or representational discrepancy …. the cracked mirror of scandal systematically distorts the details it reflects, diminishing or obscuring certain objects as it magnifies others’ (5). Identifying George Eliot as the central figure in an adulterous sex scandal, for instance, on the surface appears to diminish her authority to pronounce on the moral themes prominent in her works, emphasizing her role as ‘the other woman’ and accentuating her irreligiousness and sexuality rather than her philosophical bent. However, the Eliot scandal also invited readers to examine her ideas more closely, as the product of a potentially deviant or even a more fully emancipated mind. Since, according to Backus, a scandal ‘affects society … eliciting a sensational affective response that redistributes representational power as well as credibility’, the readership that applauded Eliot when they thought she was a male clergyman was soon forced to rethink their position, and the ideas circulating by means of malignant rumours would nonetheless be aired and further discussed (Backus 5). In Eliot’s case, scandal took multiple forms—she was scandalous not only for her religious scepticism, but also notorious as the mistress of a married man, himself the target of sexual defamation. Gossip involving the pair would have opened discussion of a variety of topics, from religious views and female intellectual attainment to the unyielding laws respecting divorce.

My paper will examine the advantages of Eliot’s notoriety as woman writer treating scandalous characters in her novels, from the exiled Hetty Sorrel to the misunderstood Dorothea, who ‘could not have been “a nice woman”’. (Eliot 640).

Louis W. Marvick (University of Nevada), ‘Eliot’s “Moral Swindlers” and the Case of Baudelaire’

Chapter XVI (‘Moral Swindlers’) of George Eliot’s last book, Impressions of Theophrastus Such (1879) concludes with an amusing caricature of Charles Baudelaire, the author of Les Fleurs du mal (1857). The title of Baudelaire’s only collection, and the title of one of the poems in it that caused the first edition to be condemned, seized and burned (‘Les Litanies de Satan’), are indicated in palimpsest behind the reference to ‘such antithetic ware as Les marguerites de l’Enfer, or Les délices de Béelzébuth’. Eliot seems to recall Baudelaire’s description (in ‘Le Peintre de la vie moderne’) of the flâneur as ‘un prince incognito’ when she scoffs at her author’s pretension to belong to ‘the royalty of genius’ as he ‘shuffle[s] down the Boulevard’. Yet the collision of Eliot’s ‘high seriousness’ (in F. R. Leavis’s phrase) with Baudelaire’s ironic celebration of sin and evil is more ambiguous than it at first appears. The ‘Frenchman’ of her portrait anticipates the generation of aesthetes and décadents that came of age in the 1880s; her ‘gauzy mental garments with their spangles of poor paradox’ belong more properly to Oscar Wilde than to Baudelaire, as does ‘the supposition that the ablest intellect, the highest genius, will see through morality as a sort of twaddle for bibs and tuckers’. Certainly, Baudelaire’s exploration of the artist’s tormented position between ‘spleen et idéal’ includes episodes of satanic revolt, but also episodes that demonstrate what Eliot (while denying them to him) calls an ‘awe-inspiring vision of the human lot’ and a ‘soul [concerned with] the gravest cares and deepest tenderness of manhood’. Baudelaire’s profoundly religious concern with moral and immoral conduct finds succinct expression in the refrain of the last poem he composed for Les Fleurs du mal (the first in order of appearance there): ‘Hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère!’ His recognition of the human capacity for self-delusion connects his thought with Eliot’s in ‘Moral Swindlers’, where her main target is our common tendency to judge one another’s moral worth by the superficial standard of its conformity to convention. It remains to be seen whether the techniques of authorial distancing that Eliot used in Impressions authorise an ironic reading of her conventional portrayal of Baudelaire as the epitome of ‘moral stupidity and … personal indulgence’.

Neela Cathelain (Tufts University), ‘Facets of Shame and the Novel Form: Adam Bede, Middlemarch, and Daniel Deronda’

‘Hetty looked out from the secret misery towards the possibility of their ever knowing what had happened, as the sick and weary prisoner might think of the possible pillory. They would think her conduct shameful, and shame was torture.’ (Adam Bede).
Instances of shame abound in Eliot’s work; indeed, one might even say that it is one of the main affects to be found in her novels. How does shame operate and shape Eliot’s novels? When does it arise? In *Adam Bede*, Hetty thinks of shame as ‘torture’: shame can function as a form of punishment, the torture of public humiliation. In that case, shame is structured around a ritualised loss of honour, which can later be restored. But the ties between shame and honour are only one way to characterize the workings of shame, linked to the traditional, rural societies Eliot depicts in *Adam Bede* or *Silas Marner*. In what ways might we argue that shame changes shape in the nineteenth century and, consequently, throughout Eliot’s novels? If Hetty fears the punishment of shame, what can we say about the way Eliot portrays her other characters? Is shame always linked to the question of honour? Can Eliot’s characters help us to explore the reversibility and stickiness of shame, narcissism, and shamelessness?

If we link shame to paralyzing self-reflexivity, the journey towards the absence of shame means moving beyond that disorientation and stasis. I argue that the novel form, following the Bildungsroman pattern, has an essential relationship with shame, because it suggests an opposition between ideal and real, contingent selves – an opposition that is brought to the fore in instances of shame, when the unity of the self becomes temporarily or permanently displaced. Focusing on *Middlemarch*, *Daniel Deronda*, and *Adam Bede*, I will explore the affect of shame in relation to the novel form, and investigate its implications for Eliot, especially concerning religion and class, in an increasingly industrialized England.

**C3: Thinking ‘Otherwise’ in *Middlemarch* (Chestnut)**

**Panel Abstract:** George Eliot’s preoccupation with the troublesome narrowness and the hoped-for widening of the mind’s capacity is familiar as a moral and ethical precept, but the widening of narrow ways of thinking is crucial to Eliot’s aesthetic project, too. This panel examines narrative strategies Eliot uses at various formal scales – from *Middlemarch*’s genre, to its characters, to its syntax – for preserving what she calls the ‘largeness’, flexibility, and aesthetic richness of both the novel form and the mental life of its readers. By 1871, Eliot was deeply concerned that readers’ imaginations were following increasingly codified formulas of plot, character, and description. Throughout *Middlemarch*, Eliot – who knew a great deal about theories of the mind – repeatedly offers alternative models of everything from the novel’s methodology to the future growth of its characters’ minds: ‘a study of provincial life’ becomes an instance of ‘the home epic’; in Lydgate’s mind, ‘there were both virtues and faults capable of shrinking or expanding’; Rosamond’s daydreaming about Lydgate at first makes her appear an easily identifiable, shallow type, before a corrected image suggests that a more insidious, calculating character passes as an uncalculating one. Inviting her readers to think in terms of an ‘imagined “otherwise”’ (as she says in the novel), Eliot innovates a range of strategies, at various formal scales, for preserving the aesthetic richness and pleasure of a multitudinous imagination.

**Maia McAleavey (Boston College), ‘*Middlemarch as Chronicle*’**

Eliot famously followed Henry Fielding’s lead in positioning herself as a historian rather than a novelist. Fielding had distinguished his ideal historian from a *chronicler*, whose works ‘very much resemble a newspaper, which consists of just the same number of words, whether there be any news in it or not’. As Fernand Braudel writes, ‘side by side with … historic events, the chronicle or the daily paper offers us all the mediocre accidents of ordinary life: a fire, a railway crash, the price of wheat, a crime, a theatrical production, a flood’. Fielding and Braudel criticize the equal weight that the chronicle gives to dissimilar events, yet Eliot’s explicit project in *Middlemarch* is to link events across scales of this kind.

In this paper, I propose classifying *Middlemarch* as a *chronicle* rather than a history. The chronicle is a narrative form that prioritizes setting over plot, the episodic over the finite, and the group over the individual. The years preceding *Middlemarch* saw the publication of novels that directly celebrate the chronicle’s tradition of ordinary life, including Charlotte Yonge’s *Family Chronicles*, Trollope’s *Barchester Chronicles*,...
and Oliphant's *Chronicles of Carlingford*. Like these series, *Middlemarch* remains in a fixed setting with a group of characters, rather than tracking the adventures of a single individual. The narrative energies of *Middlemarch* may gather steam in individualist plots but non-narrative episodes collect around the novel's groups. Conceiving of this tension as between *history* and *chronicle* allows us to reconsider the novel's commitment to the provincial community that provides its title.

**Anna Henchman (Boston University), “‘The Fleshy Self’ in *Middlemarch*: Bruises, Sores, Healing’**

In *Middlemarch* George Eliot stages ardent debates about the natural of mental life on the level of simile and metaphor. Individual characters characterize what we could call the bodymind – the combination of physiological, mental, and emotional qualities that make an individual human being – using widely divergent images and schemas. Mr. Brooke proses about the ‘lightness of the feminine mind’; Lydgate pictures his future wife reverencing ‘her husband’s mind after the fashion of an accomplished mermaid’; the narrator describes how Mary Garth’s ‘vigorous young mind … watches it own powers with interest.’ The debate about how best to imagine the nature of the human bodymind – as flighty, mermaid-like, or full of muscular vigour – comes to a head after Lydgate faces public disgrace. In contrast to Dorothea, who believes Lydgate must be innocent based on his past actions, Farebrother argues, ‘character is not cut in marble— it is not something solid and unalterable. It is something living and changing, and may become diseased as our bodies do.’ Rather than resting with Farebrother’s idea that the illness in Lydgate’s bodymind is fatal, Dorothea adapts Farebrother’s schema to argue for hope: ‘Then it may be rescued and healed.’ This paper analyses the many alternative metaphors for mind found in the novel to argue that Eliot’s idea of mental life as an organic, living tissue that can be bruised and healed is a central figuration in the novel. Tracing the language of ‘inward sores’, wounds, and ‘maimed consciousness’, the paper argues that such physiological metaphors offer continuity across beings and matter. The paper will reflect on the social and political consequences of the metaphors people use to imagine others—and suggest the power of adapting a metaphor as a form of argument and opening up alternatives—thinking otherwise.

**Debra Gettelman (College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts), ‘*Middlemarch*’s Negations’**

The phenomenon of imagining otherwise is also embedded in *Middlemarch*’s syntax. Within Eliot’s prose, what a character does not know, or what a character does not look like, often becomes entangled with what does exist within the contours of the fictional world. This is the rhetorical construction of negation, or describing something by saying what is not the case. When introducing Nicholas Bulstrode, Eliot tasks the reader with imagining both what the banker looks like and what he does not. The narrator first describes what not to picture and then offers a second, actual image: ‘Do not imagine his sickly aspect to have been of the yellow, black-haired sort: he had a pale blond skin, thin gray-besprinkled brown hair, light-gray eyes, and a large forehead.’ Critics have had little to say about how speech patterns influence a reader’s creative engagement with a novel. Yet from the beginning of her career, Eliot was concerned with how convention and fantasy governed and narrowed readers’ imaginative reception of fiction. Eliot’s frequent use of negation provides a structure for the mental experience of novel reading that is crucial to her prose style and to her project as a whole. Each negation prompts the novel’s reader to practice developing multiple, contrasting images at once. Over the lengthy experience of reading her prose, the cumulative effect is to make the imagining of alternatives into a nearly unconscious habit in reader’s minds, and ultimately to create a less teleological and more imaginatively capacious reading experience.

**C4: Science and Darwinism**

**Trenton B. Olsen (Brigham Young University), ‘Survival of the Sympathetic: George Eliot’s Darwinian Vision of Literary Influence’**
Victorian authors frequently drew on evolutionary ideas to describe literary influence and history. Francis Turner Palgrave, for instance, wrote that the chronological structure of his anthology *Golden Treasury* (1861) reflected ‘the natural growth and evolution of our Poetry’. Without espousing a consistent or comprehensive Darwinian theory of literature, many represented a struggle for existence in the literary as well as the natural world. Philosopher H. L. Mansel, for example, encouraged lending libraries to foster Darwinian competition through their book arrangement. He explained, ‘if the best of the old books could be brought in, the worst of the new must drop out to make way for them. There would be an increased struggle for existence … the weaker writers would give way, and the stronger would be improved.’

George Eliot represented literary relationships in organic or evolutionary terms in her fiction, letters, and essays. In *Middlemarch*, Eliot links Casaubon’s literary and biological sterility, and Will Ladislaw notes that poor art provides rare work with ‘soil to grow in’. She compared Thomas Carlyle’s literary influence to a forest sown from an oak tree, while dismissing some books as ‘worthy only to die and rot’. She repeatedly used the term ‘modification’ to describe literary influence, drawing on Herbert Spencer’s description of a ‘modifying influence’ in both nature and intellectual culture. While many of her contemporaries represented a literary struggle for existence, Eliot depicted her own literary relationships as loving rather than combative. Even while criticizing her predecessors, she emphasized her ‘tolerance for [their] faults’. To be sure, Eliot’s love for other writers’ shortcomings implies superiority. Her vision of literary immortality, however, depended on prompting readers’ sympathy and moral development rather than prevailing over competitors, demonstrating the power of her sympathetic imagination. Paradoxically, she competed successfully with other writers by eschewing Darwinian competition.

**Aurora Wheeler (Harvard Extension School), ‘Up to This Point their Orbits Were Individuals—Without Connection Or Unity’**

That statement appeared in John Pringle Nichol’s *The Phenomena and Order of the Solar System* (1842), a text which so transfixed George Eliot, who at that time had yet to write fiction, that she exclaimed in a letter that she had been ‘in imagination winging my flight from system to system, from universe to universe’.

This paper will examine the influence of Nichol’s astronomical texts on Eliot’s early works. Specifically, I will explore how Nichol’s descriptions of the mechanics and forces of the solar system, as well as the necessity of careful observation, impacted Eliot’s perception of the natural world and her reflection of that through fictional characters. Just as Nichol wrote on the resonant relationships between objects in the heavens, their connections strong yet invisible, so too did Eliot, through her complex and realistic depictions of ordinary people and the events of their daily lives. Characters essentially move in and of each other’s orbits, drawn by forces they cannot always comprehend and impacted by small variations that ripple outward, all of which nevertheless shape the character. To Nichol and Eliot, all is connected through actions, forces, and perturbations both grand and intensely small. To that end, I argue that Eliot was not merely influenced by scientific writing; rather, she was a creator of her own miniature fictional universes, teeming with life: fields of study in which to observe, make calculated comparisons, and attempt to elucidate the fascinating structure beneath the surface. Due the pre-Darwinian nature of the paper, works discussed will only include those written before 1860; specifically, *Scenes of Clerical Life, Adam Bede*, and the novella *The Lifted Veil*.

