## George Eliot, Lady Eastlake, and the Humbug of Old Masters

**Patricia Rubin**

In her diary entry for 20 July 1854 Mary Ann Evans wrote that she 'said a last farewell to [her London lodgings] and found myself on board the Ravensbourne bound for Antwerp'.[1] Arriving early, the 45-year-old spinster waited with anxious anticipation — 'terrible fear', she recalled — for the arrival of George Henry Lewes. Lewes was married and her transit to the Continent marked the beginning of their unconventional union and Evans's debut as social outcast. Mary Ann left behind a hard-earned, but respected, position as journalist, editor, and translator for a future whose only certainty was her belief that devoted love was 'the first condition of human goodness'.[2] History relates, of course, that this bold and risky journey was the first step in Miss Evans's transition to two highly successful and enduring self-styled identities: the pseudo-Mrs Marian Lewes and the pseudonymic George Eliot.

Once in Antwerp the unconventional pair became fairly conventional tourists. Although Lewes later noted how he 'longed to be rambling [...] undisturbed by the occasional glimpse of a visitor with a "Murray"', whether by coincidence or design, the highlights of their brief stay in the city were more or less those indicated in Murray's *Handbook for Travellers on the Continent*.[3] In the cathedral they paid due attention to the painting singled out in the guidebook: 'The great attraction in this church [...] the celebrated *masterpiece of Rubens*, — *the Descent from the Cross*'.[4] The *Descent*

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[1] *The Journals of George Eliot*, ed. by Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 14. I am grateful to Harry Mount, Jeremy Melius, and Jeremy Wood for their advice about Reynolds, Ruskin, and other matters pertaining to nineteenth-century attitudes towards art.

[2] George Eliot, 'Janet's Repentance', in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, in *The Works of George Eliot*, Cabinet Edition, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1878), II, 39–317 (p. 164). The full sentence is, 'The first condition of human goodness is something to love; the second, something to reverence.' This sentence was chosen for the inscription on Eliot's memorial stone in Westminster Abbey, unveiled in 1980 on the centenary of her death.

[3] The comment about Murray is in Lewes's journal entry for 4–5 May 1860, about visiting Pompeii, in *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. by Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954–78), III: *1859–1861* (1954), p. 291.

[4] *A Handbook for Travellers on the Continent*, 7th edn, corrected and augmented (London: Murray, 1850), p. 154, emphasis in original. The text is the same in the 1854 edition, p. 139.

was one of three in the cathedral described by Murray as 'Rubens's most famous pictures', and the couple also looked at the other two, the *Elevation of the Cross* and the *Assumption of the Virgin*. Nor did they neglect another of Murray's stars, the equally celebrated *Crucifixion* by Rubens in the museum, which they visited the next day.

Mary Ann remarked in her journal that

> the Assumption of the Virgin [...] did not please us much. The great treat was the sight of the *Descent from the Cross*, which with its pendant the *Elevation of the Cross* has been undergoing restoration. In the latter, the face of Jesus is sublime in its expression of agony and trust in the divine. It is certainly the finest conception of the *suffering* Christ I have ever seen. The rest of the picture gave me no pleasure. But in the Descent from the Cross, colour, form and expression alike impressed me with the sense of grandeur and beauty. (*Journals*, ed. by Harris and Johnston, pp. 14–15, emphasis in original)

She found the *Crucifixion* 'even more beautiful [...] than the Descent from the Cross', adding that 'these two pictures profoundly impressed me with the miserable lack of breadth and grandeur in the conceptions of our living artists. The reverence for the old masters is not all humbug and superstition' (p. 15).

The remark reveals a number of things about Eliot's interest in the visual arts while also suggesting questions about their context in the contemporary discourses regarding those arts and their place in history. The first is what did she mean by humbug? Another is in what way did the humbug of old masters relate to the humdrum — to commonplaces about their works? A third is how Eliot's judgements compared with those of Elizabeth Rigby, Lady Eastlake. Writing from very different vantage points, the intersecting views of these two well- and widely read women offer significant insights into the experience of art in their time.

Even though ultimately those two formidably intelligent, accomplished, and determined women lived not far from one another on opposite sides of Regent's Park, they were divided by unbridgeable social, religious, and political distances. Lady Eastlake was a doyenne of the drawing room (ever upholding 'the outward forms and decencies of society').[5] After her elopement with Lewes, Marian Evans willingly became a social pariah who could be visited by no respectable woman, and was not herself deemed respectable until her fame overcame objections (for some). Lady Eastlake was against everything 'whiggish' in politics and religion (to quote Harriet

[5] [Lady Eastlake], 'Biographies of German Ladies', *Quarterly Review*, December 1843, pp. 142–87 (p. 187).

Martineau's acerbic characterization).[6] Eliot was a radical reformer in sentiment and support, and agnostic. In art, like her husband, Lady Eastlake categorically separated 'the great specific excellence or purpose of the art of painting', however poetic it might be in essence or effect, from the 'language' of the poet.[7] For her art generally meant painting, whereas for Eliot (and her publisher) it encompassed the art of novel writing, which was inherently pictorial. Lady Eastlake deplored John Ruskin and 'the poisonous Ruskin-teaching'.[8] In complete contrast, Eliot was disposed to tolerate the faults of that 'man of strange whims' and to 'venerate him as one of the great Teachers of the day' — 'the finest writer living'.[9]

[6] Quoted from the introduction to *The Letters of Elizabeth Rigby, Lady Eastlake*, ed. by Julie Sheldon (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), p. 8. Martineau was advising her friend Jane Carlyle to 'learn her from her own works: but […] *beware of her*', with a biting appraisal of Elizabeth's 'talents' (emphasis in original). For the full letter, dated 5 May 1844, see Ian Campbell and Kenneth Fielding, 'New Letters of Harriet Martineau to Jane Carlyle, 1842–44', *Women's Writing*, 9 (2002), 379–94 (pp. 388–89).

