

George Eliot and Print Media: Woman of Letters

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As Linda Peterson has reminded us, ‘woman of letters’ was a highly populated if occluded Victorian category in the nineteenth century that coexisted with its dominant, frequently invoked partner in print media, ‘man of letters’.¹ Such women writers were made, not born, and, indeed, unusually for a girl of her generation and class, Mary Anne Evans was sent to school — day schools and boarding — until the age of 17.² It is a commonplace, based on her fiction, that George Eliot’s career was short, beginning in 1856–57, aged 37 or 38, but in fact her career in print began a decade earlier and includes a range of material and experience that made her a ‘woman of letters’ as well as a novelist.³

In this short piece, I argue that George Eliot was profoundly shaped as a writer by the contemporary print media that was burgeoning in Britain in her lifetime. This culture of print has been made more visible in our own time by the digital culture that has joined it, a new context that has moved ‘print’, the normalized ‘background’ of literature, into the foreground of the representation of media. Much as digital media has enabled the blog, email, distant readings, and tweets, so nineteenth-century print technology enabled an unprecedented production and distribution of poetry,

¹ Linda H. Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters: Myths of Authorship and Facts of the Victorian Market* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 22.

² George Eliot was known by many names in her lifetime, including Mary Ann, Marian, George Eliot, Mrs Lewes, and Polly. See Kathryn Hughes, ‘George Eliot’s Life’, in *George Eliot in Context*, ed. by Margaret Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 3–11 (p. 3). See also, Fionnuala Dillane on ‘Saccharissa’, in ‘Avatars, Pseudonyms, and the Regulation of Affect: Performing and Occluding Gender in the *Pall Mall Gazette*’, in *Women, Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1830s–1900s: The Victorian Period*, ed. by Alexis Easley, Clare Gill, and Beth Rodgers (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), pp. 336–50 (pp. 336–37). I have opted for ‘Marian’ as it is a name she uses in all of the networks I describe, that of the Brays, of Chapman, and of Lewes. I prefer it to ‘Evans’, a surname she rejected in favour of Lewes, once she began to live with Lewes in 1854. I use ‘George Eliot’ to refer to her professionally, as the author of works published after 1859 when she creates that name, but also when I refer to her overall career as an author, when retrospectively all of her works to date are included.

³ See Fionnuala Dillane, *Before George Eliot: Marian Evans and the Periodical Press*, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture, 88 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

articles, essays, serial and magazine fiction, journalism, and three-volume novels. The considerable variety of formats and range of genres of which Marian Evans/George Eliot availed herself between 1840 and 1880 are directly related to the coincidence of her lifespan with the efflorescence of the press. This diverse medium in its nineteenth-century form was at hand wherever she was located, from the local weekly newspaper *Coventry Herald and Observer* to monthly magazines such as *Blackwood's* and the *Christian Observer*, or quarterlies such as the *Westminster Review*. In Nuneaton, and Coventry and London, to which she moved aged 20 and 31 respectively, access points were varied and numerous, including private libraries, friends, subscription services, and private circulating libraries, which developed countrywide networks from the 1840s. While in the Midlands, Marian had access to a private library at Arbury Hall, a collection of printed books termed 'magnificent', which was owned by her father's employer (Hughes, p. 4).

Moreover, as a young woman, Marian Evans was not only able to find and read these diverse titles, but eventually to contribute to them: religious poetry to the Anglican monthly, the *Christian Observer*; book reviews to the *Coventry Herald*; articles and reviews on translations, theology, literature, philosophy, and fiction to the radical *Westminster*; and short fiction to *Blackwood's*. In the 1840s, while she was writing and publishing poetry and reviews, she also learned German and produced an early English translation of D. F. Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu*, which was published in 1846 by John Chapman, a radical London publisher, with whom she eventually worked in the early 1850s as the unnamed editor of the *Westminster Review*. Her production and publication of diverse forms of literary work in the 1840s was typical of 'freelance' writers of both sexes who combined publication of bread-and-butter journalism (such as reviewing in a local weekly) with original creative work (such as poetry) and translation from a modern language (such as *Leben Jesu*). Similar practice of the diverse literary work that print offered is found in the careers of authors of the 1840s such as Dickens and Thackeray. While they may have been predominantly characterized as novelists, they were more broadly 'men of letters' who, like George Eliot, counted editing, reviewing, and article writing among their literary work as well.