**Helen Kingstone (University of Glasgow), ‘Human-Animal Elision: A Darwinian Universe in George Eliot’s Novels’**

Animals are everywhere in George Eliot’s novels. Occasionally these are ‘real’ animals, but far more often, they are imaginary: Casaubon’s rivals ‘Carp’, ‘Pike’ and ‘Tench’; Mrs Transome’s fellow-aristocrats the ‘Heros of Fenshore’ and ‘Badgers of Hillbury’; the beating ‘squirrel’s heart’. Eliot is often viewed as an over-strictly realist writer, but in her two ‘Reform Act’ novels, *Felix Holt* (1866) and *Middlemarch* (1871-72), she does something disconcertingly comic. This paper draws attention to the strange and often surprising
ellisions between human and animal species in these novels, to ask why she does it, and what its implications might be. Recent research (Pielak, 2012) has highlighted the extent of ‘animetaphor’ in Eliot’s fiction, but this elision goes beyond metaphor to metonymy. This technique is most obviously a recognition of the Darwinian framework in which scientifically-engaged thinkers necessarily viewed the world by the late 1860s. But it is also part of her novels’ commitment to acting as an alternative history of their pre-Reform moment. Eliot insists that even ‘unhistoric’ individuals are part of history: how far does this doctrine extend? History assumes an unbridgeable difference between humans and other species, but Eliot repeatedly probes this assumption.

The first half of this paper traces Eliot’s use of Darwinian paradigms to highlight the proximity between humans and animals, and thus – once humans step down from their Biblical plinth – the lateral profusion of the organic world. The second half shows the tangles this Darwinian thinking causes for Eliot the humanist. The challenges of historical narration are multiplied exponentially if Eliot’s famous call for interpersonal sympathy is expanded across species boundaries. As a result, she ends up suggesting that despite the clamouring voices of other organisms, we can only function as human beings – and sympathise with our fellow humans – if we block them out.

**PANEL D (11.00-12.30)**

**D1: Provincial Culture (Oak 1)**


Provincialism – where it is invoked in critical scholarship on cultural theory, emerges as the antitype of the problems of cosmopolitan modernity. In *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now*, for example, Timothy Brennan notes ‘Even as ideals like collectivity, community, and self-sufficiency have been fought for, the metropolis is largely a term equated with their absence. Trying to find them has often involved a looking back, either as a return to roots or a resistance to “progress”’. (2) The provincial, all too often even now, is configured as just such a root and source of purer national identity: a community to return to restore selves corrupted in the cosmopolitan city whirl; an imagined memorial of lost unity. Unlike the Romantic pastoral retreat, however, provincial place and community is only sometimes picturesque, rarely beautiful, and never sublime. It is, in fact, often, unapologetically ugly.

In this paper I am going to explore how provincial fiction – in the shape of George Eliot’s first fiction *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857) – not only forces us to sympathise with that ugliness; but, more significantly does so by carving out an aesthetics of what I shall term ‘middleness’. Building on recent work by Sianne Ngai on the aesthetic category of the ‘interesting’, I shall argue that Eliot’s works, through repetition, through detail, through immobility, press – quite deliberately on the fine line between the dull and the interesting. In its attention to the ‘middling’ life of *Amos Barton*, Eliot’s first fiction pushes provincial fiction into new territory. In contrast to the short-form works that dominated provincial fiction in the first part of the nineteenth-century – in the shape of the sketch, the chronicle, the village tale, or parish annals – the aesthetic form of ‘Amos Barton’ opens up a sustained, sustainable place of community, marking the opening of new long-forms for provincial realist fiction. Eliot’s realism, that is, not only carves out an aesthetic whose power is grounded on painfully inescapable dullness; the sustained affect created by her narrative form opens out new possibilities of monumental scale, duration, and length for provincial fiction.

**Kathleen McCormack (Florida International University), ‘George Eliot, Edith Simcox, and William Cobbett: *Rural Rides* and “Rural Roads”’**

In November 1877 George Eliot delighted Edith Simcox by asking a favour: that her friend might buy for her a copy of William Cobbett’s *Rural Rides*. Simcox found it at a Holborn book stall and during her next Sunday at the Priory enjoyed fulfilling Eliot’s request.
Eight years later, Simcox published a long essay called ‘Rural Roads’—in form and content a tribute to Cobbett—in *Macmillan’s Magazine*. My paper argues that 21st-century scholarship by Rosemarie Bodenheimer (2002) and Ruth Livesey (2016) prompts a reading of this essay as an homage to Eliot. Despite only rare direct mentions, Eliot surfaces in this piece in at least three ways: in Simcox’s preparations for the journey (a visit to Savernake Forest/Cardell Chase); in the Felix Holt route her dog cart follows; and in similarities to Cobbett’s journeys spent observing and evaluating crops, fields, roads, flora, people, cottages, manors, and public houses along English byways.

Simcox’s subtextual/extratextual connections all help place ‘Rural Roads’ among the overt or buried tributes to Eliot frequently detectable in her writing. Bodenheimer’s ‘Autobiography in Fragments’ mentions references to Eliot not only throughout the ‘Autobiography of a Shirtmaker’ but, less obviously, in the strange stories Simcox called *Vignettes* (1882). Although ‘Rural Roads’ (1885) does not appear on Bodenheimer’s bibliography, my paper finds in this later essay indirect references similar to her examples from *Vignettes*. In addition, Livesey’s *Writing the Stage Coach Nation* definitively describes ‘what Eliot’s work shares with Cobbett’s’ (183) thus prompting connections between ‘Rural Roads’ and *Rural Rides* via the ‘Author’s Introduction’ to *Felix Holt*.

By injecting Eliot into ‘Rural Roads’, however subtly, Simcox takes up an interest generated by a long-ago, much-appreciated request for a favour. The resulting contribution to Macmillan’s demonstrates that as late as 1885 Simcox was still paying homage to Eliot in one of her most substantial periodical essays.

**Milena Schwab-Graham (University of Leeds), “Objectless Wandering”? Mapping Morality onto Peripatetic Practice in *Adam Bede*’**

This paper will trace how women’s sexual and intellectual liberation is articulated through walking in Eliot’s early fiction, offering an overview of Eliot’s lived walking experiences recorded in her life-writing as a starting point. Walking, especially in Continental Europe, enabled Eliot to pursue her ideal of a creatively embodied life, as the ‘delicious walks’ frequently recorded in her ‘Recollections’ and letters suggest. However, Eliot was acutely aware of the potentially dangerous consequences arising from such liberative ‘peripatetic practice’ (Anne D. Wallace, 1993), and her first novel, *Adam Bede* (1859), offers myriad responses to such a problematic. This paper aims to elucidate the ambiguous position Eliot accords to walking in *Adam Bede*, by examining its numerous iterations in the narrative. We argue that Eliot renders the act of walking emblematic of three main objectives which are indissolubly associated with morality. First, walking is used to facilitate moral transgression, as shown in the case of Hetty Sorrel and Arthur Donnithorne’s clandestine meetings. This leads to a consideration of ‘walking out together’ as courtship practice, in which Eliot’s relationship with George Henry Lewes provides a useful counterpoint. We then move to Eliot’s persuasive positioning of walking as a method for redeeming moral transgression, as evidenced by Hetty Sorrel seeking out Dinah Morris in her time of need. Eliot renders such progression the more powerful as it is borne of Hetty’s desperate, ‘objectless’ wandering on the cusp of suicide. Finally, we consider how Eliot positions Methodist preacher Dinah Morris’ compassionate, contemplative walking as the embodiment of ‘fellow-feeling’. As the characters of *Adam Bede* move through the rural landscape of Hayslope, their differing interpretations of peripatetic practice demonstrate how Eliot aligns the walking process with an enlarged sense of emotional, moral and intellectual realisation.

**D2: Character and Theory (Oak 2)**

**Panel Abstract:** No other nineteenth-century author—and few authors of any era—unite the philosophical work of theorizing with the detailed construction of individualized characters as compellingly as George Eliot. For Eliot, theorising characters takes the form of producing abstract conceptions of human nature—as in her numerous meditations on the issue of ‘egoism’—and of linking specific characters with ideas and
impulses that possess identifiable intellectual heritages – as in the case of Maggie Tulliver’s desires for ‘renunciation’, which Eliot links to a tradition of Christian thinking begun Thomas à Kempis.

The papers in this panel aim to contextualise, supplement, and illuminate both the abstracting aspects of Eliot’s theorising about character and the specifics of her art of character-making. They do so by engaging with current trends in literary and critical theory that themselves have roots in Victorian ethics, Victorian materialist ideas about the body and mind, Victorian concepts of economics and psychology, and Victorian constructions of sexuality and affect. The papers each suggest that Eliot’s characters and her theorisations are not so much objects for today’s critical work but are generative of that work.

S. Pearl Brilmyer (University of Pennsylvania), ‘The Mechanistic and the Lively: The Science of Froggy Characters in Eliot, Lewes, and Stein’

In 1872, the English literary critic and physiologist George Henry Lewes complained that Charles Dickens’ characters ‘want the distinctive peculiarity of organic action, that of fluctuating spontaneity.’ Setting up a comparison between Dickens’ characters and frogs that have had their brains removed in scientific experiment, Lewes declared that Dickens’ characters, like vivisected frogs, are flat, mechanistic, and predictable. The same month that Lewes was composing his essay on Dickens, his long time partner, George Eliot, was completing Book IV of Middlemarch. Book IV introduces the character Joshua Rigg, a flat character with one distinctive trait, his ‘frog face’. This paper draws attention to the narrative function that flat and distinctively nonhuman characters like Rigg play in the multi-plot Victorian novel, showing how such characters paved the way for less narratively driven representations of subjectivity emergent with modernism. Bringing into conversation work on literary character in the Victorian and modernist periods, the paper thus shifts the critical conversation in character studies from a concern with the dialectics of ‘flat’ versus "round" toward that of a new, scientifically informed binary— the mechanistic versus the lively. Drawing a series of unexpected parallels between Eliot and Gertrude Stein, I focus on the role of the frog in the emergence of this new characterological paradigm, a paradigm in which ‘realistic’ character is said to inhere not the production of individuality or apparent consciousness but in the eruption of an inexplicable liveliness.

Amanpal Garcha (Ohio State), ‘“A Difficulty Deciding”: Choice and the Political Economy of Characters in Middlemarch’

Near Middlemarch’s beginning, Dorothea and Sir James Chettam both declare their tendency to vacillate, with Dorothea claiming that she is ‘often unable to decide’ and Chettam saying likewise that he has ‘often a difficulty in deciding’. Though choice might be central to all narratives, Eliot is unique among Victorian realist writers in her emphasis on characters’ cognitive, psychological processes as they attempt to choose among moral, intellectual, marital, vocational, and political options.

My paper argues that it is the discourse of Victorian political economy that perhaps most influenced her representation of individual minds in a state of wondering indecision as they contemplate not so much whether or not to make a binary choice but how to evaluate a large number of often disparate options. Modernity makes choice-making difficult in unprecedented ways: the breakdown of coherent social frameworks for evaluating values and options, the increase in choices available in the ballot-box and the marketplace, and the liberal emphasis on the significance of ‘personal choice’ as one of the sole expressions of selfhood all made choices seem potentially limitless, and the idea of making the ‘right’ choice particularly fraught. Therefore (and conversely) to assert, as some scholars of 19th-century literature have done, that the problems individuals faced in Victorian Britain were problems of limited choices is importantly misguided: the problems are rooted in individuals’ sense of facing too many choices, without meaningful ways to evaluate them.

This paper will sketch the trends in economic history that help us contextualise Eliot’s (and other writers’) preoccupation with difficulties in evaluation and, thus, decision making. It will also show how such a history
can illuminate the novelists’ representations of phenomena – including negative affect, psychological “depth,” and narrative complexity – associated with realistic characters and complex choice-making.

David Kurnick (Rutgers), ‘Character and the Fact of Frequency’

This paper starts by juxtaposing recent work in two very different genres—philosophers’ analyses of George Eliot’s fiction and ‘quit lit’ (essays on the painful and/or liberating decision to leave academia)—and locates in them a shared sense that literary study is an essentially fanciful endeavour. I understand these genres as testifying to a perceived split between the various pursuits grouped under the rubric ‘English’: the (defensible) teaching of skills of analysis and critical thinking to students, and the (less defensible) production of knowledge about the literary past. I connect this split to Eliot’s sense of the unity of the ‘good’ the ‘true’, and suggest that her work—easy to defend as both richly moral and intellectually profound—is a particularly rich place for thinking about the crisis in the humanities. The second half of the paper explores Eliot’s conception of literary character as a site particular charged with these contradictory energies, and asks why certain conceptions of character central to literary study—character as a conceptually, and not just ethically meaningful category—are mostly invisible outside of ‘the profession’.

Summer J. Star (San Francisco State), ‘Between Creativity and Technique: Eliot’s Early Character-Building’

The idea of ‘creating character’, generally assumes authors to be in the role of creator – even as sculptors or painters ‘create’ a characteristic figure, or a composer, even, a singular, signature theme. The argument of this paper is that George Eliot knew, in a philosophically significant way, that this is not the case. Using Henri Bergson’s 1934 theory of creativity – of ‘possibility’ as a backward-cast mirage of current reality, and of human agents as creators of their own characters (in a way beyond, even, the ‘unpitying’ nature of consequence from Adam Bede) – I argue that Eliot’s creation of character-creativity (specifically, in this paper, with the characters Milly Barton, Adam Bede, and Dinah Morris) demonstrates a radical understanding of her own role as a ‘character-maker’ – not so much as a delineator, or coordinator of qualities, but as a locator of ‘character’ as a nexus between creativity (the essentially unpredictable) and technique (that which is essentially conversant with given, repeatable reality). In this paper, I suggest Eliot’s early focus on economically strapped characters (which emphasises negotiation between creativity and technique) was not simply a matter of ‘writing what she knew’, but reckoning with what the ‘creation of character’ would mean for her own psychological realism.