[7] [Lady Eastlake], 'Modern Painters', *Quarterly Review*, March 1856, pp. 384–433 (p. 388). Lady Eastlake's definition of 'the qualities proper to painting' (p. 392) and her categorical separation of the language of painting from that of poetry closely follow those of her husband as set out, for example, in Charles Eastlake's preface to the translation of Kugler's *Handbook*. See Franz Kugler, *Handbook of Painting: The Italian Schools*, trans. by a Lady [Elizabeth Rigby Eastlake], ed. by Sir Charles L. Eastlake, 3rd edn, 2 vols (London: Murray, 1855), I, pp. ix–x, with reference to Lessing's *Laocoön*. For Lady Eastlake's writing and thinking about art and its relation to those of her husband and to her own construction of her role as his wife, see Susanna Avery-Quash and Julie Sheldon, *Art for the Nation: The Eastlakes and the Victorian Art World* (London: National Gallery, 2011); and Adele M. Ernstrom, '"Equally lenders and borrowers in turn": The Working and Married Lives of the Eastlakes', *Art History*, 15 (1992), 470–85.

[8] Lady Eastlake to Rawdon Brown, 25 April 1856, in *Letters*, ed. by Sheldon, p. 127. Close friend to Effie Ruskin, she also deplored Ruskin's character, as she makes abundantly clear in her correspondence and in her 'short but necessary analysis of the author himself' in her review of volumes II and III of *Modern Painters* ('Modern Painters', pp. 386–87).

[9] For these remarks, see the letters to Sara Sophia Hennell, 5 September and 17 January 1858 (*George Eliot Letters*, ed. by Haight, II: *1852–58*, 478, 422); and to Barbara Leigh Smith, 13 June 1858 (II, 255). The January 1858 letter to Sara Hennell continues, 'The last two volumes of Modern Painters contain, I think, some of the finest writing of this age' (II, 424–25). Eliot had one of the eight presentation copies of *Scenes of Clerical Life* sent to Ruskin — all eight were 'sent on *literary* grounds'. For her reasoning about the list — Dickens, Thackeray, and Tennyson were among the others — see her journal entry of 8 January 1858 (*Letters*, II, 418); and her letter to John Blackwood, 9 January 1858 (II, 419). See further, her review of the third volume of *Modern Painters*, in 'Art and Belles Lettres', *Westminster Review*, April 1856, pp. 625–50 (pp. 625–33), which seems to contain a jibe at Lady Eastlake's essay: 'Of course, this treatise "Of many things" presents certain old characteristics and new paradoxes which will furnish a fresh text to antagonistic critics; but, happily for us, and happily for our readers, who probably care more to know what Mr. Ruskin says

Polar opposites in these and other ways, they both played expressively on the sliding scale of gendered intonation in their writing. They were given or adopted authorial identities that went from the hyper-feminized 'by a lady' and the ambiguous incognito of the anonymous reviewer to Eliot's nominal masculinity. They both promoted forms of female education, but neither were feminists. They held pronounced beliefs about what Lady Eastlake called 'the feminine ideal' and Eliot characterized as the 'womanly intellect'.[10] With respect to art and history, they were equally indefatigable readers and researchers, writers, translators, and editors. Each read Lessing with admiration and had a command of much of the available literature on art from Vasari to the learned Germans of the day (and agreed in admiring German learning, while disliking the German character). They even had some mutual acquaintances: both dined with Dickens and knew, with a greater or lesser degree of familiarity, Gustav Waagen, Anna Jameson, and Thackeray, for instance. And humbug or not, they revered the same old masters and many of the same paintings. On those points they could even be said to be humdrum and their unquestioning acceptance of a canon of 'great painters' is revealing about the operation of commonplaces in cultural consciousness. The unease that Eliot expressed about the fact that the conventional regard for the old masters might be humbug also exposes tensions in taste that were far from hers alone.

But what was humbug? And what did it mean in relation to art? Humbug, humbugs, humbuggery, and humbugging were flourishing in mid-nineteenth-century Britain. Ebenezer Scrooge's explosive (and in this case, ironic) dismissal of Christmas as humbug in Dickens's *Christmas Carol* (1843) still resounds. Humbug was cant, hypocrisy, trickery, and occasionally nonsense. Humbugs were hypocrites or impostors. (They were also, for reasons as obscure as the eighteenth-century origins of the word, gobsmacking sweets from Gloucestershire.) However common in general, 'humbug' was a strong term for Eliot and one she used sparingly. It occurs just over a dozen times in her collected fiction and only once in her published letters, and that time it is in inverted commas.[11] She uses it in her novels in relation

than what other people think he *ought* to say, we are not among those who are more irritated by his faults than charmed and subdued by his merits' (p. 626, emphasis in original). For Ruskin's influence on Eliot's views about art, see Hugh Witemeyer, *George Eliot and the Visual Arts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

[10] [Lady Eastlake], 'Biographies of German Ladies', p. 144; and [George Eliot], 'Woman in France: Madame de Sablé', *Westminster Review*, October 1854, pp. 448–73 (p. 450).

[11] Eliot uses the word 'humbug' in a letter of 7 June 1860 to François d'Albert Durade, answering a question about how to translate the 'Egyptian Sorcerer', and describing his reputed magical powers: 'Accounts vary, some explaining the whole affair as "humbug," others as one of the phenomena of mesmeric influence' (*Letters*, ed. by Haight, III, 301).

to religion in *Janet's Repentance* and *The Mill on the Floss*, of medical reform in *Middlemarch* and *Felix Holt*, and of politics in *Daniel Deronda* and *Felix Holt*.[12] The word is never pronounced by a female character or applied to one, giving the impression that for Eliot it was masculine and somewhat coarse, which makes its appearance in her journal and application to art (specifically to old masters) all the more singular.

It was not unprecedented. Old masters and humbug are called synonymous, for example, by Ruskin in a letter to his college friend, the Reverend Edward Clayton, who had asked for advice about a drawing master. Evaluating possibilities, Ruskin commented that the Staffordshire-born landscape artist Peter De Wint 'despises all rules of composition, hates Old Masters and humbug — synonymous terms with him — never was abroad in his life, never sketches anything but pig-styes and haystacks, and is a thorough-going John Bull of an artist in all respects'.[13] Ruskin added that De Wint is 'a most ardent lover of *truth* — [he] hardly ever paints except from nature' (I, 427, emphasis in original). Ruskin did not notice that this Bullish stay-at-home artist was well aware of the Continental landscape tradition, which he translated to English countryside scenes.[14] That oversight aside, the correspondence between Eliot's journal entry and Ruskin's comment about De Wint is striking, given her regard for Ruskin and her own 'ardent love of truth' in her art.

There was also a topical application of humbug to the old masters in the polemics arising from the plan to decorate the Houses of Parliament with historical paintings in fresco. In addition to the creation of a national school

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[12] There is an exceptional use of the word outside of religion and reform in *Middlemarch*, when the rogue Raffles avows that he is speaking 'without humbug' to Joshua Rigg Featherstone (his stepson) when he is dunning him for money. Featherstone replies: 'The more you say anything, the less I shall believe it' (*Middlemarch*, in *Works of George Eliot*, Cabinet Edition, 3 vols, II, 213–14).

