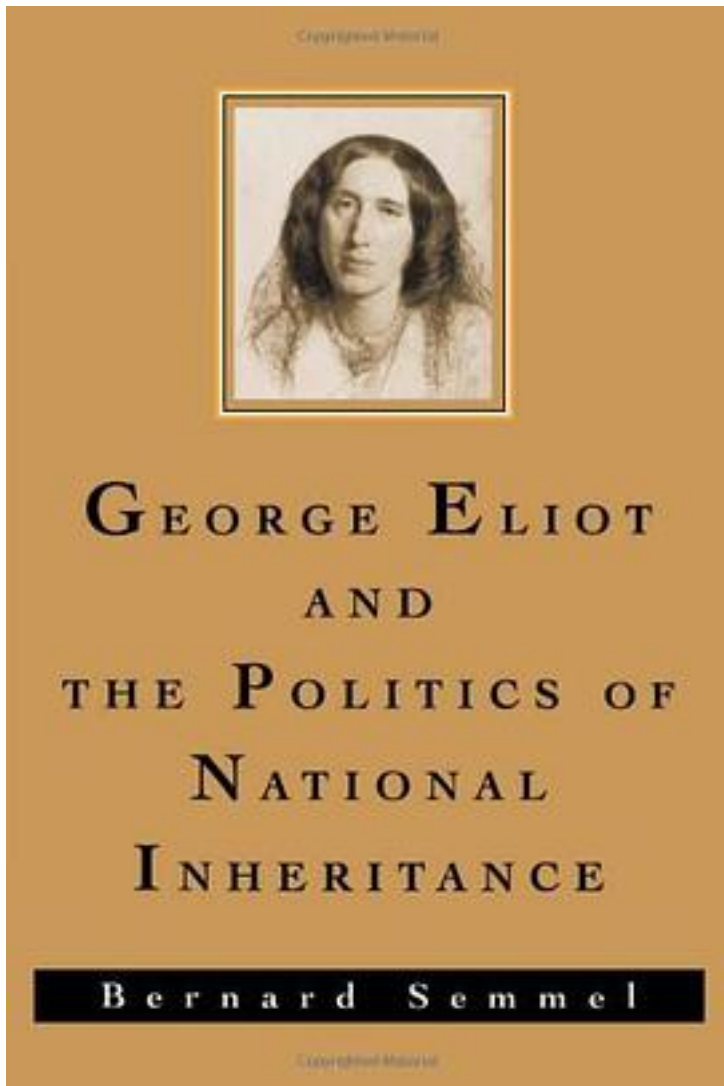


George Eliot and the Politics of National Inheritance



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In this stimulating history of the ideas behind George Eliot's novels, Bernard Semmel explores George Eliot's use of the plot of inheritance in her novels. Through detailed analyses of Eliot's novels and a study of the intellectual currents of the time, Semmel demonstrates that her feelings toward inheritance provided the central ideas in her novels. Semmel argues that Eliot wrote of inheritance both in the common meaning of the term, as in the transfer of goods and property from parents to children, and in the more metaphoric sense of the inheritance of both the benefits and burdens of the historical past, particularly those of the nation's culture and traditions. He believes Eliot's novels centered so strongly around the idea of inheritance because she viewed herself as intellectually "disinherited": she was writing at a time when society was transforming itself from a traditional to a modern one, and she was estranged from her father and brother. In this in-depth study, Semmel dissects the politics of many of Eliot's novels, including *Middlemarch*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *Silas Marner*, and convincingly demonstrates Eliot's variations on the plot of inheritance and her acceptance of the reform processes in Britain's political life. All those interested in Victorian literature, history, and political thought will appreciate Semmel's *George Eliot and the Politics of National Inheritance*.

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