One might assume that the frequent mention of blushing in British nineteenth-century literature is simply part of an emphasis on female modesty. In fact, both self-consciousness and the blush were embroiled in a history of contentious discussion in the period: on materialism, the human-animal divide, the embodied mind, the function of the nervous system, evolution, criminology, and even theology. Gilbert’s talk will trace several aspects of this discussion through the period, with special attention to the anatomist Charles Bell and Charles Darwin.

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