[13] The letter from Ruskin in Rome, dated 3 December 1840, was published in *Letters Addressed to a College Friend (1840–1845)* (1894). See 'Letter V', in *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, Library Edition, 39 vols (London: Allen; New York: Longmans, Green, 1903–12), I: *Early Prose Writings* (1903), pp. 424–33 (pp. 426–27). The equivalence of art and humbug is also strongly stated in a review of Anna Jameson's *History of our Lord as Exemplified in Works of Art* in *The Spectator*, 13 August 1864, questioning both the status of art and the authority of connoisseurs to judge good and bad in works of art: 'The very word Art has a suspicion of humbug about it. What right has the art of painting, or building, or making objects beautiful, to be called *par excellence*, any more than the art of making shoes?' (p. 939).

[14] David McTavish discusses the Continental influences on De Wint with specific reference to a watercolour titled *Oxcart on a Country Road* in the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, which adapts an etching by Jean-Baptiste Chatelain dated 1744, after a Dughet landscape, in reverse, then in the collection of the Duke of Portland at Welbeck Abbey (identified by an inscription on engraving). See David McTavish, 'Peter De Wint and Gaspard Dughet', *Master Drawings*, 47 (2009), 325–28.

of history painting, the attendant encouragement of the arts — regarded as shamefully absent in England in distinct contrast to the Continent, especially Germany — was seen to be a means to enlighten, educate, and refine the people (aka the poor, the 'lower orders', the great unwashed). Modelled on and influenced by the frescoes by the Nazarenes in Munich, the project was largely greeted by a wave of pro-German enthusiasm, soon countered, however, by criticism of the 'rage for everything German', and satirized in *Punch* with illustrations of nursery rhymes in 'the German style of art'.[15]

The humorous journal, *Our Own Times* (illustrated by George Cruikshank), devoted an article specifically to 'High Art in 1846', emblematizing the vagaries of fashion with a weathervane and commenting that 'High art, dressed out according to the last German fashion, is little better than an abstraction, and next cousin to nothing'.[16] It asserts that 'this High Art would be exclusively characterized by negatives, but for the lath and plaster' and concludes that

> never before did a nation rear such a temple to the genius of quackery, and never before did the spirit take such entire and stifling possession of a sanctuary. There will be enough of the concentrated essence of humbug bottled up in that building to infect a world. (pp. 91–92)

But the article does not reserve the barbs of the weathervane solely for what it calls the 'lath-and-plaster' school, inspired by 'German lubberliness'; it attacks the genteel 'simper of High Art [...] the extravagance and affectation with which people *comme il faut* are familiar', represented by the works exhibited at the Royal Academy's Exhibition that year. There, the Italian old masters, 'by common account of the polite world, great artists', were seen to be 'faithfully' plagiarized and believed to hold the 'true elements of greatness' by those contemporary artists who had 'a decided leaning to High Art' (p. 91).

That leaning is mocked more than once in Thackeray's family chronicle, *The Newcomes* (1855), where the protagonist, the young Clive Newcome, is determined to become a painter — a determination that is the occasion for Thackeray to introduce the unctuous humbug, the fictional portrait painter Andrew Smee, Esq., R. A., who in his turn introduces the aspiring youth and his devoted father Colonel Newcome to Gandish's School of Art. On their first visit Gandish sees that Smee is looking at his

[15] 'The Classical German Mania', *Punch*, 10 (1846), 31–32; and also, in the same volume, 'The German School', protesting against 'the alarming spread of the German School in Art' (p. 145). For pro- and anti-German sentiment in relation to the project, see Emma L. Winter, 'German Fresco Painting and the New Houses of Parliament at Westminster, 1834–1851', *Historical Journal*, 47 (2004), 291–329.
[16] 'High Art in 1846', *Our Own Times*, June 1846, pp. 89–92 (p. 89).

painting of 'Boadishia', which Gandish says 'had some success in its time', regretting however that 'I never could get my price for it; and here it hangs in my own room. 'Igh art won't do in this country […] it's a melancholy fact.' Smee whispers, 'High art! I should think it *is* high art! […] fourteen feet high, at least!', and saying out loud 'The picture has very fine points in it […]. Foreshortening of that arm, capital! That red drapery carried off into the right of the picture very skilfully managed!' — in Thackeray's parody of the 'excellencies' found in the great masters as set forth by Reynolds in his *Discourses* and still largely dominating the discourse of the ideal in art.[17]

The attack on the current generation of 'Fudges' in *Our Own Times* ends with a cry to the 'spirit of Art', asking,

> when will men learn […] that the man's own thoughts, to which he gives utterance by it, are all that is truly elevating or touching in Art? When will men learn that similes borrowed from phenomena of earthly gravitation are inapplicable to Art, in which as in heaven, there is nothing high and nothing low? […] That is not True Art which cannot, or dare not, laugh and weep, and wonder alternately — allowing all emotions of our nature to play into each other […]. The spirit of Art, like the spirit of True Religion, is incarnated at times in the humblest and homeliest forms. ('High Art in 1846', p. 92)

The terms of this tirade — its defence of the 'humblest and homeliest forms' — occur with specific reference to painting in Eliot's oft-cited explanation of her vocation as a novelist in *Adam Bede* (1859), where she pauses the story in its midst to say that

> I am content to tell my simple story, without trying to make things seem better than they were; dreading nothing, indeed, but falsity […]. It is for this rare, precious quality of truthfulness that I delight in many Dutch paintings, which lofty-minded people despise. I find a source of delicious sympathy in these faithful pictures of a monotonous homely existence […]. I turn, without shrinking, from cloud-borne angels, from prophets, sibyls, and heroic warriors, to an old woman bending over her flower-pot, or eating her solitary dinner, while the noonday light softened perhaps by a screen of leaves, falls on her mob-cap, and just touches the rim of her spinning-wheel, and her stone jug, and all those cheap common things which are the precious necessaries of life to her.[18]

[17] William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Newcomes: Memoirs of a Most Respectable Family*, ed. by Andrew Sanders (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 218–19, emphasis in original.