D3: Middlemarch (Chestnut)

Michael Meeuwis (University of Warwick), ‘Middlemarch, Romola, and the Failure of Private Reading’

This paper considers George Eliot as part of a larger project rewriting the history of the novel in terms of the subjectivity and epistemology of reading novels in groups and out loud instead of singly and silently. My point of departure here is the repeated failure, noted by David Kurnick among others, of characters within Eliot’s fiction to engage in successful private reading. Considering Middlemarch, I describe how ‘bad’ public reading drives out ‘good’ private reading. Dorothea Brooke repeatedly fails at the act of contemplative private reading that might permit her perspectival freedom from her immediate situation. Rosamund Vincy, in contrast, commands marital success in part through reading out loud in public—in particular, through reading heavily commercial poetry that concretises rather than challenges society as it stands. Middlemarch leaves us with no sense of how the novel might actually achieve social influence.

Working out how the novel can achieve traction over public life, I suggest, is something Eliot works out through convincingly in Romola. I address the novel’s best-known formal feature, its awkward translations of Italian language into non-idiomatic English, as an attempt to do for its readers what Middlemarch did for
that novel's characters: constantly interrupt the privacy of the scene of reading with oral speech. Romola presents the mode of private reading that Middlemarch shows repeatedly failing as, finally, an impossibility. The presence of public speech is too much a part of the experience of private reading to allow for a discrete epistemological separation of the private reading subject. Awkward speech thickens and jars the experience of private reading, redirecting the reader’s awareness outwards towards society.

Angela E. Runciman (Binghamton University, SUNY), ‘Feeling (for) Knowledge: Reading the “Unhistoric” Constellations of St Theresa and Dorothea in Middlemarch’

Among the many aesthetic references in George Eliot’s essay ‘Recollections of Italy’, it is Rome and its marble works which seem to appeal to her the most (Journals 356-7). Hugh Witemeyer writes that her combined interests in High Renaissance and a ‘secondary strain’ of an ‘inclination toward mannerist and baroque styles … resulted in Eliot’s curious admiration of statuesque and monumental female figures’ (Witemeyer 23; my emphasis)—arguably including Bernini’s Ecstasy of St. Teresa. Though she does not name Bernini or his Ecstasy in Middlemarch, Eliot invokes St. Theresa’s name, and the ecstatic image as described in St. Theresa’s mystical writings, building toward Dorothea’s critical break with her ‘dream-like bridal life’ on her honeymoon (Middlemarch 180). Beginning with the ruminations in the Middlemarch Prelude, the multiplicity of constellations with St. Theresa gradually conjure up an image like that of Bernini’s figure; the manner of these indirect references (e.g.) to ‘marble forms’ on the surface point toward both Dorothea’s subversive ecstasy or ‘electric shock’ and recognition of knowledge (181). Thus, the image of St. Theresa is depicted as a constellation with (or through) Dorothea, reaching toward new interpretations beyond that implicit through the gaze of Bernini’s work.

Recognizing the ‘unhistoric’ images of the past which appear in a critical present moment precisely demonstrates Walter Benjamin’s philosophy of history; capturing these images create opportunities for working toward undermining the dominant narratives of history. In this paper, I argue Eliot’s constellation of St. Theresa and Dorothea enacts this subversive process toward demythologizing and recasting the meaning of Bernini’s sculpture—ultimately recovering the ‘unhistoric’ significance of St. Theresa as a figure demonstrating the critical process and necessity of establishing a non-normative or women’s history.

Geoff Baker (Yale-NUS College, Singapore), ‘Evidence, Consensus, and the Court of Public Opinion in Middlemarch’

The institution of gossip in George Eliot’s fiction can be understood as the sort of disciplinary mechanism D. A. Miller examined in the 1980s, yet it also raises important epistemological questions about the role and nature of evidence in Victorian culture. This paper argues that, by weighing public assumptions of a person’s guilt against an individual’s belief in that same person’s innocence, Eliot’s novels confront theories of knowledge as constituted by shared empirical experiences, social consensus, or ‘common sense’. These ideas have their roots in Locke and Boyle, yet they continued to influence legal thinking in Eliot's century.

Eliot both employs and critiques certain cultural and legal extensions of empiricism. However, she also suggests other forms of ‘evidence’, like privately held ‘belief’ or intimacy with an accused’s character, as a surer measure of reality than collectively shared data or social consensus is. Middlemarch transposes empiricist and legal discourse into a sort of court of public opinion that operates with witnesses, empirical evidence, and a public certainty born of widespread agreement on the witnesses and the evidence. Against this social agreement, however, characters like Dorothea Brooke offer a private difference. (For example, she defends Tertius Lydgate, saying, ‘I feel convinced that his conduct has not been guilty. I believe that people are almost always better than their neighbours think they are’ [691].) Drawing on work by Rae Greiner, Ayelet Ben-Yishai and others, I situate such private, intimately developed sympathy in conversation with the legacy of empiricism, and as a critique of forms of evidence drawn from social consensus.
D4: Eliot’s Other Writings (Maple)

Gail Marshall (University of Reading), ‘Eliot, James, Realism, and Europe’

This paper will investigate a curious coincidence in the careers and lives of George Eliot and Henry James that sheds light on the roots of their respective practices of realism. In 1859, in ‘The Lifted Veil’, Eliot wrote about the disappointing school career of her protagonist, Latimer, whose education in Switzerland was designed to address his lack of an interest in science. G. H. Lewes’s sons were also in a Swiss school at the time, though enjoying a more liberal approach to their education. Later that year, also in Switzerland, Henry James began a course of education not dissimilar in spirit to Latimer’s at the Ecole Préparation aux Ecoles Spéciales in Geneva. Though professing himself distressed, James seems more bemused than despairing at his being educated alongside engineers, architects, and technicians. James fared no better than Latimer, but was happier in his parents’ response to his lack of a taste for science. James did, however, garner from Europe a rich ‘impressional harvest’ that laid the groundwork of his future writings. Specifically, he was to recall a ‘supremely determinant’ hour in which I argue that his realism was rooted. It was an hour that had significant similarities to Eliot's writing of German peasants in her first articulation of realism in her review of Riehl’s *The Natural History of German Life*. This paper will outline Eliot and James's early responses to Europe, the similarities between them, and the debt that their initial formulations of realism owe to Europe.

Penny Horsley (University of Sydney), ‘The Double-Dutch of Theophrastus Such: Interpretations’

This paper will consider George Eliot’s final published volume, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879), and offer an interpretation of the experimental style, the politically-charged content, and the contextual concerns of the work. The alienating lack of coherence in the sequencing, narrative voice and content of Impressions, particularly in comparison to the novels which preceded it, has made holistic interpretations difficult; yet within the text, Eliot loops on trends and themes that were seeded in her earliest writing.

Much of *Impressions* meditates on the role of the artist and writer, on the nature of autobiography, the role of criticism, and the capacity for all human communication to misinterpreted, misrepresented and misunderstood. These aspects of the work will be considered in light of Eliot’s personal life, her relationship to criticism and her theories of art which were published as early as the 1850s.

The marked shift in style from *Daniel Deronda* (1876), suggests that Eliot had a specific literary project in mind with *Impressions* and her conscious appropriation of Theophrastian character sketches as the guiding mode of organisation of the material has implications for our understanding of Eliot’s relationship to satire and her interest in critiquing human psychology through fiction.

Finally, this paper will consider the relevance of *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* for the present day and the ways in which Eliot’s writing and ideas in her final work intersect with contemporary anxieties and ways of thinking.

Akiko Higuchi, ‘Why was I attracted to Marianne Evans’s Edward Neville? Marianne Evans and William Coxe’s Travel Book’

The aim of this paper is to illustrate with examples how Marianne Evans was inspired by and indebted to William Coxe’s *An Historical Tour in Monmouthshire*, as her ‘principal source’ (Haight, 17), when she wrote *Edward Neville* (Haight, 552). Through the descriptions and many engravings in this book, she could have imagined the main figures and main places to live in her fictional world.

Examples of her borrowings include: the name of ‘Edward Neville’ from Coxe’s pedigree of the Abergavenny family in Wales; Henry Marten and his sympathizers’ signing the warrant of King Charles I; some examples of similarities of Coxe’s descriptions and Evans’s; and Coxe’s accounts of Mr Thomas Lewis at St Pierre, who had invited Marten to his table, as well as of Valentine Morris in Piercefield House
in the eighteenth century, which were blended by Evans in the creation of the fictional Sir Verner Mordaunt in Piercefield House. Furthermore, Miss Mary Mordaunt is also an amalgam of actual Miss Mary Mordaunt, who became Mrs Mary Morris, in Coxe’s book, and a fictional daughter of Sir Verner Mordaunt.

As this paper will show, therefore, without Coxe’s book, Evans might never have created Edward Neville.

D5: Eliot and Gender (Birch)

Charlotte Fiehn (University of Texas-Austin), ““[A] Clever Novelist” and her “Fair Critic[s]”: George Eliot, Gender, and Constructed Identities”

Mary Ann (Marian) Evans had a keen understanding of gender’s handicap when she began writing fiction. Her 1852 essay ‘Silly Novels by Lady Novelists’ is rife with criticism about the evaluation of women writers by critics and readers, even as it lambastes the ‘silly novels’ that some ‘lady novelists’ persisted in writing. Unlike the Brontë sisters, though, Eliot did not resort to a male pseudonym simply to avoid the stigma of being a woman. Her infamous (and extramarital) relationship with George Henry Lewes exposed her to a different and more debilitating type of criticism. Using a male pseudonym, Eliot protected herself and her work from charges of immorality, particularly regarding sexuality.

Although eventually exposed, Eliot’s initial determination to conceal both her identity and her gender is evident in her active performance as a male novelist in her earliest works. Particularly in Adam Bede (1859), she went so far as to craft heavily gendered commentary. In the first edition, the narrator speaks of having a ‘fair critic’ (Adam Bede 259), emphasising Eliot’s authorial and narratorial identity as male and, more intriguingly, identifying her readers as predominantly female. By the time she was correcting Adam Bede for a second edition in 1861, however, Eliot had cast off her disguise in certain circles and likely saw the potential for all of her readers to discover her identity. Although she retains her pseudonym to this day, the editorial changes to the 1861 edition of Adam Bede – most notably to Chapter 17 – show her constructing a somewhat different persona, coinciding with the revelation of her true identity. My paper examines the construction (and gendering) of Eliot’s authorial and narrative personae throughout her work, considering the evolution of these identities and their significance to her treatment of gender and the reception of her work.

Souad Baghli Berbar (University of Tlemcen), ‘We Should All Be Feminists: Women’s Empowerment in George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda’

George Eliot wrote at a time of gender inequality when few voices dared to speak for women. She has been repeatedly taxed with conservatism and even anti-feminism. Among the few who shed light on Eliot’s feminism, June Skye Szirtney could expose Eliot’s ambivalence on the topic in George Eliot’s Feminism: ‘The Right to Rebellion’ (2015) and point to the need for feminist reform that timidly transpires through her novels while Nancy Paxton falls short of mentioning Daniel Deronda in her insightful George Eliot and Herbert Spencer: Feminism, Evolutionism and the Reconstruction of Gender (1991). The present paper argues that Daniel Deronda, as Eliot’s last finished novel, contains her testament view of feminist issues and, through a close reading of the novel, examines Eliot’s subtle way of advancing her gender questions. It draws on the work of the contemporary celebrated figure of feminism Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie, especially the book based on her 2012 TED Talk We Should All Be Feminists, which forays into several aspects of identity, race and nationality in relation to gender. Not unlike the vivid examples pointed by Adichie, George Eliot’s characters in Daniel Deronda particularly represent both explicit and implied instances of women empowerment that epitomize Adichie’s definition of a feminist.

Eleanor Dumbill (Loughborough University), ““Extremes Not Only Too Remote But Too Disparate”: Legacies, Female Networks, and the Importance of George Eliot’s Translations’
Few of the critical studies of George Eliot’s work focus on her works of non-fiction. Of these, her works of translation are especially under-represented in critical Eliot studies. This paper explores the legacies of Eliot’s translations and the ways in which the translations themselves helped shape her legacy.

I begin by questioning the status of translation for women and the concept that it represented a safer entryway to the periodical marketplace for women. I explore the negative reaction of reviewers to the ideas expounded by Spinoza, Strauss, and Feuerbach, both in their original languages and translation and find that though this argument is convincing when the translated text is ideologically neutral, it is far less persuasive with regards to the controversial texts that Eliot translated. From here, I discuss Edith Simcox’s engagement with the translations following Eliot’s death and her attempts to protect Eliot’s reputation by claiming that she undertook these projects as an act of friendship. I stress the importance of Eliot’s female associates, notably Cara Bray, Sara Hennell, and Rufa Brabant, in bringing her translation work and argue that not only did Eliot enter upon these tasks willingly but was supported by a female intellectual networks that was considerably engaged with radical texts.

I conclude by emphasising that Eliot’s translations are vital to understanding her place within literary networks. They represent a radical impulse that affected her access to cultural and social capital, which influenced the connections she was able to make with other intellectuals and her publishing opportunities. They also allow us to explore areas of Eliot’s life that have been considered less by scholars and that speak to her place within the literary marketplace and place fresh emphasis on the importance of her female associates to the development of her career.

PANEL E (14.45-16.15)

E1: George Eliot’s Legacy (Oak 1)

Margaret Harris (University of Sydney), ‘George Eliot’s Heirs: Charles and Gertrude Lewes’

This paper brings to light the unrecognised role of Charles Lee Lewes (1842-91) and his wife Gertrude Southwood Lewes, née Hill (1837-1923), in securing George Eliot’s reputation, a role complementary to J. W. Cross’ public memorialisation of her in George Eliot’s Life (1885).