Other aspects of Marian Evans's entry into print were typical of women, although not confined to them. Writing from the privacy of home in the 1840s was among these, in part due to the nature of the professions which Marian was about to join — the male character of journalism and publishing at the time — and in part from the position from which she was coming — that of a single, middle-class woman who, by convention, was expected to regard the private sphere of the home as her domain, decisively separate from paid work. Similarly characteristic of women's work in print culture in the 1840s were the areas of Marian's developing competence and

interests: modern languages, religion, translation, poetry, fiction, and book reviewing. So, in that sense, Marian Evans's skill set was suitable for, even honed by, the mores of extant print culture, which already had systems in place that could accommodate women writers. Particularly effective among these was anonymity, which allowed women writers to conceal their gender from readers, and to conceal their names from readers and friends.⁴ While the work of Marian Evans for the press did continue to operate broadly within these conventions, from the first she wrote against the grain — interrogating Anglicanism in her poetry, translating radical books of German theology, satirizing formula fiction by 'ladies', and writing for the greater part of her life within a form of anonymity: a pen name, and a male name at that.⁵

Marian Evans's negotiation of print culture is the final topic I want to discuss: how she cultivated, participated in, and relied upon publishing networks. These included those of the Brays in Coventry, of John Chapman and the *Westminster Review* in London, and of George Henry Lewes, her long-term partner. Each network node was closely affiliated with periodical titles — as proprietor, editor, and/or contributor — to which Marian Evans would become a contributor and, in one case, editor. *They* were all editors and had close relations with the book trade and book publishers, which were deployed on her behalf, and one of them was a publisher of books and journals. That two of them became proprietors of press titles within a decade in different cities — publications on which they subsequently employed Marian Evans — shows the ubiquity of the sector, its identity as a common destination for men with ideas and means, and its capacity to accommodate writers of all sorts and persuasions. The centrality of these networks to the progress of Marian Evans's and George Eliot's career, and her education in the nuances of the possibilities of print, is everywhere evident in her decisions about the variety of formats in which her published work was to appear.

Key to Marian Evans's access to the world of print production after she left school were new acquaintances, Charles and Caroline (Cara) Bray, acquired at the age of 20 soon after moving to Coventry with her father. A progressive Unitarian family, the Brays comprised Charles, a local ribbon manufacturer; his wife Cara, an independent, Unitarian-reared woman; her sister Sara Hennell, similarly a product of Unitarian upbringing; and their brother Charles Hennell, author of a recent radical book interrogating the

⁴ For an expert snapshot of parallel careers to that of George Eliot of three freelance women journalists, see Joanne Shattock, 'Women Journalists and Periodical Spaces', in *Women, Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1830s–1900s*, ed. by Easley, Gill, and Rodgers, pp. 306–18.

⁵ On anonymity and women in the Victorian press, see Alexis Easley, *First Person Anonymity: Women Writers and Victorian Print Media, 1830–70* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

origins of Christianity.⁶ They were her first experience of a succession of intellectual and print networks that would provide structures throughout her life that supported her talent. Through the Brays, Marian met Harriet Martineau in 1845, and John Chapman, who published (in 1846 and 1854) two translations by her of works of higher criticism, to which the Brays had introduced her. Martineau, also a Unitarian, was already a ‘woman of letters’, a popular and highly respected author of books on political economy, of tracts, fiction, travel books, and articles in leading journals.

In 1851 Marian Evans moved to London; her initial destination was the office of an established and radical quarterly periodical, the *Westminster Review*, where she was to live in the complicated household of its publisher John Chapman, with whom she shared the post of editor. In this period, women were seldom among the staff in press offices, and Marian’s position was rare, if not unique: that of an onsite female editor of one of the great, upmarket, national journals of the day, read by people in government and the universities, and by liberal and radical intellectuals across the country.⁷ She was able to attend, for example, a meeting of the Booksellers’ Association in Chapman’s house in 1852; it was chaired by Dickens and attended by *Westminster Review* contributors and other ‘great men’, and she was the only woman present.⁸ At 142 Strand, Marian had even greater access to cutting-edge radical thought than she had had at the Brays.⁹ She met many London-based *Westminster Review* contributors and their friends and corresponded with others from outside the capital, whose manuscripts she read and edited. The phrenologist George Coombe, Bessie Parkes, Harriet Martineau, Herbert Spencer, and George Henry Lewes (1817–1878), who became her partner in 1853, were among them. Martineau, who was an early campaigner for the education of women, became in 1852 a regular leader writer of the *Daily News* and a contributor to Chapman/Evans’s *Westminster Review*, for which she provided financial support. She proved a close friend to Marian during the Chapman years and an influential model of a single woman making her way as an author and journalist.