[18] *Adam Bede*, in *Works of George Eliot*, Cabinet Edition, 2 vols, I, 266–67. There is a similar comment in her description of the novels by Frederika Bremer: 'Nothing

She probably had in mind Gerard Dou's *Prayer of the Spinner* in the Munich Pinakothek when she wrote this passage during her stay in Munich in the spring of 1858. She continues that she does not reject

> all honour and reverence to the divine beauty of form! [...] Paint us an angel, if you can, with a flowing violet robe, and a face paled by the celestial light; paint us yet oftener a Madonna, turning her mild face upward and opening her arms to welcome the divine glory; but do not impose on us any aesthetic rules which shall banish from the region of Art those old women scraping carrots with their work-worn hands.[19]

Eliot describes the 'mischief caused by commonplace, current notions respecting' 'High Art' in her review of Charles Robert Leslie's *Handbook for Young Painters* (1855):

> 'High' and 'low' Art being determined by the treatment and not by the subject. [...] If it is of the first importance to the painter *how* he tell a thing, it is surely also not a matter of indifference *what* it is he tells: whether it be a real, natural thing, capable and worthy to engage human sympathies; or whether it be a mere show-thing and phantasm, impossible from its own nature, or want of nature, to *treat* well, but possible only, perhaps, to 'draw' or 'colour' well. Let the well or ill drawn and coloured inanities that cover the walls of our exhibitions answer.[20]

This critique and her authorial credo in *Adam Bede* suggest that the rules policing the high/low hierarchy of art constituted the 'humbug' of old masters for Eliot as novelist, critic, and art lover.

Lady Eastlake made a similar point to Eliot's with respect to what she terms 'mean and common subjects', citing Lessing's *Laocoön* as her authority on the matter:

can be more curious than the combination in her novels of the vapourishly affected and unreal with the most solid Dutch sort of realism. In one page we have copious sausage sandwiches and beer posset, and on another rhapsodies or wildly improbable incidents that seem rather to belong to sylphs and salamanders, than to a race of creatures who are nourished by the very excellent provisions just mentioned' ('Belles Lettres', *Westminster Review*, October 1856, pp. 566–82 (p. 576)).

[19] *Adam Bede*, I, 270. In her journal entry for Friday, 14 May 1858 she recorded that 'After writing we went for an hour to the Pinacothek and looked at some of the Flemish pictures' (*Journals*, ed. by Harris and Johnston, p. 316); the next day she read the eighteenth chapter of *Adam Bede* to Lewes.

[20] [George Eliot], 'Art', *Westminster Review*, April 1855, pp. 604–20 (p. 607), emphases in original. Eliot took over this section of the review in 1855, beginning with the April issue.

> ‘Enough that by dint of truth, and manner of expression, what is ugly in nature becomes what is beautiful in art.’ Teniers has given us the beauty of pots and pans in many a tinker’s heap in the corner [...]. Everything may be made beautiful, from the highest to the lowest, for everything has a spirit as well as a letter.[21]

For both Eliot and Lady Eastlake not only lath and plaster, but high and low were at stake in the question of what constituted excellence in art, along with that of the degree to which established ideals were false idols and revering them might simply be humbug.

If Eliot used the word sparingly, I have not spotted that unladylike noun in Lady Eastlake’s published work. However, the opening paragraph of her review of Ruskin’s *Modern Painters* (1843–60) suggests her concern for the way that art was currently being treated, commenting that art is

> a subject which is now engaging the attention of a large class of the educated English public. [...] But while the arts enjoy the advantage of being at this time a reality of the most earnest and almost sacred kind to many, they suffer, as must always be the case, the disadvantage of being a fashion of the most empty and pedantic sort to many more [...]; fashion cannot think, and must talk. (‘Modern Painters’, p. 384)

Lady Eastlake’s work as translator and later editor of Kugler’s *Handbook of Painting*, her completion of Anna Jameson’s *History of our Lord*, her role as ally to her husband in promoting the taste for the early masters, and her advocacy of ‘our friend’ Morelli’s ‘new departure in Art’, were powerful antidotes to the humbuggery of fashion.[22]

Although engaging in polemics about the principles of art or discovering old masters for the great British public were not Eliot’s pursuits, writing about art was integral to her art of writing. Metaphors of picturing and painting are constants in the correspondence between Eliot and her publisher. Eliot skilfully — or possibly intuitively — exploited the relation between visual and verbal representation. Reference to artworks was a powerful part of the cultural anthropology that informs her deeply

[21] [Lady Eastlake], ‘Modern German Painting’, *Quarterly Review*, March 1846, pp. 323–48 (p. 341).

[22] In a letter in the Berenson archive at Villa I Tatti, dated 2 February 1893, Lady Eastlake handed over the flame to the young Mary Costelloe (later Mary Berenson), saying that: ‘I remember well when we began to “discover” Lotto — cheifly [*sic*] of course in the Bergamo churches — a certain picturesque fantasticality fascinated me. Our friend Morelli has created what is called “a new departure” in Art, & the present generation is fortunate in being born to it.’ Lady Eastlake’s admiration for Morelli’s method and explanation of its importance is fully expressed in her review, ‘Giovanni Morelli: The Patriot and Critic’, *Quarterly Review*, July 1891, pp. 235–52.

researched evocations of the near and distant past. Indeed, her reconstruction of the social and artistic world of quattrocento Florence in *Romola* (1863) anticipated the work of twentieth-century social historians by a hundred years.

Eliot's poetic use of Botticelli's *Primavera* in *Daniel Deronda* (1876) is perhaps even more remarkable than the explicitly historical exercise of summoning up fifteenth-century Florence and the resuscitation of Vasari's Piero di Cosimo in *Romola*. There were virtually no known paintings by Piero. The few works by the artist in English collections were not attributed to him at the time. The first to go by his name was the *Satyr Mourning over a Nymph* acquired by Charles Eastlake for the National Gallery from Francesco Lombardi in 1862 (coincidentally the year that the first instalments of *Romola* appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine*). Eliot was free, therefore, to imagine works by Piero, which she did very adeptly.[23] By contrast, she used an actual image by Lady Eastlake's 'beloved Botticelli' to picture a state of mind, indicating that she, like Lady Eastlake, looked at Botticelli's paintings with fond eyes; like her, some years in advance of what became a virtual cult of that master.[24] Eliot describes the heroine of *Daniel Deronda*, the beautiful Gwendolen Harleth (now Mrs Grandcourt) entering her