Eliot’s legacy to Charles, the eldest son of her partner George Lewes, included her copyrights and the responsibility of managing them. His correspondence with William Blackwood and Sons shows him closely tracking receipts of royalties but not actively engaged in the business of the publisher. Sorting through the papers of both Eliot and Lewes enabled him to prepare material for publication, notably Eliot’s Essays and Leaves from a Notebook (1884). Into the bargain he aspired to authorship on his own account, bringing out a number of articles and stories.

Gertrude’s accession to the role of literary trustee after Charles’ death in 1891 coincided with significant changes in publishing practice in the English-speaking world, such as the demise of the three-decker novel and the rise of the literary agent. She proved a quick study as she assumed the authority to opine on what George Eliot would have wanted. William Blackwood III was keen to humour her, given the importance of profits on Eliot’s works to the firm, and the threat posed to them by the expiry of her copyrights beginning with Scenes of Clerical Life on 1 January 1899. I will trace Gertrude’s influence on the decisions Blackwoods made, from the colours of bindings for various editions to the publication of a deluxe illustrated Silas Marner for Christmas 1899. In conclusion I will glance at the activities of her youngest daughter Elinor Southwood Ouvry when she took over as trustee in 1923.

Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi (Bath Spa University), ‘Edith Simcox’s Shirts: George Eliot, Creative Labour, and Professional Communities’
In 1875, the philosopher, social activist and would-be lover of George Eliot, Edith Simcox, founded with Mary Hamilton a women’s-only shirt-making co-operative, Hamilton and Company. By analysing the various facets of Simcox’s enterprise and her ongoing position in Eliot’s intellectual network, I would like to examine how the type of self-sustaining, professional and educated female community she envisioned attempted to go beyond the paradigm of creative labour she understood as flawed in George Eliot’s life and work. This case study will help us to think through the affective and social complexity of the relationship between Eliot and her ‘literary daughters’, and an example of the status and celebrity she enjoyed in the latter part of her career.

In spite of her advocacy of sympathetic feeling, Eliot embodied an individualistic mode of authorship through which she deliberately set herself apart from the commercial dictates of mass market fiction. Simcox’s turn from sympathy to cooperation needs to be seen as part of a broader cultural formation that led to the development of a new model of creative labour in the second half of the nineteenth century, positioned between a Romantic conception of individual genius and socialist programmes of work and art. A close reading of Simcox’s journalism, autobiography and philosophical writings alongside Eliot’s will help us to recognise the shaping role that discourses of art, dress and industry played in her efforts at social activism.

Simcox’s relationship with Eliot testifies to the complex relationship between women, work and commerce in the creative industries, demonstrating both the cross-fertilisation of ideas but also the difficulty in reconciling the individual with the communal, as well as the pragmatics of labour with ideals of professional communities.

Constance Fulmer (Pepperdine University, Malibu), ‘George Eliot According to Women Then and Now: A Comparison of Observations of Her Contemporaries and Women Today’

In this bicentenary year it is enlightening to recall some of the comments which were published about George Eliot by the women who were actually acquainted with her as well as with her novels and poems during her lifetime. Both Geraldine Jewsbury and Anne Mozley published reviews of *Adam Bede* in 1859 and as George Eliot’s novels and poetry appeared, the volumes were regularly reviewed by women readers. She and her works continue to attract the attention of feminists and to compel women to write about her as a person and to debate the meaning and merit of her writing. It is interesting to compare the comments made by these contemporary women with the opinions being expressed by women today. The topics are remarkably similar: George Eliot’s personal appearance and demeanour, her home and her role as a hostess, her relationship with George Henry Lewes, and, of course, her novels and her poetry—particularly her women characters. I will emphasize similarities in the views expressed and the issues raised by Geraldine Jewsbury, Mathilde Blind, Bessie Raynor Parkes, Eliza Lynn Linton, Lucy Clifford, and others with those of five women who have published their work within the last five years. I will refer to Kathleen McCormack’s *George Eliot in Society* (2013); Wendy Williams’s *George Eliot: Poetess* (2014); June Skye Szirotny’s *George Eliot’s Feminism* (2015); Kathryn Hughes’s *Victorians Undone* (2017); and Beverley Park Rilett’s article in *George Eliot-George Henry Lewes Studies* titled ‘The Role of George Henry Lewes in George Eliot’s Career’ (2017). Pointing out these comparisons emphasises the lasting impact of George Eliot’s critical and cultural legacy and the relevance of her life and work for women today.

**E2: Comparative (National) (Oak 2)**

Clare Walker Gore (Trinity College, University of Cambridge), ‘A Tale of Two Maggies: Realism, Redemption, and Disability in *The Moorland Cottage* and *The Mill on the Floss*’

In a stultifying provincial setting, a promising young girl named Maggie struggles to thrive. Undervalued by her unimaginative mother and adored brother, it seems there is no one to offer a helping hand to our
heroine, until she meets her first real friend, a wise invalid who offers counsel and sympathy. Inspired and encouraged by this friendship, Maggie grows into a morally serious young woman, and finds herself able to make the ultimate sacrifice for her brother’s sake when the moment of choice comes. Her selfless devotion has its reward: saved from the shipwreck in which her inconvenient brother drowns, Maggie makes a happy marriage and lives to bless the memory of her departed disabled mentor.

As the reader will have guessed, I am not in fact describing the plot of George Eliot’s The Mill on the Floss (1860), but that of Elizabeth Gaskell’s novella The Moorland Cottage, published ten years earlier. Up until that final sentence, however, this plot summary could have applied to either text, so similar are their basic structural elements. The question of Eliot’s possibly direct, vigorously disclaimed debt to Gaskell has already received some scholarly attention; in this paper, I want rather to explore the significance of the differences between the two texts at the level of plot. In particular, I want to probe the connection between the two Maggies’ drastically different endings and their differing relationships with their disabled mentors, on which both plots turn. Where Gaskell produces an entirely successful version of what we might call the redemptive disability plot, and has Mrs Buxton play the role of the angelic invalid to perfection, Eliot’s Philip actively resists the part he is assigned, with tragic consequences. As Eliot takes Gaskell’s material and reworks it as tragedy, I argue that she essentially offers us a competing version of the disability plot, and that we can see here in microcosm her movement away from Gaskell’s understanding of realism, and towards the preoccupation with failed plots which shape late masterpieces such as Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda.

Jen Davis (University of Chester), ‘The Uses of Silence: Solitude, Society, and Morality in Eliot and Coleridge’

George Eliot often presents solitude as a catalyst for self-realisation, but her uses of the motif of silence are predominantly regulatory in nature. This paper explores striking similarities between her presentations of silence and those of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. While scholarship has long recognised the influence of William Wordsworth on Eliot’s writing, affinities between her fiction and Coleridge’s poetry remain relatively unexplored. Analytical focus on the descriptive language used by Eliot and Coleridge reveals thematic and linguistic parallels, as well as correspondences in their use of metaphor and symbolism.

The narrative arcs of Eliot’s fiction are dependent upon interaction between characters, and silence is a component of such interaction, albeit one that tends to inhibit and restrict self-expression; often, Eliot uses silence to attenuate or ameliorate emotions too painful to express. In Coleridge’s poetry, silence functions as a point of origin for explorations of the individual consciousness, prompting self-examination and contemplation of the self in relation to the world. Despite divergences in their respective understanding and presentation of moral agency and social interaction, for both Eliot and Coleridge silence often results in a radical renegotiation of the individual’s relationship with others.

Jaqueline Bohn Donada (Federal University of Technology, Paraná), ‘George Eliot in between Tradition and Modernity’

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century artistic movement often called Modernism was trailblazing in its essence and defined itself, to a great extent, by statements such as Ezra Pound’s Make it New. In literature as well as in other arts, a creative and revolutionary impulse helped trace its main developments. Therefore, the movement is often seen as promoting a break with traditional forms in prose and poetry and its main writers, as questioners of literary tradition. Untraditional and unconventional as Modernism might have been, its relation with tradition was not simply one of rupture. The heated debate that took place in the beginning of the twentieth century in essays, prefaces and even diaries and letters about the place of tradition in contemporary literature indicates that Modernist innovations come at least in great part, not from a rejection of what tends to be considered tradition but from a thorough examination of its role, nature and legacy. The main actors in this debate are the writers that Virginia Woolf called ‘the Georgians’, names like
herself, T. S. Eliot, James Joyce and others. However, this paper proposes to look at the role George Eliot (an important reference for Woolf) had in planting the first few seeds of the clash between tradition and modernity that has been central to the Modernist agenda. We look at her novels, *Romola* in particular, and at instances in her essays and correspondence where Pound’s *Make it New* seems to be in its genesis. We consider George Eliot’s particular position as herself an innovator in the English novel and examine how the conflict between old and new ideas (expressed, for instance, in our title) that is often perceived in her texts can be said to prefigure the Modernist tension between tradition and modernity.

**Anne Reus (Sheffield Hallam University), “A Deluded Woman”: Virginia Woolf and George Eliot**

In 1924, Virginia Woolf offered an irreverent assessment of George Eliot’s literary afterlife: ‘Her reputation, they say, is on the wane, and, indeed, how could it be otherwise? Her big nose, her little eyes, her heavy, horsey head loom from behind the printed page and make a critic of the other sex uneasy … however absolute and austere his devotion to the principle that art has no truck with personality, still there has crept into his voice, into textbooks and articles … that it is not George Eliot he would like to pour out tea’.

Woolf’s flippant statement brings together several important aspects of Eliot’s legacy: it draws attention to Eliot’s anomalous position as a female ‘Great Sage’ of Victorian literature, it mocks the misogyny of male critics who feel threatened by her failure to conform to a traditionally domestic femininity, but it also implies that Eliot’s posthumous career was in decline and her canonical days would soon be over.

This is a recurring theme in Woolf’s literary criticism. As my paper will suggest, Woolf struggled with Eliot’s literary career and found her a threat rather than a role model. Thus, Woolf consistently undercut Eliot’s professional success: her centenary review recalls a late-Victorian resistance to the ‘deluded woman who held phantom sway over subjects even more deluded than herself’ before assigning Eliot to a laurel-covered tomb; while Eliot’s independent life and income threaten the very foundations of Woolf’s argument in *A Room of One’s Own*. Taking Eliot both as an example of the successful woman of letters and the late-Victorian writer, this paper will therefore consider the implications of Woolf’s resistance to Eliot both from a feminist and modernist perspective.

**E3: Daniel Deronda I (Chestnut)**

**Ben Moore (University of Amsterdam), ‘Impartial Sympathies: Money, Symbol, and Allegory in Daniel Deronda’**

In its opening scene, depicting Daniel’s observation of Gwendolen Harleth gambling at a spa resort, *Daniel Deronda* (1876) announces an interest in the relationship between money and people, and in how assessments of human value – both our own and others’ – are inextricably bound up with monetary or exchange value. Eliot’s interest in money has been explored by several scholars in recent years, including Dermot Coleman, Nancy Henry, George Levine, Emily Coit and Deanna Kreisel, most of whom engage with the question of how the economic contributes to Eliot’s meditations on individual and social morality. In my paper I take account of such readings, but propose an interpretation of Eliot and money that moves in a somewhat different direction, analysing *Daniel Deronda* in light of Walter Benjamin’s distinction between symbol and allegory (itself a response to Romantic-era debates on the topic).

For Benjamin, the symbol is a form of representation that ‘insists on the indivisible unity of form and content’, whereas allegory allows for historical mutability; in it ‘the observer is confronted with the facies hippocratica of history as a petrified, primordial landscape’. I suggest that money in the nineteenth-century imaginary, including the novels of George Eliot, can be understood in terms of the struggle between money’s symbolic and allegorical dimensions. This tension comes into prominence early in the century in the anxieties surrounding the replacement of gold money (symbolic) with paper money (allegorical), as explored in Matthew Rowlinson’s *Real Money and Romanticism*, and it continues to shape narrative form.
into Eliot’s time. I take elements of Daniel Deronda such as the gambling hall, the pawn shop, Deronda’s rejected ‘impartial sympathy’ and the financial difficulties of Gwendolen as focal points to excavate this symbol/allegory tension, ultimately arguing that despite an apparent desire to stabilise monetary and personal values in symbolic terms, Eliot’s text is unable to escape the allegorical instability and mutability which have become inherent to both.

Sara Håkansson and Mats Johansson (Lund University), ‘George Eliot’s Visual Moments: The Construction and Development of Character in Daniel Deronda’

In George Eliot’s last novel, Daniel Deronda, the narrator comments: ‘And often the grand meaning of faces as well as of written words may lie chiefly in the impressions of those who look on them’ (158). The comment relates, in particular, to the titular hero’s physiognomy, but its relevance for the entire novel is evident. Daniel Deronda is insistently concerned with the visual and with the problematics of looking. Like many of Eliot’s novels, it examines the visual in relation to notions of reliability, perspective, interpretation, representation, the subjective versus the objective, and the relation between observation and imagination.

This paper is concerned with the creation and development of character as unveiled through visual moments within the diegesis. While a great deal of previous scholarship on visuality in Eliot is concerned with ekphrasis, our focus is on the function of the visual between characters. We propose that visual moments – understood as the combination of looker, ‘lookee’, the manner of looking or seeing, the context of looking and the form of narration – significantly contribute to characterisation. Furthermore, we suggest that George Eliot, to a large extent, locates characters’ personal beliefs and ideologies in visual exchanges.

We have identified visual moments in Daniel Deronda with the aid of corpus linguistic methods, which has allowed us, not only to pinpoint the frequency and range of lexical items related to the visual, but which has also proven valuable to the systematicity and objectivity in the analysis and to the close reading of visual moments in the text. By systematically analysing and categorising visual exchanges, we trace and unravel character construction and development, thereby complementing or qualifying the composition of character as presented through the combination of direct speech, free indirect discourse and the agency of a reflective and analytical narrative voice.