Marian Evans came to Chapman’s office with a proven record of editorial skills, acquired mainly through her having seen through the press — Chapman’s press — her book-length translation of Strauss’s *Leben Jesu*,

⁶ Charles C. Hennell, *An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity* (London: Smallfield, 1838).

⁷ Other women editors at mid-century include Isabella Beeton (*Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine*), M. E. Braddon (*Belgravia*), Eliza Cook (*Eliza Cook’s Journal*), and Charlotte Yonge (*Monthly Packet of Evening Reading for Younger Members of the Church of England*).

⁸ Rosemary Ashton, *G. H. Lewes: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 128.

⁹ For more on Chapman’s office, see Rosemary Ashton, *142 Strand: A Radical Address in Victorian London* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2006).

but also through the reviewing she had undertaken for Bray's *Coventry Herald and Observer*. But what she learned about the press through editing the *Westminster* was how publishing and journalism worked: identifying topics from contemporary culture of import to the nation and of interest to the reader, and the best new books about them; identifying, cultivating, and managing authors (probably the most challenging and educative aspect); shaping periodical numbers; commissioning authors and rejecting and editing manuscripts; meeting deadlines and ensuring compliance with the length of issues; dealing with printers and office colleagues — these were all skills to be mastered. There is no question that Marian left the *Westminster* far more knowledgeable than she entered, equipped with transferable information about what periodical editors wanted — topics, style, length — about the sector of quarterly reviews, the distinct ideologies of titles across the market, rivalries among journals, and how to keep up with or forestall competitors. Alertness to trends in current writing and the politics of reviewing were areas of expertise key to going freelance. When she teamed up with Lewes, she was both a skilled and experienced professional, and by the time they departed for Germany in July 1854, her second Chapman book was out: Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*. It was another translation of a formidable theological text of higher criticism. While she may seem to have deferred to Lewes's subsequent management of her business affairs, her informed participation in the arrangements is not to be doubted, nor is her pleasure in not having to carry them out herself.¹⁰ Lewes would become a combination of a secretary and an agent.

Lewes, who was also part of the Chapman network, was the centre of a third crucial network that underlay Evans's career in print after she left the editorship of the *Westminster Review* in 1854. If the network of the Brays stemmed from a cluster of family members, and that around Chapman from the journal, Lewes's network stemmed from himself, benefiting from his astonishing breadth of interests (drama, science, the novel, German literature and philosophy), his considerable experience of authorship and journalism, and his founding and editing of the *Leader*, a serious weekly of the day. Lewes was close to Marian Evans in age, but by the time they became partners he had published several novels, a history of philosophy, and books on Spanish drama, Robespierre, and Comte, with his *Life of Goethe* in progress.¹¹ He was already an exemplary 'man of letters', and he continued to pursue his scientific research and literary studies at this same

¹⁰ See William Baker and John C. Ross, *George Eliot: A Bibliographical History* (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press; London: British Library, 2002), p. 419, for evidence of her professionalism: they note that she kept a record of her authorship in her journals, including what she was writing, when she submitted it, and how much she was paid.

¹¹ For more on G. H. Lewes, see Ashton, *G. H. Lewes*.

rate of intellectual intensity, founding and editing, for example, the radical reconception in 1865 of the quarterly review genre, the *Fortnightly Review*, based in part on the French feuilleton, fifteen years after the *Leader* first appeared.