[23] See Caroline Elam, 'Piero di Cosimo and Centaurophila in Edwardian London', *Burlington Magazine*, 151 (2009), 607–15, for the coincidence of the National Gallery's acquisition of the painting and the first part of the serialization of *Romola* in the *Cornhill Magazine*, with the observation that 'if Piero di Cosimo's name was already one to conjure with, his *oeuvre* still remained to be reconstructed' (p. 607). See also Elam's essay, 'La fortuna critica e collezionista di Piero di Cosimo in Gran Bretagna', in *Piero di Cosimo 1462–1522: Pittore eccentrico fra Rinascimento e Maniera*, exhibition catalogue, Uffizi, Florence (Florence: Giunti, 2015), pp. 175–83. For Eliot's 'Piero', see Witemeyer, pp. 56–60. The *Satyr Mourning over a Nymph* painting was first noted by Charles Eastlake in his travel notebooks in 1856, in the Casa Guicciardini in Florence. See *The Travel Notebooks of Sir Charles Eastlake*, ed. by Susanna Avery-Quash, Volume of the Walpole Society, 73, 2 vols (London: Walpole Society, 2011), I, 312. He saw it again in the Lombardi collection in 1858, when he thought it 'in no respect excellent' (I, 428). While in Florence in September 1861, he made an offer for the painting, which was not accepted (I, 568). He tried again in September 1862 and the acquisition from Francesco Lombardi for the price of £171 6s. 3d. was completed in October after some haggling (I, 607, 615).

[24] Lady Eastlake to Austen Henry Layard, Pisa, 15 November 1865, in *Letters*, ed. by Sheldon, p. 232. For Lady Eastlake and Botticelli's reputation in the mid-nineteenth century, see Adrian S. Hoch, 'The Art of Alessandro Botticelli through the Eyes of Victorian Aesthetes', in *Victorian and Edwardian Responses to the Italian Renaissance*, ed. by John E. Law and Lene Østermark-Johansen (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 55–85; more extensively, and with a focus on the 'rediscovery' of Botticelli in relation to the development of art history in the nineteenth century, see Jeremy Melius, 'Art History and the Invention of Botticelli' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2010), and my essay '"Pictures with a Past": Botticelli in Boston', in *Botticelli: Heroes and Heroines*, ed. by Nathaniel Silver, exhibition catalogue, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (forthcoming).

grand new home on her wedding day, 'really getting somewhat febrile in her excitement'. Gwendolen has married money and station, almost incredibly fulfilling

> her girlish dreams of being 'somebody' — walking through her own furlong of corridors and under her own ceilings of an out-of-sight loftiness, where her own painted Spring was shedding painted flowers, and her own foreshortened Zephyrs were blowing their trumpets over her.

At the same time that she gloried in this vision, she was uneasy, feeling 'the insistent penetration of suppressed experience, mixing the expectation of a triumph with the dread of a crisis'.[25] The crisis was soon to come, and the uncanny charms of the *Primavera* supply a haunting vision of repressed fear.

In addition to employing artworks to convey complex emotional states, like Gwendolen's, or to reveal character, shape social situations, or to catalyse dramatic moments, Eliot satirized the unthinking and empty talk so deplored by Lady Eastlake. In *Middlemarch* (1871–72), for example, she describes how Dorothea, with her 'Puritanic conceptions', found 'smirking Renaissance-Correggiosities [...] painfully inexplicable' and was incapable of bringing them 'into any sort of relevance with her life' (I, 109). Dorothea tells her uncle,

> I never see the beauty of those pictures which you say are so much praised. They are a language I do not understand. I suppose there is some relation between pictures and nature which I am too ignorant to feel — just as you see what a Greek sentence stands for which means nothing to me.

The well-meaning Mr Brooke, who collected ideas and pictures with equal enthusiasm, answers her:

> Bless me, now, how different people are! But you had a bad style of teaching, you know — else this is just the thing for girls — sketching, fine art and so on. But you took to drawing plans; you don't understand *morbidezza*, and that kind of thing. (I, 117–18)

Dorothea's predicament is not unique in the realm of mid-century realist fiction. In Thackeray's *Newcomes*, the amiable Colonel Newcome was completely 'in the dark' when he was with his son 'in the midst of the artists and their talk'. He could not understand 'all this rapture about a snuffy brown picture called Titian; this delight in three flabby nymphs by

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[25] *Daniel Deronda*, in *Works of George Eliot*, Cabinet Edition, 3 vols, II, 120.

Rubens' (p. 262). The second was a jibe aimed at Rubens's *Judgement of Paris*, acquired at auction by the National Gallery in 1844 for the staggering sum of 4,000 guineas, and attacked by Ruskin in *The Times* as 'coarse and unnecessary'.[26] The Colonel did his best. He went 'privily and worked at the National Gallery with a catalogue [...] desperately praying to comprehend' what he saw and 'puzzled before [the works], as he remembered he was puzzled before the Greek rudiments, as a child'. Greek to him as well were the heated arguments among the artists:

> They assaulted this academician and that; laughed at Mr. Haydon, or sneered at Mr. Eastlake, or the contrary — deified Mr. Turner on one side of the table, and on the other scorned him as a madman — nor could Newcome comprehend a word of their jargon. (Thackeray, p. 262)

Was their jargon gibberish or Greek, laughable or learned? Sides were indeed drawn on what or whom was worthy of appreciation and, in the case of the National Gallery, of acquisition. There was a general sense that in painting the national school was deficient with respect to high art, that this lack could be remedied by better educating both artists and the public, and that fortunately knowledge of the arts and their history was growing.[27] Allied with the latter was the interest in early Italian art, which was based in great measure on a recognition of its historical importance, along with its potential usefulness in training artists. Lady Eastlake expressed her increasing enthusiasm for the earlier masters with characteristic vigour when she wrote in her journal during her Florentine stay in 1855, 'I am fairly bitten with all the true pre-Raphaelites — nowhere to be found in such grandeur as at Florence', adding that 'I shall be truly proud if we succeed both in

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[26] For the sum, see Gregory Martin, *The Flemish School circa 1600–circa 1900*, National Gallery Catalogues (London: National Gallery, 1970), p. 198. The painting was bought at the John Penrice sale, Christie's, 6 July 1844, at the time when Charles Eastlake was keeper. For Ruskin's remark, see 'Danger to the National Gallery', *The Times*, 7 January 1847, p. 5, signed by The Author of 'Modern Painters': 'but now, Sir, what vestige of apology remains for the cumbering of our walls with pictures that have no single virtue, no colour, no drawing, no character, no history, no thought? Yet 2,000 guineas were, I believe, given for one of these cumbrances, and 5,000 for the coarse and unnecessary Rubens, added to a room half filled with Rubens before, while a mighty and perfect Angelico was sold from Cardinal Fesch's collection for 1,500.' There were seven paintings by Rubens in the collection already; of the two that were purchased, only one has a recorded purchase price: *Minerva and Mercury Conduct the Duke of Buckingham to the Temple of Virtue* (NG187), sold to the gallery for £200 in 1843 (Martin, p. 150).