Harriet Newnes (Lancaster University), ‘“Neutral as an Alligator”: The Reptilian (non)Face in Daniel Deronda’

When George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda was published in 1876, not all reviewers reacted favourably to the preponderance of an ostensible ‘language of psychology’. Phrases objected to include: ‘dynamic quality’ (of Gwendolen Harleth’s glance), ‘emotive memory’, and ‘keenly perceptive sympathetic emotiveness’ – most noticeably exemplified in the eponymous hero. Yet, the character and appearance of Mallinger Grandcourt presents a disturbing alternative to the apparent profusion of vivid emotional response and sympathetic communication in the novel. Grandcourt’s face is frequently portrayed as statically unmoved and unmoving: He is, ominously, as ‘neutral as an alligator’. Prior criticism has read the recurrent depiction of Grandcourt as insect-like and reptilian as signifying his lack of humanity. His exclusion from the intricate communicative interactions that wordlessly bind characters together also marks him as peculiarly faceless. As Angelique Richardson has demonstrated, Charles Darwin’s comparisons of animal and human faces provides a theoretical foundation for Eliot, allowing her to re-conceptualise the emotional experiences and responses of her human characters. This paper builds on Richardson’s work to demonstrate how Eliot addresses the subjects left out of Darwin’s schema of emotional response: the reptilian and insect faces. Probing further, an association between illegibility and the non-mammalian face is identified that speaks directly to nineteenth-century concerns about animal–human relations and the slippery classification of animals least like us. This paper investigates the converse of the heightened emotional exchanges lampooned by Eliot’s critics, whilst also opening up a space in which the reptilian face is granted an unnerving autonomy, situated outside the novel’s dominant communicative apparatus.
Interpreting Gwendolen Harleth is a central concern of *Daniel Deronda*. From the opening paragraph, observations operate under the assumption that some understanding might be gained by carefully scrutinizing Gwendolen’s appearance and behaviour. Within this framework, the blush, what Darwin calls ‘the most human of all expressions’ (*Expression of the Emotions*), serves as a conspicuous sign of typically hidden interiority, through which her observers can ‘read’ Gwendolen’s shame, unease, and outrage. However, Eliot reminds us, that ‘a blush is no language: only a dubious flag signal’ (*Daniel Deronda*) leading to divergent, even contradictory interpretations.

Compounding the difficulty in reading the blush, Eliot’s narrator periodically suggests that Gwendolen enjoys a limited but ‘almost miraculous self-control’ over her blushes which ‘only came to her when she was taken by surprise’ (*Daniel Deronda*). These non-blushes, physiological non-events, are often narrativised, enabling the reader to witness the skin-paleness that would be red. Narrativising Gwendolen’s miraculous self-control forges a complex relationship between interior and exterior, mental and physical, emotion and flesh, observer and observed.

In addition to calling upon primary nineteenth-century scientific texts which deal with blushing, such as Darwin’s *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, this essay will rely on Mary Ann O’Farrell’s *Telling Complexions: The Nineteenth-Century English Novel and the Blush*. In doing so, I hope not only to explore how the blush operates with Daniel Deronda, but also to connect it to broader scientific concerns about the relationship between mind and body.

**E4: *Romola*: The Reception of the Novel in Japan through its Translations (Maple)**

**Panel Abstract:** *Romola* was the first George Eliot novel to reach the Japanese reading public. If we recall that the isolationist policy of Japan lasted for more than two centuries and European literature was introduced only in the latter half of the 19th century, it is surprising that an abridged translation of *Romola* by a Christian pastor, Tokuma Tominaga (1875-1930), appeared in a serial form in a weekly journal as early as 1901, and then in a book form in 1902. In 1929, a more complete translation by Toyohiko Kagawa (1888-1960) appeared. Kagawa was also a Christian pastor, a well-known novelist, and an active social worker. Much later, there were three other translations; in the late twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Why was the first translation of *Romola* published in a weekly journal? Why were Christian pastors involved in translating it? What are unique about their translations? What are their contributions in view of introducing English literature to Japan? Placing the translations in the context of Japanese literary, cultural, and translation history, our panel will explore the significance of the Japanese translations of *Romola*, thus shedding new light on the global influence of Eliot’s writing.

**Yohko Nagai (Keio University), ‘The Role of Literary Journalism’**

With the growing urge to learn about the Western thoughts, culture, and politics, foreign literary works were avidly translated into Japanese, and English works were introduced in anthologies and literary magazines. This exposure to Western literature prompted readers in the Meiji period (1868-1912) to re-examine the role of literature in society. While a literary critic, Shoyo Tsubouchi (1859-1935), stated in 1885-86 that the fundamental principle of a novel as a form of Art lies in ‘bringing pleasure to one’s heart, and heightening one’s grace and dignity’, Christian pastors, like Masahisa Uemura (1858-1925), Tominaga, and Kagawa, saw literature as having a moral objective. For them, literature was a means of enlightenment, not
necessarily a means of aesthetic appreciation. Amidst these contrasting literary trends, why was *Romola* translated into Japanese, and what was the significance of publishing the abridged translation in a weekly journal? What was the expectation of its readers and their response? By referring to the importance of literary journalism in the introduction of Western literature in Japan, the social milieu that prompted Tominaga's translation of *Romola* and its effects will be considered.

**Mikako Kinoshita (Kanagawa University and the Jikei University), ‘Why Christian Pastors?’**

Both Tominaga and Kagawa who made early translations of *Romola* were Christian pastors. In addition, Kagawa referred to *Romola* as ‘a religious novel’. Considering these facts, it is significant for us to look at the religious background of Meiji Japan when the country was going through rapid transition to its modernization or Westernization.

After Japan reopened its door to foreign interaction in 1854, specialists in such field as industry, agriculture and lawmaking were sent from abroad in response to Japanese government’s request. Along with them came Christian missionaries. Though even today, Japanese Christians are a religious minority, constituting only about one percent of the population, the influence those missionaries had on modern Japan, particularly on private education system is noteworthy.

Beginning by learning English language from the missionaries, young Japanese came to encounter Christian values such as individuality, human rights, Man’s sin, and God’s salvation. This experience inspired them, eventually making some of them Christian leaders themselves, just like Tominaga and Kagawa. Taking Kagawa as a prime example, I will discuss what the Japanese Christians in those days considered the problems of their country and how they tried to solve them.

**Kazuko Hisamori (Ferris University), ‘Two Early Translations’**

When Tominaga published his translation of *Romola* in a book form, he entitled it ‘Nadare to Yuri’ [Avalanche and Lily]. He explains in his preface that ‘Lily’ symbolizes Romola while ‘avalanche’ best describes how Tito Melema meets his catastrophic end. The title best describes Tominaga’s effort firstly, to convey what he considers to be the gist of the novel and secondly, to attract the Japanese readers, who are by literary tradition sensitive to natural images.

Kagawa on his part introduces Eliot, in the preface of his translation of *Romola*, as a novelist strong in characterization. Every human being, Kagawa argues, shares to certain degree Tito’s dual personality while *Romola* that revolves around a great historical figure, Savonarola, is a love story that could be appreciated with deep religious reverence.

Tominaga, we may say, is self-conscious in introducing Western culture while Kagawa is more at ease, taking it for granted that everyone shares, for example, Tito’s frailty. Picking up some of the episodes of *Romola* as concrete examples, I will further illustrate how Tominaga concentrates on giving a faithful outline of the story, while Kagawa gives life to the characters: Tito, Romola, and Savonarola.

**Noriko Kubota (Tsuru University), ‘Further Development’**

Although Kagawa’s *Romola* is not a complete translation, about 80% of the whole text is beautifully translated into 500 pages of Japanese. Notwithstanding the radical omission of the original passages of *Romola* in parts, the complicated personalities of Tito and Romola, the appalling betrayal of Tito against Romola and Baldassarre, the dramatic development of the story, the difficult political situation of Renaissance Florence, the conflicts and dualities of Savonarola are very well described in vivid Japanese.

Subsequent to Kagawa’s translation of *Romola*, Machiko Tanimura’s *Romola* was published in 1965. It is a retold edition for girls, and it helps young girls to learn about George Eliot literature. The two complete translations were produced by two academics in the 1980s and in the 2010s respectively.
Thus, five different translations of Romola have been produced to date. It is highly notable that in Japan, overseas women authors were relatively slow to be introduced, compared to male authors. Romola, translated first by Tominaga in 1901, and then by Kagawa in 1929, is one of the earliest novels of English women novelists to be introduced. Romola can be said to be a pioneer work in the reception of English literature in Japan.

E5: Religion and Secularism I (Birch)


Explicit references to religious founders like ‘Bouddha’ and ‘Mahomet’ collect around the figure of Daniel Deronda, while Gwendolen Harleth is heavily associated with ancient myth, primitive fear, and superstitious habit. This paper introduces the science of religion as a significant context of George Eliot’s oeuvre, one connected with her turn towards the concept of many-sidedness and her investment in a ‘doctrine of sympathy’. Specifically, it considers her intentions with this new science through an examination of Daniel Deronda (1876); I introduce Deronda and Gwendolen as ‘many-sided’ figures used by Eliot to remark upon the science of religion, displaying the diversity of the enterprise, its (introspective) uses, and ethical interest for readers. The science of religion was a scholarly initiative in mid-to-late nineteenth-century Britain that applied an impartial and scientific attitude to the study of world religions. Max Müller (1823–1900) and E. B. Tylor (1832–1917) were two of its leading figures. Müller, a German philologist and orientalist based in Oxford, is viewed as most responsible for transforming the science of religion into a recognized discipline. Tylor is best known for his interest in primitivism; he pioneered an anthropological approach to the study of religion, myth, and folklore. Eliot read works by both Müller and Tylor throughout the 1860s and 1870s. In tracing her attention to their scholarship, this paper challenges the overwhelming emphasis in literary criticism upon Judaism in connection with Daniel Deronda. While Eliot conducted extensive research on Judaism, the works she engages with in her Folger, Berg, and Pforzheimer notebooks include the leading scholarship on Buddhism and Islam, as well as works on Zoroastrianism, Norse mythology, and Central Asian philosophy. The full list of works supports the view that Eliot had another context in mind for her final novel — the science of religion — one that was not in competition with her research of Judaism but encompassed and supported it. As a region of Victorian discourse wherein the freighted moral and epistemological issues tied to many-sidedness, sympathy, and self-cultivation come to the fore, the science of religion is an important feature of Eliot’s work.

Katharine Williams (College of William and Mary, Williamsburg), ‘“He Bids You Stretch Out Your Hands”: Haptic Redemption in “Janet’s Repentance”’

Possibly ‘the first detailed portrait of a middle-class, female alcoholic’ in nineteenth-century fiction, George Eliot’s ‘Janet’s Repentance’ arguably depicts a groundbreaking female restoration (Shaw 177). It is also a novella that abounds in haptic imagery and interaction, or description relating to the sense of touch. Hands are interwoven throughout ‘Janet’s Repentance’ from the abusive hand of Robert Dempster, through the Christ-like hand of the Reverend Tryan, to the erased, redeemed and reinscribed female hand. As scholars such as Peter Capuano and Katherine Rowe broadly argue, the pervasive representation of hands is a significant marker of the great concerns of Victorian fictions. Building upon this scholarly foundation, this paper will examine how Eliot expresses Janet’s individual redemption, and the larger feminine triumph over masculine abuse by the novella’s end, through haptic representation, transformation and exchange. I will explore this topic against the context of Eliot’s faith and her artistic interests at the time of her writing. I will particularly consider moments of touch from a biblical perspective, such as the covenantal significance of Janet and Mr. Tryan’s second handshake – the scene in which my title quotation occurs. As Capuano argues in ‘Racial Science and the Kabbalah in Eliot’s Daniel Deronda’, Eliot was keenly aware of the
biblical representations of Jewish hands (Capuano 158). By drawing on Eliot’s evangelical religious formation and her art studies, I will further argue that her attention to the hand of God in ‘Janet’s Repentance’ suggests an even earlier interest in biblical hands.

Gal Manor (Levinsky College of Education, Tel Aviv), ‘George Eliot, Robert Browning, and Judaism: Two Ezras and a Jochanan’

George Eliot and Robert Browning stood out among Victorian writers in their positive representations of Jewish characters and in their knowledgeable references to Jewish texts. Both had a keen interest in Judaism, studied the Hebrew language and drew Jewish concepts and characters from common sources. It is no surprise, then, that their works contain mutual intertextual references. In this paper I will discuss the reciprocal influence between the two authors, focussing mainly on the Jewish concepts of ‘soul’ and ‘flesh’ in three works: Robert Browning’s ‘Rabbi Ben Ezra’ (1864) and ‘Jochanan Hakkadosh’ (1882), and George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda (1876).

Robert Browning and Mary Anne Evans first met on 12 December 1862, after Browning had returned to England following Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s death. They met several times and had a mutual appreciation, Browning commenting ‘I liked her much’ (Litzinger & Smalley, 2005, 192). Six years earlier, in 1856, Eliot wrote a favourable review of Browning’s Men and Women (1855) in The Westminster Review, with special praise for Rabbi Ben Ezra’s ‘song of death’, an excerpt out of the poem ‘Holy Cross Day’, a poem which openly condemns antisemitism and encourages Jewish restoration to the ‘pleasant land’. In Daniel Deronda, Eliot brings up the theme of Jewish restoration, yet without Browning’s religious conversion narrative. She also elaborates on Jewish ideas of ‘body’ and ‘soul’ stemming from Kabbalistic sources in connection with the character of Ezra Mordecai Cohen. The choice of the name Ezra, though a common Jewish name, could also be an intertextual reference to Browning’s ‘Rabbi Ben Ezra’, a poem based on the historical figure of the Jewish philosopher Aben-Ezra, who is mentioned by Mordecai in Daniel Deronda.

Six years after the publication of Daniel Deronda, Browning engages with the Kabbalistic notion of the bond between souls in ‘Jochanan Hakkadosh’ (1882). Mordecai and Jochanan share a similar plight: they are dying and in search for a young soul to help them complete what they regard as their spiritual mission. Both missions end with success. Thus, Eliot’s and Browning’s works on Jewish themes are mutually suggestive of one another, as well as being unashamedly cryptic and pro-Jewish, in spite of what both authors must have realized would be a dissenting opinion from the critics and the reading public.

