

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> Royal Holloway, University of London		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 27 English Language and Literature		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Remembering the Victorians: Enhancing the heritage of nineteenth-century authors through place		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2013-2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Juliet John  Ruth Livesey	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Hildred Carlisle Chair, Victorian Literature Prof. of Nineteenth-Century Literature and Thought	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 2012-2020  2002-date
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2014-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>What can research on place, memory, and the Victorian novel do to enrich how museums and heritage associations commemorate the Victorians? In the heritage sector, biographies of famous Victorian authors are often represented rather than their literature. Researchers in Royal Holloway's Centre for Victorian Studies changed the story of commemoration by emphasising the value of literary place in local heritage. Working in partnership with the Dickens Museum, George Eliot Fellowship, and Nuneaton Museum their research inspired new investment from arts organisations, informed two major exhibitions, 'Global Dickens' and 'Scenes from the George Eliot Country', and benefitted museum curators and museum visitors, novel readers, artists, local communities, students and teachers.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>The Centre for Victorian Studies at Royal Holloway has research strengths in place, space, and nineteenth-century cultural heritage. Centre Directors Professor Juliet John (2012 to 17) and Professor Ruth Livesey (2008 to 2012) share research interests in how and why readers want to 'place' authors and examine the role of literary place in constructing 'real' places, such as 'Dickensian' London. Their research showed that the nineteenth-century novel represents local place in a way that became emotionally charged in the Victorian age of mobility and globalisation.</p> <p>John works on Dickens in relation to 'mass' culture, the cultural, aesthetic and affective dynamics of legacy, and global circulation. Her research examines how Dickens's works consciously construct a new 'heritage' aesthetic of place which he believed was crucial to his future cultural status in a transnational world (R1). She also researches Dickens's endurance in, and adaptation to, the screen, the heritage industry and the digital age. John's 'Dickens's Global Art' (R2) examines the role of travel in forging consciousness that artistic legacy relied on the resilience of evocations of place in a globalising nineteenth century. 'Crowdsourced Dickens' (R3) explores the role of 'imagined community' in current 'crowdsourced' collaborations online as well as community Dickens ventures, contesting the idea that the internet can provide a utopian global forum for a heterogeneous mass literary audience, but finding solace in the resurgence of the smaller scale community of the literally eccentric 'club'. John's research is extended through two National Productivity Investment Fund collaborative doctoral awards co-supervised with the Dickens Museum in London examining Dickens, place-making and author heritage in the nineteenth century and subsequent literary tourism.</p>		

Livesey's work on literary place looks from the other end of the critical telescope at locality, the idea of 'provincialism', and small-scale ideas of Englishness in the novel. Livesey's latest book argued that the nineteenth-century stage-coach system was an important means by which small local communities felt part of a national network – later lost in the centralising railway age (R4). The mid-nineteenth century novel, by evoking the stage coach era, gives a way to feel at home in small places in a world that is on the move. More recently, this study of fictional constructions of local place has focused on George Eliot's Midlands. Livesey examines the local history of Eliot's North Warwickshire, a shifting landscape poised between agriculture and industry and imagining itself as the middle of England in every way (R5). Eliot's fraught relation to her home town, Nuneaton, and her self-imposed exile, tells of enduring national tensions between ideas of 'provincial' towns and 'cosmopolitan' life in the capital. But Livesey argues that Eliot's fiction – through revaluing the everyday of small-town life – is an art form that gives radiance to life in a middling state: one that, perhaps surprisingly, allies her with radical modernist artists such as Vincent Van Gogh (R6).

### 3. References to the research

**R1** John, 'Longing and the Dickensian City: Place, Popularity and the Past', in *Charles Dickens, Modernism, Modernity*, ed. by Christine Huguet and Nathalie Vanfasse, 2 vols (Wimereux: Editions du Sagittaire, 2014), I, 95-120. Peer-reviewed essay selected from an award-winning French Colloques de Cerisy event, 2011. Available from HEI on Request.

**R2** John, 'Dickens's Global Art: Cultural and Ecological Legacy in *Pictures from Italy*', special edition of *E-rea on Dickensian Prospects*, 13 (2016), <https://erea.revues.org/5025> Peer reviewed open access journal.

**R3** John, 'Crowdsourced Dickens: Adopting and Adapting Dickens in the Internet Age' in *The Oxford Handbook of Charles Dickens*. Patten, R. L., Jordan, J. & Waters, C. (eds.). (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 756-73. Peer reviewed. Available from HEI on Request.