Lewes was perhaps above all a journalist, publishing frequently in leading periodicals of the day. The proliferation of his journalism is indicated by the high number of entries for Lewes in the *Wellesley Index*, a reference work that covers only a sample of higher journalism, a tiny proportion of the press, and excludes all of Lewes's publications in the *Leader* and other weeklies. Augmented by a more inclusive bibliography in Alice Kaminsky's *George Henry Lewes as Literary Critic*, his writing for the press shows the political heterogeneity of the periodicals and newspapers to which he contributed and the extent to which he was a journalist by trade, publishing wherever he found paid work: *Blackwood's*, *Fraser's*, the early *Pall Mall Gazette*, and the *Saturday Review* (all Tory), *Cornhill Magazine* (non-party political), *Edinburgh Review* (Whig), the *Westminster Review* (Benthamite), and the *Leader* and *Fortnightly Review* (progressive).¹² That this (selective) list of titles favours the Tory press when we know Lewes personally to be a freethinking radical endorses the profile of Lewes as a professional journalist. A (selective) list of his book publishers shows the same canny variety and professional adeptness: he did not stick with one, or a single market — Blackwood, Henry Bohn, Chapman and Hall, Charles Knight, David Nutt, Smith Elder, Tauchnitz, Trübner — with their variety reflecting the breadth of his interests and his nimble mind.

Eliot pays tribute, lightly and wittily, to journalism and journalists in *Middlemarch* (1871–72) in her characterization of Will Ladislaw, whom Dorothea marries. Trailing the iniquities of 'London', 'foreign', low birth, and liberal politics, Will arrives in Middlemarch to edit the *Pioneer*. 'There are stories going about him as a quill-driving alien, a foreign emissary, and what not', Sir James Chettam opines:

What a character for anybody with decent connexions to show himself in! one of those newspaper fellows! You only have to look at Keck, who manages the 'Trumpet'. [...] His writing is sound enough, I believe, but he's such a low fellow, that I wished he had been on the wrong side.¹³

Lewes's rich network is outstanding in the period and characteristic of a working journalist and 'man of letters'. It was crucial in launching Marian Evans's career as a novelist in the late 1850s and early 1860s: having himself

¹² Alice R. Kaminsky, *George Henry Lewes as Literary Critic* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1968), pp. 195–207.

¹³ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ed. by David Carroll (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 375, 375–76 (Chap. 38).

been contributing to *Blackwood's Magazine* steadily in 1856 and 1857, he approached Blackwood on her behalf, who published her short stories in *Blackwood's* in 1857 and her first book of fiction in 1858. Lewes encouraged her adoption of a 'handle' with which to relate to publishers and the public. In February 1857 Marian selected 'George Eliot', a male pseudonym that privately acknowledged the part of Lewes (George Henry Lewes) in forging her professional identity.¹⁴ Lewes went on to help her manage the crisis that followed the publication of *Adam Bede* in 1859 about the *real* identity (i.e. gender and name) of George Eliot, which exposed her identity and violated her privacy, but also established her, and no one else, as the author of these works. How Lewes advised and collaborated with her to create publication forms suited to the rhythms of her literary production, which he then negotiated with publishers, is visible in the biographies of both parties and in their correspondence (Ashton, *Lewes*, pp. 205–06, 254, 269). Is there another nineteenth-century novelist, man or woman, who had a better or more 'willing literary agent and negotiator with publishers' than Lewes, as Rosemary Ashton characterizes him in her fine biography?¹⁵

The print formats and publishing choices of George Eliot's future work are conspicuously varied, ingenious, and bespoke; and indebted, we know, to Lewes's networks, knowledge of the print sector, and creative nous. She starts carefully in 1857 with short stories, published and serialized in a house magazine where anonymity was still policy, and whose publisher issued books; this is followed by a two- (not three-) volume edition in early 1858 from that publisher. *Adam Bede*, a full-length, three-volume novel follows promptly in early 1859, similarly from Blackwood but pseudonymous and with a setting and purview calculated to attract readers of *Scenes of Clerical Life* and new ones, as its author attribution shows: 'By George Eliot, Author of "Scenes of Clerical Life".'¹⁶ Even without serial publication, print mores ensured that such a signature, plus reviews — in this case enthusiastic — could sell books. *Adam Bede* was an immediate and huge success, quickly requiring new editions to supply the circulating libraries. However, from this first novel, Lewes and George Eliot were resisting the default model: initial periodical serialization that circulates the novel and familiarizes the public with its title, followed by the three-volume library

¹⁴ See Ashton, *Lewes*, p. 176, on Lewes's role in fostering Marian's early fiction and self-confidence at this time, and on her choice of pen name.