PANEL F (16.45-18.15)

F1: Afterlives (Oak 1)

Siv Jansson (Loughborough University and Birkbeck), ‘Writing a Writer: Eliot Biography’

My paper is focused on Eliot biography. There have been a range of biographies of Eliot in recent decades, some focused on the life exclusively and some combining a critical reading with the life-story. For the purposes of this paper, I want to look at Eliot biography from the perspective of constructing the biographical subject. This encompasses issues such as social and cultural context, the biographer’s agenda, and the expectations of life-writing, which change over time. It will not be possible to discuss all Eliot biographies within the time or scope of this paper, so I have selected three to focus upon, with the intention of making brief reference to others as appropriate. The three I will consider in more detail are John Walter Cross’s 3-volume biography of his late wife; Gordon S. Haight’s biography from 1968, which was for many years the definitive life-study of Eliot; and Philip Davis’s 2018 book, The Transferred Life of George Eliot. I will (if time allows) include Rosemary Ashton’s biography as well, but I have chosen these three for
specific reasons. I have selected Cross because, although he obviously knew her intimately, there is a particular agenda at work in his narrative; Haight because of the dominance of his work in Eliot studies for many years; and Davis because it is the most recent study of her life and because it attempts a new way of considering Eliot. These span the years of Eliot biography and also mark points at which a shift and change in the perception and expectation of biographical writing can be noted. That the three I have chosen are all written by men is coincidental, but is something I will address by brief reference to other excellent biographies by Ashton, Frederick Karl, Kathryn Hughes, Jenny Uglow and Nancy Henry. The paper will explore the ways in which the construction of George Eliot/Marian Evans and 'George Eliot' has shifted and changed over decades, and what we can draw from this about the perception and understanding of Eliot in particular and life-writing in general.

Kathy O'Shaughnessy, ‘Life, Art, and the Novel’

Reading biographies of Eliot over the years, I was always left with an odd sensation at the end. The episode with Johnny Cross – it was like a fly in my eye! The sudden, secretive marriage – a banker – 20 years younger – suicidal jump into the canal ... sketched in two pages, it didn't seem to fit with the rest of her life.

This was the germ of my novel, to be published later this year by Scribe (In Love with George Eliot). My determination to make sense of that episode led me to understand her inner life in a particular way, suited to the dramatic needs of story. Sifting the evidence of her work, letters, diaries and others' accounts, I found an inner thread linking her rise from ostracized woman to canonized moral voice; using fact, and then my imagination.

In biographies, the friendship between the Cross family and Eliot and Lewes, takes a small amount of space; as does Eliot's marriage to Cross; in a novel I could stretch that friendship out, explore it – Johnny Cross as her great friend, but also her nemesis-in-waiting. I had to explore Eliot's combination of need, pride, supremely gifted perception and sympathy that gave her such personal power to enchant, and Johnny Cross's own susceptibility to that power.

The public's fickle eye, and readiness to judge, was central to Eliot's fiction and life. In a novel I could create a living character whose own private fear of being judged, and written about, was all of a piece with her determination as a writer to move people into compassionate understanding of others.

There came a moment, with Cross, when she herself was in need of such understanding, when the concerns of her art were uncannily mirrored by the events of her life.

Delia da Sousa Correa (Open University), ‘Old Music and Ancient Tragedy in The Mill on the Floss’

This paper centres on George Eliot's allusions to music by two long-dead composers, George Frideric Handel and Henry Purcell. In The Mill on the Floss, it is Purcell's music that takes possession of Eliot's heroine. References to Handel are frequent in her writing and reverence for his oratorios was ubiquitous in the Victorian period. However, Handel's music turns out to be of far wider resonance for Eliot than is represented by the chorus-loving Caleb Garth in Middlemarch.

How did allusions to the music of composers whose work was already ancient in her time underpin Eliot's engagement with tragedy and myth? What could Eliot expect her contemporary readership to make of them and how can they continue to illuminate the experience of readers now? We can never listen to the identical sounds that Eliot heard or hear this music with nineteenth-century ears, but what difference does knowledge of the same repertoire make to our experience of Eliot’s fiction?

George Eliot was, as Henry James described the ideal reader, ‘one on whom nothing is lost’. She read purposefully, diligently, copiously, insightfully, and—to a remarkably extent—consequentially. The record of her reading, accordingly, is found not only in the list of the books in her library, not only in the quotations she copied into ‘quarries’, not only in her letters, but on the pages of her fictional creations, and in multiple respects. To miss what she read is, in part, to miss what she wrote.

In 1997, I presented the first study (and still, I believe, the only substantial study) of her reading of Victor Hugo; I referred to numerous points of contact between Hugo’s writings and the writings of both George Henry Lewes and George Eliot (including her brief allusion, in Impressions of Theophrastus Such, to Hugo’s neologism, ‘comprachico’, a term he used to describe characters he invented, yet presented as historical, in the prologue of L’Homme qui rit). The figures of the comprachicos are in fact at the heart of the matter in The Man Who Laughs, for Hugo and perhaps also for George Eliot as his reader.

The comprachicos, who specialize in the contortion of the anatomy of the body, epitomise the deformation of the soundness of the soul. They represent a particular kind of evil—not only because they distort rather than destroy, but because they themselves derive no benefit or pleasure from their actions. This evil does not follow from yielding to temptation under pressure (e.g., wrong-doers in much of George Eliot’s fiction); comprachicos act with full intention, and yet without conventional purpose. As such, Hugo’s comprachicos may have contributed to the controlling force, in Daniel Deronda, of motiveless evil.

Irina Gnyusova (Tomsk State University), ‘Anton Chekhov’s “Ionych” and George Eliot’s Middlemarch: The Fate of Man in a “Soul-Wasting Struggle with Worldly Annoyances”’

The paper attempts to give a new view of the conception of the story ‘Ionych’ by a comparative analysis of Chekhov’s work with George Eliot’s Middlemarch. Eliot’s novel was written in 1871-72 and immediately published in Russian magazines. Did Chekhov read it? There is no sure evidence of it. But Eliot’s name regularly appeared in Russian periodicals. One more connecting link is G. H. Lewes: his book Physiology of Common Life was very popular in Russia.

Attention to common life and its methodical, even scientific study is the ‘node’, in which the interests of Chekhov, Lewes and Eliot converge. Eliot was also known by her propensity to natural sciences. Many researchers noted the importance of Chekhov’s main profession for his creative method. The key feature of Chekhov’s poetics, maximally objective representation of the facts of life, is similar to Eliot’s analytical psychological analysis. For a reason, the novel Middlemarch has the subtitle ‘A Study of Provincial Life’.

The type of character, which Eliot and Chekhov put in the centre of their works, is significant. This is a natural scientist and a practicing doctor at the same time. In Middlemarch, this type of character obeyed the Victorian idea about the heroism of common life and the tribulations of man in struggle for freedom to be true to his own moral position, which was close to Chekhov. The parallels between the fates of the two doctors bear evidence of the fundamental closeness of the Victorian philosophy of personality to Chekhov, of the affinity of the creative method and the moral-philosophical views of Eliot and the Russian writer rather than a random typological resemblance.

This closeness of the moral pathos and of the specific nature of objectivity in Eliot’s and Chekhov’s works indicates the fact of a particular dialogue of the two European writers.

Boris Mikhailovich Proskurnin (Perm State University), ‘Adam Bede and Ivan Turgenev’s Notes of A Hunter: Ideological and Artistic Convergences’

Both George Eliot’s and Ivan Turgenev’s works are famous for the masterful and original introduction into literature a new type of a hero – the one from peasantry. The paper stresses the writers’ realistic and
analytical approaches to depicting a human being’s fate under swiftly changing social, cultural and moral circumstances. The paper stresses also that Turgenev and Eliot depict province as a socio-cultural wholeness and appeal to a human being as an autonomous creature in terms of social, moral and spiritual existence; because of it Eliot and Turgenev impose many hopes on a human being’s high level of morality, his conscientious behaviour in the situation of free choice, the concentration of which is more the more democratic and less patriarch and paternalistic contemporary world becomes. The paper analyses what is called moral and ethical spaces of the writers’ works where liberal and humanistic inclinations determine ideological and artistic convergences of the writers of different national, social, cultural and gender origin. The parameters of these spaces are checked by the images of the heroes taken from the humble people who are, by both writers, morally and ethically pure and solid because of their closeness to Nature. The paper shows that both writers as moral realists give very much philosophically and ethnically sharpened and anthropologically measured pictures of countryside landscapes. The author of the paper proves that romantic features in the images of the authors’ protagonists are, among others, serious grounds to think of the writers in terms of artistic convergences. The paper demonstrates that comparative method of study of Adam Bede and Notes of a Hunter gives serious chances to reveal more vividly some new and interesting points in the artistic worlds of both writers.

F3: Daniel Deronda II (Chestnut)

Fionnuala Dillane (University College Dublin), “Mute Orations, Mute Rhapsodies, Mute Discussions”: Silence in George Eliot’s Last Decade

In this paper I argue that George Eliot’s works in the 1870s, Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda, demonstrate her sustained experiments with an aesthetics of silence that force readers to question acts of interpretation, their own and that of her characters and narrators. Both the silent gaps between part publication of these novels and the unworded interactions of her characters scramble our interpretative mechanisms. Purposeful silences, these structural and narrative acts are Eliot’s response to a dominant cultural and scientific push towards visibility and explanation, whether played out in the strong endings of mid-century domestic fiction; the reassuring expulsion of transgressive agents of sensation fiction; or in the growing legitimacy of deductive sciences of the mind. I conclude that Eliot’s fascination with silence relates to her increasing sense of her lack of control over her own literary legacy in her final decade.

Nanae Hama (Fukuoka University), ‘Returning Home with a Fortune: Imperial Declines and Births of Cosmopolitans in George Eliot’s Later Works’

George Eliot often used the word ‘fortune’ in her works, which most of the time contained a financial meaning: ‘a large quantity of money’. In ‘Brother Jacob’ (1864) and Felix Holt, the Radical (1866), residents believed that David Faux and Harold Transome returned to England with a large fortune because both of them returned from a British colony or a region equivalent to one. However, George Eliot never permitted these characters to become imperial successors but instead described them as moral failures. She also accused the residents of having a poor and an imperialistic consciousness. After the great loss of Thornton Lewis in 1869, George Eliot began to imply that ‘fortune’ should not merely relate to money. For example, Will Ladislaw in Middlemarch (1872–73) was said to be arriving at England to try his fortune, ‘a capital in his brain’, and in the end he contributed to his society by becoming a social reformist. The eponymous character of Daniel Deronda (1877) and his prototype, Fedalma, in The Spanish Gypsy (1868), also contributed to their communities by becoming leaders. They experienced ethnic identity crises, but they made use of their cultural hybridity in order to develop their own ethnic groups. For George Eliot, the most important thing was to survive intercultural experiences and to use the acquired experience in a good way. Only the person who could achieve this could be called a cosmopolitan, who Thornton Lewis failed to
become. I would like to begin my presentation by analysing how George Eliot made a slight distinction in the meaning of ‘fortune’, and then I will identify the identical cosmopolitans in George Eliot’s later works.

**Hao Li (University of Toronto), “Constitutional Idealism”: Ethos and Speculative Ethics in *Daniel Deronda***

In Walter Pater’s *Marius the Epicurean*, the narrator speaks of a religious-cum-philosophical awakening of Marius in terms of his ‘constitutional idealism’. Marius is receptive to Christian virtue as a new form of spirituality primarily because it awakens in him an idealist longing that he has cherished since his early childhood. The resonance between one’s inherent temperament and external ethical stimuli is the subject of this paper. Through an analysis of George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda*, I argue that Eliot’s conception of the characters’ moral imaginings is defined by the potential (or lack thereof) of this elective affinity between ethos and speculative thinking.

Thus I use ethos for an individual’s disposition, though inflected by the sense of moral character. In *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot’s concern about what a character ought to do is fundamentally about what he or she could do. Much depends on one’s predisposition or receptiveness to an exploratory mode of envisioning. The prospect of ethical enlightenment is bound to be different for Gwendolen, Daniel Deronda, and Mordecai, as it depends on their ethics of being rather than doing.

Unlike in Eliot’s earlier works, the exploratory dynamics of ethical thinking in *Daniel Deronda* are responsible for a creative, open-ended and futuristic approach to the ethics of existence, often against prescriptive existing (Christian) moral values. In this, Eliot anticipates novels by late Victorian authors such as Pater, Wilde, and Hardy. Like these works, *Daniel Deronda* searches for what is not yet here as an ethical imperative. It challenges the mode of the prescriptive as mere teleology and authority, in its search for a procedural imperative that is against totality, and against the mind as a structuring episteme of the body. In this, it attempts to change the meaning of the imperative and promotes an ethos to problematise.

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**F4: Religion and Secularism II (Maple)**

**Ilana Blumberg (Bar Ilan University), ‘Dolly Winthrop and Unlettered Faith: Remapping Secularization to Include A Saving Ignorance’**

Studies of secularization in mid-century England have tended to be particularly invested in stories of the educated classes: intellectuals whose crises of faith and conscience prompted not only searchings of the heart but also a return to the central texts of their upbringing. Meanwhile, the argument that the working-classes secularized earlier than the middle classes, and with far less angst, has occluded investigations of a broad range of less educated and even illiterate English Christians whose faith is dramatized regularly in novels of the period. Yet George Eliot’s English novels offer us a vivid picture of Protestant Christians, ranging from nominal Christians absorbed by secular respectability to characters who seem left behind by time in the unsophistication of their religious convictions. In *Silas Marner*, we encounter Dolly Winthrop, a figure shaped by faith that repeatedly declares its status as unlettered and Silas Marner himself, at first distinguished by a faith that the narrator describes as quasi-pagan in its inability to distinguish superstition from Providence.