**R4** Livesey, *Writing the Stage Coach Nation: Locality on the Move in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Supported by Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship, 2012 (£28,438). Nominated for MLA James Russell Lowell Prize.

**R5** Livesey, 'On Writing Portable Place: George Eliot's Mobile Midlands', *Mobilities*, 12:4 (2017): 559-571, DOI: [10.1080/17450101.2017.1331005](https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2017.1331005) Supported by Royal Holloway Research Strategy Seed Funding 2016, £4,325. Peer reviewed contribution to special interdisciplinary issue 'Mobilities in the Humanities' ed. Lynne Pearce and Peter Merriman.

**R6** Livesey, 'George Eliot and Vincent Van Gogh: Radiant Realism', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Nineteenth Century*, 29 (March 2020). George Eliot bicentenary Special Issue. 2019 George Eliot Fellowship Annual Lecture. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.1936>. Supported by AHRC Research Leadership Fellowship AH/S002545/1: 'Provincialism: Literature and the Cultural Politics of Middleness in Nineteenth-Century Britain'. 4/2/2019-4/8/2020. £199,532. PI Livesey.

### 4. Details of the impact

Museums and heritage associations with collections on well-known authors often focus their exhibitions on biographical information, and opportunities to represent contemporary and thematic explorations of their works of literature are missed. Research by John on Dickens's global reach and Livesey on Eliot's art of local belonging informed new interpretation strategies for curators, educators and art organisations seeking to connect audiences to their collections, to the authors' literary works and to heritage commemoration.

#### A. Enhancing Heritage Interpretation

John and Livesey improved museum professionals' understanding of the importance of including place in exhibitions. Their research was used to inspire and educate museum visitors about the radical and innovative nature of the writers' work, beyond conventional expectations of the Victorian era. John and Livesey co-produced interpretation materials, co-curated exhibitions, and advised on interpretation strategies with the Dickens Museum, Nuneaton Museum and Art Gallery, the Landmark Trust, and the George Eliot Fellowship.

Their research informed two major commemorations and ensured their legacy. John's close collaboration with the Dickens' Museum led her to serve on the Dickens 2012 bicentenary steering group, and she was appointed as one of the Museum's five academic advisors in 2017. In this position, the museum drew on her research expertise and she informed their curatorial and creative strategy at regional and national levels. Drawing on John's model, Livesey established partnerships with the Nuneaton-based George Eliot Fellowship in 2018 to enhance local and regional understanding of Eliot's literary significance during the 2019 bicentenary commemorations.

John's research inspired a major exhibition, **'Global Dickens: For Every Nation on Earth' (November 2019 to May 2020), which John co-curated at the Dickens Museum.** Museum [text removed for publication] stated that John's research was 'the bedrock' of this major exhibition and her contribution led to a '[text removed for publication]' (S1). The inclusion of Captain Scott's copy of *David Copperfield* in the exhibition garnered extensive press coverage about the role of fiction in providing a sense of home and place in a world on the move, including Alison Flood, *Guardian Books*, and Robert Dex, *Evening Standard* (S2). 23,992 visitors attended the exhibition (S2).

John **enhanced visitor experience** of the exhibition by providing training for museum volunteers, and her on-line resources and media appearances extended access to the exhibition and her research on Dickens. A museum volunteer enrichment programme devised by John enabled volunteers to make connections between contemporary global celebrity and Dickens's work. John's three exhibition vlogs on the global circulation of Dickens's work were considered by [text removed for publication] in building visitor engagement and increasing the international reach of the exhibition, with over 900 views on YouTube (S1). John also educated people who were not able to attend the exhibition in person: she appeared on Start the Week in relation to the exhibition, 6 May 2019, discussing 'Icons of Culture' (BBC R4 Mon 9am listening figures approximately 3,000,000). Responses via Twitter include 'Tremendous @BBCRadio4 Start the Week, Marr at his best. Brilliant academics discussing Chaucer, Shakespeare and Dickens with themselves as well as us. What the Beeb should be doing.' (S2)

**Livesey's research informed and inspired the bicentenary Eliot exhibition at Nuneaton Museum and Art Gallery, 'Scenes of George Eliot Country', (November 2019 to March 2020).** The exhibition explored Nuneaton's connectedness to the stage-coach system: a direct outcome of Livesey's book, *Writing the Stage Coach Nation: Locality on the Move in Nineteenth-Century British Literature*. Visitors were able to visualise the importance of travel by seeing a new map co-produced by Livesey, which featured in a cabinet alongside a historic collection of earlier guides to the 'the George Eliot Country'. Museum Manager, Catherine Nisbet notes, 'the conversations we held [with Livesey] over our 2 exhibitions opened up new perspectives and lines to alternative content. This came to fruition in the "Scenes" exhibition where we were moved to bring Eliot's realism to the fore in our exploration of her landscape' (S5).