[27] See, for example, [Sir Thomas Wyse], 'Report of the Commissioners on the Fine Arts', *British and Foreign Review*, July 1843, pp. 193–246, which opens: 'We have for many years been listening to complaints, sometimes loud, sometimes deep, of the state of Art, and especially of High Art in this country' (p. 193).

rescuing some example, and in introducing them into England, where already there are a chosen few who adore them'.[28] Succeed they did. During Sir Charles's directorship he acquired over fifty paintings that would be considered 'Pre-Raphaelite', more than a third of about one hundred and fifty pictures added to the collection during those years — purposefully and effectively transforming the gallery into a didactically beneficial ensemble illustrating the progress of art from the era of its 'reawakening'.

Original, independent-minded, and different as they were, neither Eliot nor Lady Eastlake escaped holding received opinions about the old masters held to be the greats. Or, as Lewes said about the company the couple kept in Dresden, 'We live like Hermits here. [...] Our society is strictly limited to Raphael, Titian, Correggio, Veronese, and the other "gents" of painting.'[29] Raphael and Rubens had high status in that social register and provide examples of the sources of the conventional regard — or reverence for — their works.

It is likely Reynolds who gave Rubens his place among the heroes of art for the English. The *Discourses* were never out of print. They had recently been reissued in economical editions of Sir Joshua's works in Bohn's Library (1846, 1852, and 1856). The abiding influence of the *Discourses* was due in part to his systematic presentation of a practical theory of art for painters and for those who desired to be 'distinguished as lovers and judges of the Arts' (for Reynolds to be found 'among our Nobility').[30] Even more

[28] *Journals and Correspondence of Lady Eastlake*, ed. by Charles Eastlake Smith, 2 vols (London: Murray, 1895), II, 76 (13 October 1855). Benjamin Disraeli had already argued for the didactic benefit of creating a chronologically comprehensive collection in 1826, in the first edition of his novel *Vivian Grey*. See *The Early Novels of Benjamin Disraeli*, ed. by Daniel Schwarz and others, 6 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2004), I: *Vivian Grey*, ed. by Michael Sanders: 'We are now forming, at great expense, and with greater anxiety, a National Gallery. What is the principal object of such an Institution? Doubtless to elevate the productions of our own school, by affording our artists an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the works of the great masters who have preceded them. Why, then, have we deviated from the course which has been pursued in the formation of all other National Galleries? There we shall see arranged in chronological order, specimens of the art in all ages, from the period in which Cimabue rescued it from the Greek painters, unto the present time. The excellent is doubtless to be conceived in the study of the excellent; but we should always remember, that excellence is relative [...] let [the young artist] trace on the walls of the gallery, the history of his art. [...] Thus gradually [...] should our young artist be introduced to the great masters, whom then the wise pride of human nature would incite him to imitate' (pp. 184–85). I am grateful to Francis Russell for directing my attention to this intriguing passage.

[29] Eliot to John Blackwood, Dresden, 16 August 1858, in *Letters*, ed. by Haight, II, 474.

[30] Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. by Robert R. Wark (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 14. While Reynolds's aesthetic principles, along with his portraits, were abiding touchstones in art and art criticism, his reputation did not

consequential, however, was their origin in the foundation of the Royal Academy in 1768, when the arts gained an official institutional presence in discussions of national identity and cultural status — discussions which intensified over time with the creation of national collections and an explicit concern for the fact that England lacked 'the same display of nationality in what regards our intellectual relations as among other nations', to quote from a review of the Report of the Commissioners of Fine Arts ([Wyse], p. 194). Sir Joshua, whose own paintings were still in fashion and part of English self-fashioning, set out clear definitions of the 'various departments of painting' and their 'pretensions', from those dedicated to 'low and vulgar characters' and their passions (like the 'merry-making or quarrelling, of the Boors of Teniers') (p. 51), which could be 'excellent in their kind' and praised in proportion to the limitations of their subjects, up to the very highest realms of heroic painting in the 'great style' of the greatest Italian masters (p. 71). Not only did he put names to those who attained and maintained the ideal in art (with Raphael being 'the first of painters'), but he did so with reference to clearly defined principles.[31] Those principles established a critical framework and critical vocabulary that provided the terms for the emerging debates about the arts and their various altitudes (high and low) and for expressing opposing attitudes towards the ideal and the real.

Reynolds granted Rubens a particular, if somewhat equivocal excellence. He described the Flemish master as a 'character of Genius' and placed him in the category of artists of the 'characteristical style', that is, 'possessing a character entirely his own' (p. 201). For Reynolds, despite Rubens's deficiency in 'correctness of Drawing, his want of Simplicity in Composition, Colouring, and Drapery', and the fact that,

> throughout the whole of his works, there is a proportionable want of that nicety of distinction and elegance of mind, which is required in the higher walks of painting [...] the facility with which he invented, the richness of his composition, the luxuriant harmony and brilliancy of his colouring, so dazzle the eye, that whilst his works continue before us, we cannot help thinking that all his deficiencies are fully supplied. (pp. 85, 87)

escape debate. For Sir Joshua's influence and the opposition to it, making him an 'anti-model', especially for the Pre-Raphaelites, see Camilla Murgia, 'From Academy to "Sloshua": Joshua Reynolds' Perception in the Victorian Era', *Studies in Visual Arts and Communication*, 2.2 (2015) <http://journalonarts.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/SVACij_Vol2_No2-2015-Murgia-J-Reynolds_CS02.pdf.> [accessed 14 February 2019].

[31] For Reynolds on Raphael, see *Discourses*, p. 198. That estimation recurs throughout the *Discourses*: see, for example, Discourse V, p. 81, and XI, p. 194.