‘Dolly Winthrop and Unlettered Faith’ will focus on the social meaning of uneducated faith and its place in the larger contemporary context of secularisation, religious alternatives to orthodox Christian doctrine, and versions of unbelief. For George Eliot, a novelist immersed in the most advanced challenges that history and science posed to religious orthodoxy – the historicity of Scripture, the status of miracles and the supernatural, the efficacy of the sacraments, geological time – did an active faith require ignorance for its sustenance? How can we contextualise Christians who are represented as oblivious to the processes of secularization, and whose faith, practice and institutional membership are not only unrelated to the intellect
but often inimical to a wide swath of Anglican doctrines and theology? What was the full range of Eliot’s attitudes toward an unintellectual, often illiterate religion? What role did such a religion play in the character of the English as she perceived it? If such faith could be characterized as a ‘saving ignorance,’ could Eliot imagine a “saving knowledge” worth pursuing?

Elizabeth Ludlow (Anglia Ruskin University), ““Enclosed by the Divine Presence”: Prayer and the Female Body in George Eliot’s Fiction and Poetry’

In Adam Bede (1859), Dinah Morris is first introduced as she preaches to the villagers on the Green in Hayslope. In her short sermon, she reasons that ‘we can understand what Jesus felt, because he came in a body like ours, and spoke words such as we speak to each other’ (ch 2). Such an understanding, she explains, enables us to experience for ourselves God’s feelings towards his creation. We see the working out of this understanding later in the novel when, after praying and ‘feeling herself enclosed by the Divine Presence’ (ch 15), Dinah is compelled to go and embody Christ to her cousin Hetty; it is implied that she able to feel what Jesus feels for her because of the way she prays.

In this paper, I suggest how the embodied spirituality that Dinah and several of Eliot’s other female characters model intersects with the philosophy that Ludwig Feuerbach expresses in Das Wesen des Christentums (1841), which Eliot translated as The Essence of Christianity (1854). Extending Jeffrey Keuss’s recognition of how Eliot offers a different conception of Jesus to those of her contemporaries including James Anthony Froude, Walter Pater and Mary Ward: one that is ‘not formed, fixed, nor exposed, but is constantly forming, transient, and strangely veiled within the poetic space’, I suggest how she draws on elements of Feuerbach’s philosophy as she describes the inextricability of body and soul and highlights the altered and extended perspective that can come from experiencing the self as part of Christ’s body. Alongside considering Dinah in Adam Bede, I offer case studies from several of Eliot’s other novels, from her short story ‘Janet’s Repentance’ (1857), and from her poem ‘Agatha’ (1869) in order to illustrate how she expresses an ever-changing conception of the poetics of Jesus through representations of the female body in prayer.

Brian H. Murray (KCL), ‘George Eliot and the Lives of the Saints’

For Thomas Carlyle, ‘Hero Worship’ was ‘the germ of Christianity itself’. But although the lives of exemplary men and women were a staple of nineteenth-century print culture, Christian hagiography was a problematic and contested genre. Saints’ lives were enthusiastically adopted by the Oxford movement as evidence for the Catholic continuity of the Church of England, yet for many Protestants such texts were theologically unsound accretions, fictive distractions from the divinely inspired text of scripture. In a society obsessed with chronology and progress, this ancient form still had the power to absorb the linear and contingent events of history into a recurring and circular pattern of devotional time. My paper will explore George Eliot’s long-term engagement with hagiography by demonstrating that her fiction (including The Mill of the Floss, Romola and Middlemarch) responds directly to critical and devotional accounts of sanctity. Focusing on Eliot’s relationship with the art historian Anna Jameson and the novelist and erstwhile hagiographer James Anthony Froude, I argue that Eliot’s historically and theologically-informed critique of hagiography in her novels cannily moves beyond confessional boundaries. For example, by selecting the Dominican reformer Savonarola as the (anti)-hero of her historical novel Romola, Eliot constructs a critique of martyrdom that simultaneously avoids the pitfalls of anti-Catholic bigotry and the pretensions of enlightened secularism. But if Eliot’s fiction occasionally appears to embrace cyclical patterns of hagiographical time the irresistible force of historical progress often undercuts this, threatening to disrupt ritualized cycles of devotion.

Influence studies remain consistent in previous George Eliot scholarship, ever expanding the sources of influence embedded within the multiple dimensions in her novels. Amidst the Continental and British influential figures, John Stuart Mill has attracted relatively little critical attention despite Eliot’s contact with him. This paper will examine how George Eliot is in dialogue with John Stuart Mill on the relations between liberty and authority by investigating in particular how Eliot reconfigures Mill’s discussions on liberty and authority in her novels.

Writing in the reformation era featuring heated debates over liberalism and liberty, both Mill and Eliot expressed their concerns with the potential impact of authority on social development. Eliot’s correspondences and literary writings also show her familiarity with Mill’s thoughts on individual liberty, utilitarianism, political economy, female emancipation and political liberalism despite her disclaimer of total assimilation of anyone else’s ideas. Mill’s influential 1859 *On Liberty* elaborates his sharp insight into the conflicts between individuality and social authority, especially the clash between freedom of individual thought and the authority of public opinion. References to and reflections on public opinions recur in George Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss, Felix Holt the Radical*, and *Middlemarch*.

Eliot’s resonances of Mill’s ideas provide the possibility of establishing connections between their conceptions of individual liberty and public opinion. Specifically, the paper starts with a brief rehearsal of Mill’s warning of public opinion as ‘the tyranny of the majority’ and suggests that Eliot is indebted to Mill for her perception of its dualistic impacts; then it analyses how Eliot reconfigures the double-edged public opinions in her novels; finally, I will conclude by Eliot’s reconfiguration of Mill’s reflection on individual liberty and social authority in her novels.

F5: Eliot and the Forms of Morality (Birch)

Nancy Yousef (Rutgers University), “‘Each lived in a world of which the other knew nothing’: Philosophical Inflection in *Middlemarch*’

The philosophizing voice of the narrator in *Middlemarch* has long been a subject of contentious critical debate as well as a cherished feature of the novel. We easily distinguish the meditative and reflective passages from the fictional world in which they are embedded, but their specific role within the larger aesthetic project of the novel remains an open question. Eliot’s explicit conviction that judgment is necessarily ‘embodied in language’ and her insistence that ‘metaphor is no mere ornament of speech, but belongs to its essence’ have a bearing on how the familiar discursive voice of the narrator in *Middlemarch* is to be understood, especially given the interdependence of figuration and conceptualisation in her commentary on characters and events.

In this paper I will be exploring how the novel sets the narrator’s characteristic propositions about psychic privacy alongside and against the affectively charged occasions they purport to explain and, in so doing, also brings the theoretical tendencies of the narrator under investigation. From habitual references to the invisibly ‘intense consciousness within’ to extended metaphors of privacy and enclosure, the narrator’s reflections on the hidden inner world of the psyche need not be ascribed to Eliot herself, nor accepted as premises governing the representation of the ordinary but by no means insignificant misgivings, misunderstandings and disappointments of relational experience depicted in the novel.

Jesse Rosenthal (Johns Hopkins University), ‘Between our lives and the race’

‘Our lives make a moral tradition for our individual selves, as the life of mankind at large makes a moral tradition for the race.’ This line, from *Romola*, marks the first time in Eliot's career that she uses the term ‘tradition’ to refer to anything other than gossip, family idiosyncrasy, or rural superstition. By the time she writes *Daniel Deronda*, the term will be elevated to a motivation for right action, pointed toward the future and rooted in the past: ‘our duty is faithful tradition where we can attain it’. What lies behind this transition,
from ‘individual selves’ to ‘the race’? How does the backward become the way forward? This paper will look at Eliot’s writing, especially around the time of Romola, in connection with the changing understanding of the idea of tradition in the nineteenth century – as the notion came to offer the groundwork for religious, political, or psychological progress. In particular, I wish to show how this transition informs the formal principles of development, which structure Eliot’s great later novels.

Helen Small (University of Oxford), ‘Temper, Temper: Late Eliot’

‘A common humanity is not yet enough to feed the rich blood of various activity which makes a complete man. The time is not come for cosmopolitanism’. So decides George Eliot’s last, most sustained, and trickiest exercise in first-person narration, Theophrastus Such. This paper returns to the relationship between the case Eliot pursues, in Theophrastus, for a tolerant internationalism (on the way toward cosmopolitanism but not yet there) and her choice of the character sketch as the performative vehicle through which to scrutinise the behavioural habits that make up our distinctive identities, personal and collective. It will look to extend and refine existing arguments about Eliot’s attraction to ancient Cynicism by concentrating especially on her thinking about the antagonistic ‘temper’ as a particular kind of high-risk characterological performance in the public domain. Part of that attraction, I argue, lies in the Cynic’s strong articulation of what is evidently a selective representation of human desires, needs, and interests—on the basis of which the original Cynic, Diogenes, expressed philanthropia or love of all humanity. The paper will probe the question of quite what Eliot is doing reviving such a confrontational and reduced view of human interests as her chosen tactic for her last work of public moralism.

FRIDAY 19 JULY

PANEL G (10.45-12.30)
G1: George Eliot and the Modern Reader (Oak 1)

Valerie Sanders (University of Hull), ‘Me, Myself, and Middlemarch: Talking About the Novel in the Twenty-First Century’

In the famous Boeuf en Daube scene in Virginia Woolf’s To the Lighthouse Minta Doyle confesses to having been terrified of Mr Ramsay: ‘and the first night when she had sat by him, and he talked of George Eliot, she had been really frightened, for she had left the third volume of Middlemarch in the train and she never knew what happened in the end.’

Middlemarch has always daunted readers, both in terms of its length and the density of its narrative. Unlike Jane Eyre, it is not a landmark text of adolescence, passionately devoured by aggrieved teenagers, and to summarize one’s response at an emotional level will often sound inadequate. Martin Amis, however, interviewed for The Guardian (28 February 2014), sees it as a book which ‘renews itself for every generation: ‘I reread it in my 30s with completely undiminished admiration.’ My paper is about the way people outside academia talk in the media about Middlemarch, and how it has interwoven itself with their lives. I am interested in how people formulate a vocabulary and format for their interactions with the book: whether through autobiographical reading memoirs, such as Rebecca Mead’s My Life in Middlemarch (2014) and Susan Hill’s A Year of Reading from Home (2009), or on BBC Radio 4’s Desert Island Discs, where P. D. James chose the novel for its four subplots, and Jancis Robinson because, compared with the Bible and Shakespeare, it was ‘easy to read’ and would make her smile. Howard Jacobson (2017) meanwhile ‘renounced’ Middlemarch because he was talking about it too much, and Patricia Spacks (2011) despaired of being able to re-read her old teaching copy when it ‘shed flakes of paper’ on to her lap. In
talking about *Middlemarch* it is hard to avoid the physicality of this large text, which can nevertheless be left on a train, or written in, or allowed to fall apart, or treasured when grander scholarly editions have superseded the brick-shaped paperback. If Minta Doyle survived her conversation with Mr Ramsay by pretending to be more ignorant than she was, my paper considers other ways in which *Middlemarch* can be discussed lightly but meaningfully in a culture driven by soundbites and fleeting attention spans.


This talk will tell the story of the conception and development of a new research platform for scholars of George Eliot that I developed and recently launched at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the George Eliot Archive. It also will address the research implication and future prospects for similar digital humanities projects, especially single-author websites.

The George Eliot Archive, which launched in December 2018, is a repository for Eliot’s complete works of fiction, nonfiction, and translations, in addition to more assessments of the author’s life and works by her contemporaries than have ever been compiled. This collection of digitised nineteenth-century documents launched one year after its sister site, the George Eliot Review Online, which provides free access to all issues of the journal from its inception in 1970. Together, these two scholarly sites provide free online access to extensive research materials and interpretive apparatus created and vetted by specialists. This talk will begin with a short demonstration of the design, organization, and navigation of the two websites as they currently exist for scholars of George Eliot’s life and works.

The key elements of the presentation will elucidate the methodologies used for this project. That is, it will expose why we did what we did, what worked and what didn’t, and summarise the lessons learned along the way. These insights involve selecting appropriate materials; negotiating publication rights, permissions, and copyright law; designing and operating the digital platform for maximum user benefit; establishing lasting international, national, local, and institutional partnerships; and making the project scalable as we plan for future expansion.

The end of the talk will focus on the philosophical underpinnings of open-access digital humanities projects. Because such projects push back on the commercialization of research, the ethics of who gets access to information become significant considerations for supporting barrier-free online scholarship and encouraging more faculty to develop digital humanities projects that serve learners inside and outside the academy, like the George Eliot Archive.

In sum, my talk and PowerPoint presentation will not only introduce audience members to what they can find in the George Eliot Archive and the George Eliot Review Online, but also will address lessons learned as I saw this long-term project come to fruition, from the research that informed the curation process, to the conceptualization of new methods of delivering information, to the plans we have for the next phase of development. The talk will close by emphasizing the benefits of collaboration—the aspect I have found especially rewarding as I built two related scholarly websites.

**Kelda Green (University of Liverpool), ‘George Eliot and “Serious Reading”’**

This paper sets out the results of a reading and writing experiment which was designed to examine what it is that George Eliot’s novels can do to and for modern readers. It will provide primary evidence to support the argument that serious literary reading has an important and potentially therapeutic function in modern society. Using innovative methodologies and interdisciplinary analysis, it will investigate the kinds of thinking within individuals that can be triggered by serious reading. The aim here is to bridge the gap between theory and practice and lay the foundations for the development of literary-based therapeutic interventions.
In this study participants were asked to read sections of George Eliot's novel *Silas Marner* and to write a series of imaginative letters between themselves, the characters in the novel and the author herself. The experiment aimed to explore whether George Eliot’s prose could expand a reader’s capacity to hold onto and shift between multiple different perspectives. While research has identified a link between reading and empathy (as summarized by Lisa Zunshine in *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel*, 2006), this paper practically demonstrates how the density of thought contained within a realist novel demands a capacity for psychological processing which exceeds one-way empathy. Rather than simply demonstrating an ability to understand and embody the mental state of a fictional character, participants taking part in this experiment were able - with varying degrees of success - to occupy and shift between multiple perspectives and to use these new-found mental positions to self-reflexively look back at their own lives.