¹⁵ Ashton, *Lewes*, p. 6. In *The Letters of George Henry Lewes*, ed. by William Baker, ELS Monograph Series, 64, 65, 79, 3 vols (Victoria: ELS, University of Victoria, 1995–99), see, for example, the following letters in which he does business on her behalf: 5 January 1860, 26 October 1861, 8 April 1862, 3 May? 1862, 17? March 1865, 9 July 1871, 16 August 1871 (all vol. II).

¹⁶ Review of *Adam Bede*, *Blackwood's Magazine*, April 1859, pp. 490–504 (p. 490). *Blackwood's* is the only review I am aware of that did not supply the name of the publisher — that is, itself — in the bibliographical reference to the article.

editions which readers, having read reviews of the serial edition, may borrow from the circulating libraries, which buy more copies to meet demand increased by the pre-publicity. In concert with George Eliot's later preference, *Adam Bede* was not subjected to initial publication in monthly parts of fixed length in either part-issue or a periodical; it appeared directly in three volumes.¹⁷

This time its anonymity provoked further, if different, speculation by the public about the *gender* of 'George Eliot'. Having assuaged the curiosity around the anonymity of *Scenes* with a pen name in 1857 that obscured her gender as well as her name, George Eliot is forced to admit her identity — name and gender — during the spring of 1859, following another outbreak of misattribution after the publication of *Adam Bede*.¹⁸ The preference for anonymity that characterized journalism in the first quarter of the century was still adhered to by Blackwood in *Blackwood's Magazine*, not only for fiction in the periodical but also for book editions of fiction. Eliot's plight in June 1859 signals that the print mores around anonymity were changing, and in December 1859 and January 1860 two new magazines like *Blackwood's* — monthly 'house journals' — appeared that advocated signature: *Macmillan's Magazine*, from that firm, and *Cornhill*, from Smith, Elder.¹⁹ The age of the celebrity author that Dickens had kick-started with *Household Words* to augment the income stream of irregular novel publication in 1850

¹⁷ See Joanne Shattock, 'Publishers and Publication', in *George Eliot in Context*, ed. by Margaret Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 12–22 (p. 17). For her first novel, the decision to publish directly in volume form seems to have been more the result of accident than design. As Shattock explains, the initial expectation was that the new novel would be published serially in *Blackwood's*, but because Eliot was determined to have more written before serial publication began than had been the case with *Scenes of Clerical Life*, serialization was delayed. After seeing thirteen chapters, followed by several more tranches, John Blackwood may have hesitated about the suitability of aspects of its subject matter for *Blackwood's*, as Shattock suggests. In any case, Eliot eventually proposed that it appear in three volumes only.

¹⁸ See Ashton, *Lewes*, pp. 190, 193, 209–17. This was a gradual process and largely managed through private networks that filtered through into the public sphere, including that of the Brays and of the *Westminster*. As early as October 1856, Herbert Spencer was told that Marian was embarking on writing fiction, a confidence he broke in the autumn of 1858 when he revealed to Chapman the identity of the author of *Scenes*. Even Blackwood was only informed of the identity of George Eliot in February 1858 when he was invited to visit. *Adam Bede* appeared first in February 1859, and friends learned by post from April into the summer of 1859, although it was formally denied as late as June, when Lewes and Eliot decided reluctantly to reveal the truth through private networks. Ashton is meticulous in embedding the chronology of this process in context.

¹⁹ House journals had the advantage for publishers and authors of not only a package that included publication in serial and volume formats by a single firm, but free advertising for the firm's titles in serial and book formats and, following publication, the inclusion of (usually sympathetic) reviews of titles in the house journal.

was ushered in through signature in the new magazines, just after ‘George Eliot’ moved from screened pseudonym to full disclosure.²⁰

The default for George Eliot’s fiction remained that of *Adam Bede* — the avoidance of serialization — with three notable exceptions: *Romola*, in the *Cornhill* (1862–63), and the part issue of *Middlemarch* (1871–72) and *Daniel Deronda* (1876). As Lewes had agreed to act as literary adviser to George Smith’s new journal, he suggested to Smith that Eliot’s new work, *Romola*, would be a prestigious addition to *Cornhill*; for his part, Smith’s offer of high payment *and* illustrations clinched the deal.²¹ In accepting this offer, Eliot changed publisher, as the *Cornhill*, like *Blackwood’s*, was a house journal, part of a book firm, which duly published the library edition of *Romola*. However, in this exception to her resistance to periodical formats, Eliot refused to ‘supply’ the sixteen parts Smith stipulated, opting for twelve, and taking a reduced advance to prevail.²²