When such genius was exercised, instead of the artist's excellence being applied to illustrating subjects that were worthy and interesting in themselves,

> the subject can be valued only as an occasion which set the artist to work; and yet, our high estimation of such pictures, without considering or perhaps without knowing the subject, shews how much our attention is engaged by the art alone. (pp. 200–01)

Reynolds's acknowledgement that the quality of the execution might make the subject negligible, and his balancing of defects against affects is echoed in Lady Eastlake's evocation of

> Rubens' magnificent pictures [in the Pinakothek in Munich] — sometimes misnamed the Fall of the Angels — no traditions of Art or words of Scripture can be applied to them. Mere cataracts of figures are these, unparalleled in knowledge of drawing, and in the poetry of the horrible [...]. Here, therefore, the mind must be content to look only for triumphs of human skill — for Art in its most gorgeous pride of the eye, but not for sacred history, or even for the traditions of what may be called sacred fable.[32]

Reynolds's own respect for Rubens's paintings is amply recorded in his *Journey to Flanders and Holland in the year MDCCLXXXI*, where they dominate his itinerary and his comments. Sir Joshua's judgements were still authoritative in the mid-nineteenth century: Murray's *Handbook* quotes his description of the altarpieces in the Antwerp cathedral in full. In his turn, Charles Eastlake, painter, Royal Academician, and, from 1851, a successor to Reynolds as president of the Royal Academy, also followed Reynolds in his attention to Rubens's works and what he called his system of painting. He agreed with both Reynolds and the *Handbook* that the *Descent from the Cross* was 'the masterpiece of Rubens' (*Travel Notebooks*, ed. by Avery-Quash, I, 25).

Lady Eastlake, who accompanied her husband when he saw the cathedral paintings in 1852, wrote enthusiastically to John Murray about this visit: 'Antwerp was a feast', noting that Sir Charles

> was fortunate in finding the great Ruben's [*sic*] Descent & Elevation already cleaned & not yet put up, but standing on

[32] Anna Jameson and Elizabeth Eastlake, *The History of our Lord as Exemplified in Works of Art*, 3rd edn, 2 vols (London: Longmans, Green, 1872), I, 61–62. For the context of Lady Eastlake's response to Rubens, see Adele M. Ernstrom, 'Elizabeth Eastlake's *History of our Lord as Exemplified in Works of Art*: Theology, Art and Aesthetic Reaction', *Art History*, 35 (2012), 750–78 (p. 758).

> a level with the eye in the great so-called workshop of the Cathedral. They have been admirably cleaned, which has consisted chiefly in stripping off overpaintings & allowing the original work to emerge so that Rubens was seen in his glory.[33]

Eliot also succumbed to what she described as Rubens's magic during her travels on the Continent. She wrote to her publisher John Blackwell from Munich in May 1858 saying that for her 'the great Saal full of Rubens's Pictures' was one of the very few redeeming features of Munich, 'a society where it is held a recreation to drink tea without flavouring and tell jokes without point' (*Letters*, ed. by Haight, II, 460). Writing to her friend Sara Hennell in April 1858, she said that

> the Rubens-Saal is what I most long to return to. Rubens gives me more pleasure than any other painter, whether that is right or wrong. [...] At present Rubens more than any one else makes me feel that painting is a great art and that he was a great artist. His are such real, breathing men and women, — men and women moved by passions, not mincing and grimacing and posing in mere apery of passion! What grand, glowing, forceful thing life looks in his pictures — the men such grand bearded grappling beings fit to do the work of the world, the women such real mothers. (II, 451)

While Eliot's response to the paintings concentrated on their convincing physicality and their emotional impact and the Eastlakes' on technical prowess, they all agreed in finding them fixed points in the constellation of high art. Separating subject from subjectivity and allowing style to override subject conveniently short-circuited the Catholicism of Rubens's religious work and made their Counter-Reformation carnality a matter of the bravura of the painter's brush. Taken in terms of taste — the 'period eye' — the opulent surfaces of Rubens's paintings accorded well with the fashion for heavily upholstered interiors and the flounces and furbelows of ladies' dress.

Eliot qualified her enthusiasm for Rubens in Munich, saying that 'to be sure, I have not seen so many pictures and pictures of so high a rank by any other great master. I feel sure that when I have seen as much of Raffaelle, I shall like him better' (II, 451). And so it happened, once in Dresden in July 1858, she wrote to Sara to say that 'Dresden is a proper climax, for all other art seems only a preparation for feeling the superiority of the Madonna di San Sisto the more' (II, 471). She sat before Raphael's painting feeling 'a sort of awe, as if I were suddenly in the living presence of some glorious being, [which] made my heart swell too much for me to remain comfortably, and we hurried out of the room' (*Journals*, ed. by

[33] Lady Eastlake to John Murray, Dresden, 4 September 1852, in *Letters*, ed. by Sheldon, p. 127.

Harris and Johnston, p. 325). For Lady Eastlake, Raphael was indisputably the 'perfect painter' and it was a certain fact 'that the most beautiful picture in the world is Raphael's Sistine "Madonna" at Dresden' ('Giovanni Morelli', p. 252).

The *Sistine Madonna* was the *Mona Lisa* of the mid-nineteenth century — the most widely known 'must-see' and 'must-admire' work of the artist. From 1855 it was installed (or enshrined) in a dedicated chapel-like space, placed above an altar table inscribed with Vasari's text, and framed in the Renaissance style with red velvet curtains drawn back on either side. When Eliot sat awestruck before it three years later, the painting had been fully transformed from a devotional object to an object of devotion.[34] Like the *Mona Lisa*, it was not always such a celebrity. Mentioned by Vasari, the work was little noticed until it was sold in 1754 from the church of San Sisto in Piacenza to Duke August II of Saxony, subsequently King Augustus III, for his gallery in Dresden. The crescendo of fame started almost immediately from that date. Johann Joachim Winckelmann rhapsodized over it in his *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst*, singling it out from all of Christian art. There were tributes to it from the pens of the most distinguished German men of letters, including Schiller and Goethe, who wrote verses to it.[35]

Prints circulated from the 1780s and the *Madonna* was already a poster girl in England by 1825 when she appeared as a form of 'Christmas and New Year Present' in an annual *Forget Me Not*.[36] She was so familiar 'from numerous copies and prints', Anna Jameson said, that she approached the actual 'Madonna del Sisto [...] literally with a kind of misgiving', as she recalled in her *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad*.[37] Despite her hesitation, when she looked, she saw 'the divinest image that ever shaped itself in palpable hues and forms to the living eye [...] a revelation of ineffable

[34] The *Sistine Madonna* was installed in the new gallery designed by Gottfried Semper; for watercolours by Otto Gussmann of the installation dating from 1898 and a photograph taken in 1935, see *Die Sixtinische Madonna: Raffaels Kultbild wird 500*, ed. by Andreas Henning, exhibition catalogue, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister (Munich: Prestel, 2012), cat. nos. 129–31 (pp. 284–85) and 136 (p. 289). For the nature of the esteem for the painting and its history, see Andreas Henning's essay in the exhibition catalogue, 'Raffaels *Sixtinische Madonna* — Kultbild und Bildkult', pp. 22–49.