**Emily Beckwith (University of Georgia), ‘Middlemarch on YouTube: Shifts in Narrative Style and Narrative Voices’**

In the introduction to her 2006 edited collection, *Middlemarch in the 21st Century*, Karen Chase writes, ‘Middlemarch is an open text with illimitable interpretations’ (9). A decade later, in the wake of the 2012-2013 Emmy-award-winning *Pride and Prejudice* transmedia adaptation, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Chase’s statement proved true in a particularly 21st century way. From March 15 to December 1, 2017, Rebecca Shoptaw, then a film and media studies student at Yale University, released *Middlemarch: The Series* on YouTube. This web series, starring college students, is a modernized, gender-bent, video-blog adaptation of George Eliot’s novel. In addition to these significant changes to setting, character, and form, the amateur status of the cast and crew invite us to examine the (new) ways in which Eliot’s legacy is being perpetuated in the 21st century.

Jakob Lothe’s chapter in *Middlemarch in the 21st Century* discusses Eliot’s use of a third-person narrator to convey her narrative vision in *Middlemarch* and how Anthony Page adapted that in his 1994 BBC production. Building on Lothe’s exploration of adaptation from prose to film, I propose to examine the adaptation from prose to multi-perspective video-blog in order to better understand how Eliot’s narrative vision has been adapted in *Middlemarch: The Series*. Not only does the video-blog represent a shift in narrative style, it also represents a shift in the narrators of Eliot’s legacy. Given this productive parallel, I also intend to explore the implications of redistributing these narrative voices to include the amateur (e.g. college students) as well as the professional (e.g. teachers, scholars, filmmakers).

**G2: Felix Holt and Romola (Oak 2)**

**Eirian Yem (Lincoln College, University of Oxford), ‘Troublesome Beginnings: Epigraphs in *Felix Holt*’**

In the introduction to *Felix Holt*, George Eliot writes of ‘some tragic mark of kinship in the one brief life to the far-stretching life that went before, and to the life that is to come after, such as has raised the pity and terror of men ever since they began to discern between will and destiny’ (10). This paper argues that, in similar fashion, the epigraphs in *Felix Holt* mark the text and address themselves to historical process. Quoting from prior sources, George Eliot used the epigraphs to explore different forms of inheritance and tradition, and issues of choice versus historical determinism. Unlike many other nineteenth-century novels, in which chapter apparatus became increasingly tacit, she transformed the chapter unit into an interpretative boundary. Paratext, in her novels, consists in the teasing-out of connections, and the detection of pattern, shape and direction. Narrative is not necessarily predictable; epigraphs, however, register George Eliot’s desire for her readers to be active (and therefore feeling) participants in the narrative, while allowing her to maintain predictive control. In this paper, I will demonstrate the ways in which the manuscript of *Felix Holt* provides evidence for her careful reflection upon the chapters she wrote and the epigraphs she used to
provide new perspectives on them. She enlisted her own reading to think through how other texts, both literary and scientific, might inform or transform our experience of the novel. However, her epigraphs also suggest an ongoing fascination with the ethics of cultural appropriation and reveal elements of self-doubt in her own repurposing. In *Felix Holt*, the present is psychologically and biologically haunted by the past. The epigraphs enact this haunting: literary memory lives on in the margins, linking past to present, and rewarding the thorough, thoughtful reader.

**Jo Carruthers (Lancaster University), ‘The Art of Politics: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Matter in *Felix Holt*’**

This paper explores Eliot’s representation of the relation between responsiveness to the world of matter and ‘fellow feeling’ through analysing the depiction of aesthetic appreciation in her disparaged novel *Felix Holt*. The novel was proclaimed a ‘failure and a mistake’ by Henry James and more recently Catherine Gallagher has judged that Eliot’s depiction of the working class as ‘faulty and degenerate’ ‘forestalls their political representation’. Framing the novel with the aesthetic theories of Friedrich Schiller – one of Eliot’s favourite writers – reveals a more positive depiction of the working classes. The novel depicts the working classes as inhabiting a superior capacity for the right kind of responsiveness to matter and materiality. Esther Lyon’s ultimate choice of Felix over Harold, and working life over riches, becomes a logical extension of her sensitivity to the aesthetic realm. Indeed, sensuous responsiveness to the material world is revealed as essential to good personal and political relations.

**Maria Juko (University of Hamburg), ‘George Eliot’s *Romola* and the Smilesian Gentle(wo)man: Female Self-Reliance to Female Selfhood’**

George Eliot’s *Romola* (1863) presents the only work of fiction by a female author quoted by Samuel Smiles in his revised edition of *Self-Help* from 1866. While his neglect of women in the guidebook has been noted by scholars (cf. Tyrrell 2002), the relationship between Smiles’s concept of self-help and female literary characters has not received enough attention yet. The ‘constitutional’ or ‘cultural blindness’ (Sinnema 2008) of the Victorian Smiles towards women was challenged by his contemporary Jessie Boucherett. In her *Hints on Self-Help: A Guidebook for Young Women* (1863) she introduced a female version of self-help. Whereas her work focussed on woman’s access to the capitalist market, Smiles’s emphasised individual moral reform. Yet, following Boucherett’s argument, it is possible ‘to add mentally the word “woman” wherever “man” appears’ in Smiles’s concept.

This paper argues that Romola di Bardi’s negotiation of self amid the struggle of woman’s submission and resistance in 15th-century Florence is charged by a reliance on the Smilesian character-based self-help idea. In an atmosphere of competition between political parties, secular education and religious belief, women’s role within these conflicts and a juxtaposed female interconnectedness in *Romola* echo Smiles’s demand for self-reliance and mutual dependency. While Bonaparte (1979) and Showalter (1999) have highlighted the female protagonist’s promotion of an early feminist discourse on the role of woman in 19th-century Britain, I want to supplement these results and suggest that the novel’s appropriation of masculine ideals of self-improvement along the lines of Smiles’s *Self-Help* furthered female emancipation. I thus argue that the application of self-reliance by Romola di Bardi presents a means to escape patriarchal confines in George Eliot’s novel and helps negotiating a sense of selfhood for the female protagonist.

**Jessica Glueck (Winchester College), ‘George Eliot and the Unmaking of Myth: Allusion and Identity in *Romola*’**

George Eliot’s *Romola* is so packed with allusions to Christian and Classical myth that many scholars have deemed it a radical departure from the realism to which Eliot was so devoted. Instead, they posit, it should be read as an allegory in which each character stands for a figure from myth. This paper argues that Eliot in fact uses myth in *Romola* to examine the value of ideal archetypes for directing human aspiration and
fostering self-knowledge. *Romola* is a realist novel, but one which acknowledges human desire for something more perfect than the real.

I explore Eliot’s use of mythical allusions in the context of her knowledge of Classics and her engagement with Strauss and Feuerbach, who saw Christianity as an especially powerful myth. The paper then turns to a close reading of *Romola*’s mythical allusions. First, I illustrate the gaps between static mythic types and the novel’s dynamic depiction of identity, demonstrating Romola’s naive propensity to imagine herself and others as embodiments of singular mythic figures. This tendency contrasts with the Eliotic narrator’s sceptical juxtapositions of opposing mythic types. The myths present competing hypotheses about the characters’ development, and their form reflects Eliot’s interest in scientific empiricism. Yet neither this scientific approach nor Romola’s childlike faith in myth seem to provide definitive interpretations of character in the novel. There is, however, an alternative function of myth in *Romola*: myths represent other characters’ loving belief in the protagonists. Romola’s quest to live up to these idealised visions allows her to conceptualise her ethical purpose and gain understanding of her fellow human beings. Although human identity in *Romola* is too mutable to be described by any fixed mythic parallel, the novel suggests that myths can provide guidance when they communicate the reverence of those who care for us.

**G3: George Eliot’s ‘Recollections’ and Her Early Novels: Realism and Nature (Maple)**

**Panel Abstract:** From 1854 to 1860, George Eliot wrote six ‘Recollections’ based on her domestic and overseas travels. The period of time covered in her ‘Recollections’ overlaps with the beginning of Eliot’s career as a novelist, and many of the preoccupations of Eliot’s early fiction surface in one form or another in her ‘Recollections’; as yet, however, few critics have discussed the connections between them. In this panel, we especially focus on the burgeoning form of Eliot’s realism which manifests itself characteristically in her descriptions of nature and human action. Within these travelogues, Eliot pays close attention to the natural landscapes and the people she met in order to represent reality more faithfully (as would be the case in her subsequent novels). We respectively examine the reflection of her visual experiences in the natural world into her early fiction, including *Scenes of Clerical Life, Adam Bede,* and *The Mill on the Floss.*

**Eri Satoh (Kobe College, Japan), ‘How does She Perceive the World?: The Effect of Landscape Vision on the Mind in George Eliot’s Two “Recollections” and “Mr Gilfil’s Love Story”’**

By helping George Henry Lewes’s study on marine species in Ilfracombe, Eliot comes to find out the importance of close observation of objects, especially the natural landscape and phenomena. From “Recollections of Ilfracombe 1856” (hereafter ‘Ilfracombe’) onward, Eliot meticulously describes what she senses from the natural world, such as its changing aspects due to the effects of light. She also mentions the psychological effect of viewing the landscape, especially, in ‘Ilfracombe’, with her animated spirit overflowing. However, in ‘Recollections of the Scilly Isles and Jersey 1857’ (hereafter ‘Scilly and Jersey’), her way of narrating becomes less vital due to depression both physical and mental, though her interest in observation never declines and she thinks it ‘an acquisition’ to see Scilly’s ‘unique scenery’. In ‘Mr Gilfil’s Love Story’, which she completed while staying in Scilly, Eliot also precisely portrays the natural world, which is often associated with Caterina Sarti’s dynamic shifts of emotion. Caterina’s mind sometimes sympathetically connects with the landscape vision and at other times distances from it psychologically. In this paper, Eri Satoh examines how Eliot’s own visual experience of the natural world affects her descriptions of female psychology, by comparing the depictions of natural world in ‘Ilfracombe’ and ‘Scilly and Jersey’ with Caterina’s gazes and the narrator’s view on the landscape in ‘Mr Gilfil’s Love Story’.

**Masako Ishii (Kyoto University), ‘George Eliot’s Realism: “Janet’s Repentance” and ’Recollections”’**

In opposition to many critics who have regarded Eliot as a realist novelist, George Levine (2008), for example, calls Eliot’s realism ‘hypothesis’, explaining that Eliot turns to imagination and intelligence to
realize altruism. J. Hillis Miller (2012) declares that realism ‘must depend on figurative language’. In her ‘Recollections of Ilfracombe 1856’, Eliot notes that ‘[t]he mere fact of naming an object tends to give definiteness to our conception of it’ while helping her partner, George Henry Lewes, to collect and observe marine fauna for his *Sea-side Studies*. The first and second parts of her third novella, ‘Janet's Repentance’, were written during her stay at the Scilly Isles and Jersey in 1857, where Eliot again enjoyed close observation of nature. It is natural to think that the figurative language – particularly the metaphors – in Eliot’s early fiction reflects the descriptions of nature and local people in her travelogues and Lewes’s *Sea-side Studies*. Few critics, if any, however, have examined the relationships between these texts. In this essay, Masako Ishii searches for a new horizon to understand ‘Janet’s Repentance’, drawing on Eliot's essays, ‘Recollections of Ilfracombe 1856’, ‘Recollections of the Scilly Isles and Jersey 1857’, and Lewes’ *Sea-side Studies*.

**Michael Ormsbee (University of Rochester), “The Spirit of the Place”: Locating Modern Myth in George Eliot’s “Recollections of Weimar 1854” and *Adam Bede*”**

During their trip to Germany in 1854, George Eliot and George Henry Lewes spent ‘many a delicious hour’ wandering through the Park of Weimar. Particularly memorable for Eliot was ‘a bit of rude sculpture in stone’, a column around which a serpent coiled. This *genio loci* (a ‘spirit of the place’) alludes to an ancient Roman practice, but it also features in a story about a local baker who vanquished a serpent by laying out some poisoned pastries. For Eliot, this ‘excellent example of a modern myth’ is valuable because of its accessibility even to people ‘unedified by classical allusion’. As Eliot begins to write fiction, she will combine the same close attention to Nature with a searching yet sympathetic curiosity towards the people who make a living bound to a certain place. In *Adam Bede*, as in the Park of Weimar, we see Eliot’s regard for the mythic significance of common people like the baker who ‘merited a place with Hercules, Theseus, and other monster slayers.’ By reading *Adam Bede* alongside Eliot’s ‘Recollections of Weimar 1854’, Michael Ormsbee argues that we can understand Eliot’s early realism not only as close observation of Nature and human psychology, but as the construction of her own species of ‘modern myth’.

**Shinsuke Hori (Nihon University, Tokyo), ‘The Invisible Images of the Visible World: A Sense of the Real in George Eliot’s “Recollections” and *The Mill on the Floss*’**

Throughout the ‘Recollections’, George Eliot sees the world replete with trivial facts and creates invisible images of the natural and social world. Her realism starts from a premise that describing and naming every minor fact heightens the reality of the world. As she writes in ‘Recollections of Ilfracombe 1856’, she finds a desire ‘now growing in me to escape from all vagueness and inaccuracy into the daylight of distinct, vivid ideas.’ In *The Mill on the Floss*, when we witness Maggie Tulliver's progress from domestication to the entry into the social world, we can also see her recognition of such desire. As Eliot did during her travels, Maggie comes to be able to see the natural and social world and she finds that the world she sees teems with invisible images she really cannot see with physical eyes. The development of her way to see the world coincides with the germination of her realism which manifests itself in ‘Recollections of Ilfracombe 1856’. In this paper, Shinsuke Hori examines Eliot's realistic vision which creates invisible images of the natural and social landscape in her ‘Recollections’ and *The Mill on the Floss*. 