Maintaining resistance to production-determined formats, Lewes negotiated an ingenious plan for *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* that allowed Eliot to avoid producing parts of uniform length at monthly intervals. These novels were issued as paperbound parts, called ‘books’, a term appropriate for the material form in which they were issued (thick, small, book-like parts, with covers) and for the organization of the narrative (into eight parts, called ‘books’). Issued at two-monthly (*Middlemarch*) and monthly (*Daniel Deronda*) intervals in attractive uniform covers as successive books, each part was bulked out by advertisements to appear of roughly similar length to the others, although the lengths of the textual narrative of *Middlemarch* parts differed by up to thirty-six pages (*Fig. 1*). Selling at five shillings per part, they were represented to Blackwood by Lewes as good earners, more lucrative than incorporation in *Blackwood’s*, but circumventing the libraries by encouraging purchasing rather than borrowing. Economically, they functioned like periodical serialization that supplied sales to augment those from the library editions. However, another innovation, and bonus, was that both appeared in four-volume library editions, an exception to the default pattern of novel publication. George Eliot’s

²⁰ For celebrity and print, see Alexis Easley, *Literary Celebrity, Gender, and Victorian Authorship, 1850–1914* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011).

²¹ Lewes, in offering *Romola* to Smith, writes: ‘She is, as you know, reluctant and diffident; but she will, I am pretty sure[,] be guided by my wishes, even against her preference for the other form of publication’ (Letter to George Smith, 3 May? 1862, in *Letters of George Henry Lewes*, ed. by Baker, II, 34). In July 1862 he writes to W. M. W. Call, urging him *not* to wait for the whole to read the novel, but to read it in parts: ‘My main object in persuading her to consent to serial publication was not the unheard of magnificence of the offer, but the advantage of such a work being read slowly & deliberately instead of being galloped through in three volumes’ (II, 35–36 (p. 36)).

²² In the event, she wrote fourteen parts.