[35] For an anthology of writing inspired by the painting, see Michael Ladwein, *Raphaels Sixtinische Madonna: Zeugnisse aus zwei Jahrhunderten deutschen Geisteslebens* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1993). For a discussion of the literature and a chronological list of writing on the work, see Marielen Putscher, *Raphaels Sixtinische Madonna: Das Werk und seine Werkung* (Tübingen: Hopfer-Verlag, 1955). See also the section 'Auf dem Weg zum Mythos', in *Die Sixtinische Madonna*, ed. by Henning, pp. 224–324.

[36] *Die Sixtinische Madonna*, ed. by Henning, cat. no. 77 (p. 248).

[37] Anna Jameson, *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad*, 2nd edn, 3 vols (London: Saunders and Otley, 1835), II, 158.

grace, purity, and truth, and goodness'. Though doubting the power of words and daunted by the attempt to say anything when 'too much has already been said and written', she managed an ecstatic description based on her experience of 'gazing on it again and again, day after day' (*Visits and Sketches*, II, 158). Jameson's heartfelt reaction echoed those of numerous other appreciative beholders. It was preceded by the responses of many worthy Germans (including Kugler) and shared by many of her fellow countrymen. English readers who wanted to learn from Kugler's *Handbook*, for instance, were guided to admire the *Madonna*:

> One of the most wonderful creations of Raphael's pencil: [...] at once the exalted and blessed woman of whom the Saviour was born, and the tender earthly Virgin whose pure and humble nature was esteemed worthy of so great a destiny. (Kugler, II, 381–82)

Even Ruskin ranked the painting among the 'few works of man so perfect as to admit of no conception of their being excelled'.[38] What Eliot and Lady Eastlake thought about this *Madonna* was personal to them, but their reverence for the work followed a well-established litany of looking.

Broadly put, the mid-century roster of great masters was a compilation derived in part from Vasari's third, culminating era of perfect masters, in part from those artists appraised and esteemed by Reynolds, in part from tastes encouraged by burgeoning 'cultural tourism' and institutionalized in the arrangements of the museums and galleries visited (let's call them the Murray's *Handbook* masters), and in great part from the developing definition of a history proper to the arts, its literature, and its research protocols (archival and connoisseurial). But the formation of the canon was not merely a matter of better historical housekeeping. Lady Eastlake's pronouncement that 'Art, truly understood, is inveterately Protestant' indicates at least one of the ways that the ideal in art was also ideological.[39] The radiant motherhood of Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* and sweet humility of Fra Angelico's Virgins (another iconic master), for example, found their parallels in the predominant models of virtuous womanhood in Victorian England. Were such paragons possible or probable, or were they mere humbug?

In sum, in making their value judgements Lady Eastlake and George Eliot were very much women of their times. I use the phrase 'of their times' advisedly; not in order to restrict their importance to history and to the history of art writing, but to place them historically. Lady Eastlake was acutely sensitive to 'the modes of thought prevailing at their own time',

[38] John Ruskin, 'Preface to the Second Edition [1844]', in *Works*, ed. by Cook and Wedderburn, III: *Modern Painters, vol. I* (1903), pp. 7–52 (p. 13).
[39] [Lady Eastlake and Harriet Grote], 'Christian Art', *Quarterly Review*, July 1864, pp. 143–76 (p. 175).

as she wrote in her study of early Christian art ('Christian Art', p. 166). George Eliot was equally absorbed by the process of history and with the ways that the knowledge of the past could be a source for comprehending the present in its irrevocable modernity.[40] Their views on art should be seen in relation to common preoccupations, which make their coincidence and occasional conventionality key to understanding period concerns.

There is no contradiction between their being 'original in thought and expression' (to quote the editor John Lockhart's admiration for Elizabeth Rigby) and being representative of their day.[41] In fact, their convictions about the nature of women and of women's writing prove what might be called their timeliness. They agreed on the psychological difference between the sexes, between masculine rationality and feminine intuition, and were in accord on thinking that those differences presented advantages for women writing, even as the position of women was changing along with so much else. Eliot was convinced that 'women have not to prove that they can be emotional and rhapsodic, and spiritualistic', observing that 'everyone believes that already'. Their duty was 'to prove that they are capable of accurate thought, severe study and continuous self-command' ('Belles Lettres', p. 578). She was also sure, however, that 'instead of being destined to vanish before a complete development of woman's intellectual and moral nature, [the difference] will be a permanent source of variety and beauty'. Those qualities arose from women writers' relative freedom from 'the trammels of pedantry and technicality' and their attendant ability to engage with their 'entire being' in their writing ('Woman in France', p. 449). Ample instances of variety, beauty, and deep personal investment are found in their writing, which was not necessarily feminine in its tone or approach, but was female in its fluidity. As women writers they took on different authorial identities according to the contexts of their texts and the conventions of publication. In whatever voice, however — be it that of translator, critic, essayist, or storyteller — they both countered humbug and contributed to an informed appreciation of art with full confidence in their abilities and of 'their great responsibility' as female writers.[42] They were keenly aware that instead of being 'eager to show what they can do like men [...] they [were] capable of much more as women', to give the redoubtable Lady Eastlake the final words on the matter (*Journals*, ed. by Eastlake Smith, I, 39).

[40] Eliot's aside in describing the town of St Oggs in *The Mill on the Floss* is a typical reflection, at once wry and nostalgic: 'Ah, even Mrs. Glegg's day seems far back in the past now, separated from us by changes that widen the years.' See *The Mill on the Floss*, in *Works of George Eliot*, Cabinet Edition, 3 vols, I, 182.

[41] John Lockhart to John Murray, in *Letters*, ed. by Sheldon, p. 48.

[42] *Journals and Correspondence of Lady Eastlake*, ed. by Eastlake Smith: 'How little the female writers of the present day seem aware of their great responsibility: eager to show what they can do like men, they disregard the fact that they are capable of much more as women' (23 December 1842, I, 39).