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Rignall, John, "Review of George Eliot and Europe" (1997). *The George Eliot Review*. 290.
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John Rignall, ed., *George Eliot and Europe* (Scolar Press, 1997), pp.xii + 239.

George Eliot and Europe arrives at a timely moment, when the nature of the relationship between Britain and the Continent is at best ambiguous, and when the parameters of 'Europe' are anxiously contested. In some ways, things have not altered much since the middle and late nineteenth century: nationalism, immigration, militancy, cultural isolationism - all of these were as important to nineteenth-century ways of thinking as they are today. This collection of essays, based on a conference and part of a series which seeks to understand Europe in relation to the rest of the world, insists that in order to understand George Eliot's work fully, we must consider the range of ways in which she engaged with Europe culturally.

As Margaret Harris discusses in the opening essay, George Eliot was a great traveller and part of Harris's project in examining the journals is 'to demonstrate her engagement with discourses of travel' (2). Harris suggests that 'Recollections of Italy. 1860' is in part influenced by Goethe's *Italian Journey* and that Eliot's essay is really patterned on the Romantic Grand Tour. Furthermore, in the Italian journal we see how a re-interpretation of the past - 'there is a consciousness in the journal of history being constantly re-made' (15) - marks a primary theme in her fiction from *Romola* onwards.

Implicit in Harris's essay is the notion that in visiting Europe, Eliot converted her impressions into her fiction, an idea which pervades a number of essays in the volume which consider Eliot's extraordinary capacity for (in Hans Ulrich Seeber's words) 'cultural synthesis'. Seeber reads *Middlemarch* as a European novel partly because of the way Eliot insists on collective rather than single, personal identities in the novel. Dorothea, Lydgate and Ladislaw all have Anglo-European identities in one way or another, and it is this cultural hybridity which Seeber suggests is at the heart of Eliot's cultural synthesis. While *Middlemarch* may be a study of provincial life, it also transcends national boundaries, blends European voices (especially in the untranslated chapter epigraphs) with English, and so resists any notion of singular or pure identity. According to Seeber, *Middlemarch* is a polyglot novel which assumes a polyglot reader.

The process of cultural synthesis is explored variously in several other essays. Beryl Gray begins her discussion of natural history and *The Mill on the Floss* by asserting that 'all George Eliot's works of fiction are the products of a cultivated intelligence made European through travel, translation, and formidably extensive reading' (138); furthermore, in order to appreciate the full complexity of her fiction we must attend to the 'culturally boundless range of allusions that substantiate George Eliot's presentation of character, and illuminate her vision of tendencies and relations' (154-55). For Gray, this means we need to consider not only Goldsmith's *An History of the Earth and Animated Nature*, which Maggie recommends to Luke, but also the works of the French naturalist Buffon, which inform Goldsmith's study. Eliot's own prodigious learning in her texts requires us to trace the cultural resonances. Also focusing on scientific discourse, Nancy Henry suggests that Goethe, La Bruyère and Rembrandt all find their way into *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* through the

'cryptic associations' between Eliot and Lewes, which Henry describes as 'speaking privately in public' (60). Again, we see further evidence of the deep layering of Eliot's referentiality.

Other essays in the volume undertake similarly to decode the complicated intertextuality which marks all of Eliot's fiction and to understand European literature and culture in relation to George Eliot's works. In discussing music in *Daniel Deronda*, Delia da Sousa Correa suggests links between Klesmer and E.T.A. Hoffmann's story 'Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler's Musical Sorrows'. But this is not a simple case of pinning down influence for as da Sousa Correa argues, 'the plethora of possible models [for Klesmer] emphasizes how important is the figure of the Central-European musician as a medium of German Romantic aesthetics within Eliot's negotiation of musical and cultural value' (100). Nancy Cervetti considers Eliot's 'process of selecting and fusing from a variety of sources' (85), specifically Feuerbach, Strauss and Marx, as evidence that there was no single paradigmatic system of thinking which dominates. Cervetti does not offer simplistic readings of influence, rather suggests the similarities and differences between, say, Marx's *Communist Manifesto* and Felix Holt's 'Address to Working Men'. Shoshana Milgram Knapp examines Eliot's and Lewes's ongoing engagement with Victor Hugo's works over a forty-year period, suggesting how traces of Hugo can be found both directly and indirectly in Eliot's fiction.

Less interested in decoding the range of allusions, other essays seek to locate Eliot broadly within, or at least alongside, European literature. Barbara Hardy is not interested so much in influences as affinities, and she focuses on the theme of unhappy marriage in *Middlemarch*, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and Fontane's *Effi Briest*, all of which explore the 'social construction and destruction of women's lives' (70). Similarly, John Rignall places *Daniel Deronda* alongside Balzac and Proust, arguing that Eliot looks back to the one and forward to the other. Again, this is not an essay about influence as such; rather, Rignall discusses the ways the 'affinities with the work of the two French novelists are a measure of the bold new departure that *Deronda* represents' (211). In considering Germaine de Staël's *Corinne*, Gill Frith suggests that *The Mill on the Floss* is 'one version of a story which nineteenth-century women told themselves, a story about the relationship between gender and national identity which has its origins in *Corinne*' (225-26). Here, Eliot is not so much alluding to *Corinne* (that novel which Maggie Tulliver doesn't finish reading) as re-imagining a tradition 'in which "gynoso-cial" bonding is affirmed through the exchange of a man', seen in *The Mill on the Floss* in Maggie's delivering Stephen back to Lucy (238).

Other essays discuss Eliot's more tangible engagement with Europe. Linda K. Robertson for example, considers Eliot's and Lewes's preference for continental education in choosing a school for Lewes's boys. In opting for Hofwyl School in Switzerland, the two were choosing European breadth rather than the 'intellectual narrowness' (Eliot's words) found in English public schools. Robertson goes on to note that non-traditional and non-English study becomes an important discourse in *Daniel Deronda*. Both Tom Winnifrith and Lesley Gordon discuss *Romola* and Eliot's tremendous and daunting scholarship in preparation for the novel. Winnifrith emphasizes that the novel is as much about the nineteenth century as the Renaissance – as much a response to the political intrigues in Italy in the early 1860s as those

in the 1490s. Gordon examines the revival of Greek scholarship during the fifteenth century as depicted in Bardo, 'who represents one side of an irreconcilable conflict between paganism and Christianity' (189). Bonnie McMullen discusses *Daniel Deronda* in relation to Eliot's visit to Spain (a European connection often neglected) and argues that Ronda, a Muslim and Jewish city where Eliot never reached, appears in 'Deronda' as a bridging image uniting past and present, Gentile and Jew. Derek Miller also focuses on *Daniel Deronda* and traces references to allegory, chivalry and the First Crusade.

Unravelling the complexity of Eliot's engagement with European culture is the primary intention of this volume and it is what makes this collection so worthwhile for Eliot scholars and readers. What we see across all of the essays is the extraordinary process of cultural synthesis, of both influence and affinity, in Eliot's fiction. In a suggestive essay which needs further development, Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth argues that in reading Eliot, we must attend to the 'shifting constellations of viewpoint' which comprise her 'complex treatment of perspective' (34), so central to realist texts. Eliot's resistance to overarching, systemic solutions, to simplistic definitions of identity and character, and to monologic ways of imagining the world force us to realize that Eliot resists narrow, nationalistic classification in every way. This is one way we might consider Eliot as the most European novelist of her day.

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