The exhibition brought 12,199 visitors to the museum and engaged over 500 local school children (S5). Visitor comments demonstrate that Livesey's work changed public perception of Eliot as a product of and commentator upon the local area: 'What's important to me is the change of emphasis in the portrayal of Eliot as a person developing in the environment she lives in as opposed to Eliot as a woman in difficult non-conforming relationships' (S5). By drawing attention to the significance of George Eliot to Nuneaton's heritage, Livesey is lending her research expertise to transform local heritage and tourism practice. Invited by Nisbet, Livesey serves as an advisor to the major redevelopment of the George Eliot Galleries at Nuneaton Museum and Art Gallery (2020 to 2021), playing key part in selection, interview and appointment (S4) of external heritage consultants, led by Warwick Country Council Visitor Economy Manager for research into a new George Eliot Visitor Centre in Nuneaton (GBP20,000 investment, August 2019).

## **B. Generating New Ways of Thinking through Arts Collaborations:**

Livesey's research on George Eliot's relationship to Nuneaton has inspired artists to find **new ways to engage local people in Eliot's challenging novels**. It has also informed programme makers and artists to reassess Eliot's relationship to Nuneaton, thereby reaching wide and diverse audiences.

The local legacy of George Eliot inspired artist Paul Smith to co-design and illustrate a new walking map and leaflet 'The Unofficial George Eliot Countryside', with Livesey and the Nuneaton-based George Eliot Fellowship for the 2019 bicentenary commemorations (S4). [text removed for publication] copies of the map were distributed by Fellowship volunteers from a launch at Heritage Open weekend September 2019. Fellowship Chair, [text removed for publication] comments, Livesey's research '[text removed for publication]' (S4). In March 2020 the map was adopted by the local tourist confederation 'Visit North Warwickshire', as a local heritage trail and was downloaded 70 times from that site in 3 months (S9). This evidence of research engagement through the arts has proved 'very useful' to culture and heritage planners in Nuneaton and Bedworth, as they 'move to explore more sustained conversations in relation to Eliot and cultural tourism in the borough' (S5).

Livesey's research **inspired new artistic works** that represent the relationship between Eliot and place. She advised on, and appeared in, BBC4 Arena 'Everything is Connected: George Eliot's life' dir. by artist Gillian Wearing and filmed in Nuneaton, opening out new connections between research on locality, nineteenth-century realism and contemporary arts (S9). Her research also informed Dash Arts Café event, 'Europeans: George Eliot's Radical Coventry', at Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry (6<sup>th</sup> February 2020), a creative cabaret of music and spoken word attended by [text removed for publication] members of the public (S4). As a result of Livesey's research insights, [text removed for publication], Dash Arts, inaugurated the development of a large-scale immersive, site-specific *Middlemarch* experience to be programmed in Coventry City of Culture, 2021. Livesey is research lead for this major new artistic event. Dash Arts has raised GBP24,000 of development money (to December 2020) for the event which will be programmed in Coventry City of Culture, 2021. [text removed for publication] notes that Livesey's research '[text removed for publication]'. (S6)

### C. Impacts on Understanding, Learning, Participation

John and Livesey worked together to **build the creativity and confidence of educators and adult learners in engaging with nineteenth-century literature and place**. Livesey co-produced an Eliot-themed education resource. This was piloted by pupils from Croft Junior School, Nuneaton at day workshop at the Landmark Trust's Astley Castle, during Heritage Open Weekend, June 2019. Croft Juniors is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> decile for educational deprivation in the national Index of Multiple Deprivation (2015), in which 1/3 of pupils qualify for Pupil Premium funding and cultural engagement outside school is low. The workshop provided **new creative routes to engaging with literature and local belonging**. A Year 6 teacher noted 'getting the children to write about what they know' in the local area was transformative and not always supported by the curriculum (S7). Pupils commented 'it's made me realise how interesting Nuneaton is!' (S7). The pack was subsequently adopted and reused by staff at Nuneaton Museum. Adult learners at Livesey's three public lectures on Eliot across in Nuneaton across 2019-20 (133 attendees in total; each full capacity) learned a new sense of continuity between Eliot's writing of the everyday and their own life stories. Attendees commented 'I think this will affect me deeply, the way I read, the way I see'; 'this reinforces my mindfulness practice – Affirmation of the here and now and being and living in the community of the G[eorge] E[liot] landscape' (S7).

Scaling up from the key sites of 'global' London and 'provincial' Nuneaton, John and Livesey's research on literature and placemaking **developed the contextual knowledge of secondary school English teachers at a national level in relation to place and mobility in the nineteenth-century novel**. The requirement to teach nineteenth-century literature at GCSE with a strong sense of context has created a clear need for research-led enrichment. Both John and Livesey have improved the confidence, knowledge, and skills of KS3 and KS4 English teachers exploring nineteenth-century texts through place-making. Working with the Prince's Teaching Institute, John and Livesey devised CPD training events on 'global' Dickens, and Eliot,

community and place (9 November 2019, [text removed for publication] [S3]; 20 May 2020, [text removed for publication] [S8]). 81% of participants agreed the session would have an impact on their pupils, 72% that **their knowledge and skills were improved**, with 61% agreeing they now felt more confident exploring nineteenth-century texts. An attendee noted 'The questions posed about why we know who Dickens is and why we associate Victorian writers with particular places. This got me thinking about how to this angle in and explore these questions with my classes' (S3). Livesey's co-produced package of 12 lessons and resources for Key Stage 3, '*Silas Marner*: Writing Place and Community', is now included in the PTI online teaching resources and has been downloaded 118 times by its registered users (English teachers and subject leads) May-June 2020. [text removed for publication], St Thomas More School, Nuneaton, has adopted and reused the Marner package for Year 7 and [text removed for publication] (Brockington College, Leicester) comments on this 'fantastic scheme of work' equipping students early with the rich knowledge needed for success at KS4 English (S9). Livesey's teaching resource on *Middlemarch* and small town 'provincialism' has been viewed 14,535 times on the Royal Holloway TeacherHub (S9).

Livesey's research has **stimulated debate among journalists and media producers** about the importance of geographical location in determining an author's long-term reputation. Her work on Eliot, gender, and provincial place centred on Nuneaton underpinned and was quoted several times in **significant national coverage** of the Eliot bicentenary by Kathryn Hughes, 'What Eliot's 'Provincial' Novels can Teach Today's Divided Britain', (*Guardian* 16 Nov. 2019; circulation 130,500) (S9). Livesey was a featured guest in podcasts and radio interviews including BBC R6 Music, Cerys Matthew Show (approximately 700,000 listeners), BBC Free Thinking Podcast, 'Bonnetts at Dawn' podcast (1,941 listens on Soundcloud). Knowledge of Livesey's research via this media, led to Livesey's invitation to appear on BBC R4 Start the Week opposite American writer Richard Ford to discuss writing the local/provincial and nineteenth-century literary heritage vs contemporary American realism (BBC R4 Monday at 9am listening figures average at 3,000,000; 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020 social media responses to Livesey: 'this was a magical radio show. Thoughtful discourse Big USA/Small UK; city vs province and much more'; 'championing provincial writers and small presses ... wonderful') (S9).

##### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

**S1** Testimonial: [text removed for publication], Charles Dickens Museum.

**S2** Media Impact Analysis, 'Global Dickens'.

**S3** Qualitative and quantitative feedback: Prince's Teaching Institute Continuing Professional Development event on Dickens, with additional statements by [text removed for publication].

**S4** Testimonial: [text removed for publication] George Eliot Fellowship.

**S5** Testimonial: Catherine Nisbet, Director Nuneaton Art Gallery and Museum including information on visitor numbers and comments on 'Scenes of the George Eliot Country'.

**S6** Testimonial: [text removed for publication] Dash Arts.

**S7** Portfolio of feedback from attendees at three public lectures and Astley Castle Workshop with Landmark Trust.

**S8** Qualitative and quantitative feedback: Prince's Teaching Institute Continuing Professional Development event on Eliot's *Silas Marner*, with additional statements by [text removed for publication].

**S9** Portfolio of evidence of reach of impact via digital and mainstream media.