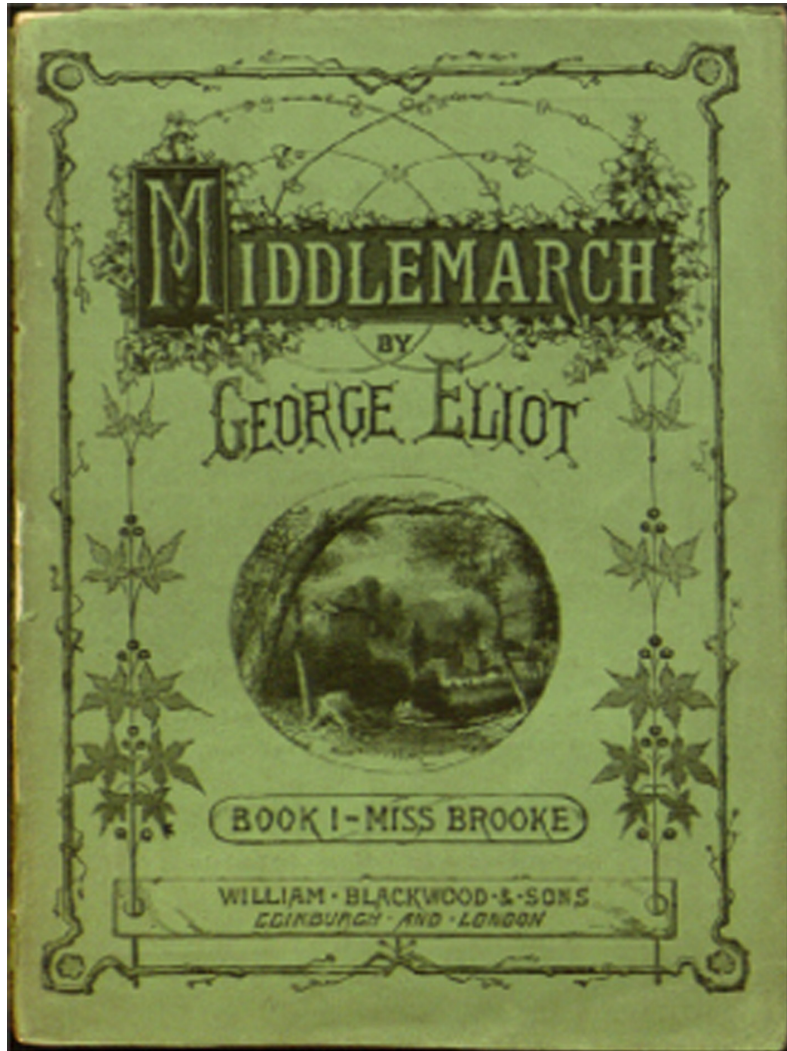


Fig. 1: Cover of Book 1 of *Middlemarch*, 1871, published in bimonthly part-issues with advertisements.

genius was undoubtedly fostered by the flexibility and diversity of literary print culture of the period. After her debut as a novelist, she was able to rely on the quality of her reputation, and the unwavering support of John Blackwood, to give free rein to her creative imagination. She published, for example, short fiction ('The Lifted Veil' (1859) and 'Brother Jacob' (1864)) and a political 'Address to Working Men, by Felix Holt' (1868) in response to the new Reform Act in *Blackwood's*; a long verse drama (*The Spanish Gypsy* (1868)); poetry (*The Legend of Jubal and Other Poems* (1874)); and a singularly original, satirical volume of criticism, *Impressions of Theophrastus*

Such (1879), which was her last published book.²³ Moreover, most of the poems in *Jubal* were collected and reprinted from their prior publication in *Macmillan's Magazine*, *Blackwood's*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, and in pamphlet form, between 1869 and 1871 (Baker and Ross, pp. 440, 510); and, inter alia, drawing on a reprint model of many 'men of letters' of the day, she was planning a volume of criticism in the 1870s comprising a selection of her revised periodical articles and reviews, which, in the event, appeared posthumously.²⁴

After leaving the *Westminster Review* and Britain for Germany in 1854, Marian continued to write for it and other periodicals, including the *Leader*, as did Lewes. Then, and on their return in 1855, until Marian began earning good money from her fiction in 1858, journalism was their main source of income, with both of them able to use their extensive networks to place their work. The repeal of newspaper stamp duty in 1855 and the gradual lifting of other related taxes on print resulted in a cascade of new titles, creating more opportunities for publication. Marian and Lewes were alive and working at the height of nineteenth-century print culture, with an unprecedented number of high culture and middlebrow magazine titles in circulation, a growing readership, and cheaper access to books and periodicals. Marian wrote four accomplished articles for the *Westminster* in 1856 and 1857, including 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists' and 'German Wit: Heinrich Heine'.²⁵ Combining wit and erudition, they show her talent for writing (which Lewes noted), and her mastery of the journalism skills she had acquired during her immersion in London print culture. It is a measure of her professionalization as a journalist at this time that neither she nor he were above puffing, a common phenomenon of nineteenth-century print culture, fostered by anonymity.²⁶ She reviewed Lewes's biography of Goethe anonymously in the *Leader*, founded and edited until recently by him. In this period, she and Lewes, who was still contributing to it regularly himself through 1857, also turned to a new title, a vituperative Tory weekly, the *Saturday Review*. In 1859 it had unusually warm praise for *Adam Bede*, before finally derogating and dismissing it in its customary manner. The advance on *Adam Bede* and the income it generated permitted the couple to move in early 1859 from rooms to a house, and transformed the finan-

²³ For an engaging and informative entrée into this little-read, fictional representation of 'essays' and characters by George Eliot, see *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, ed. by Nancy Henry (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994).

²⁴ George Eliot, *Essays and Leaves from a Note-Book*, ed. by Charles Lee Lewes (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1884).

²⁵ For the gender context of 'Silly Novels' in the *Westminster Review* and other contemporary periodicals, see Laurel Brake, *Print in Transition, 1850–1910: Studies in Media and Book History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 87–109.

²⁶ For puffing, see *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism*, ed. by Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor (London: British Library; Ghent: Academia, 2009), p. 517.

cial interdependency between them to a more even keel, and from Lewes to Marian. It is notable that participation in print culture was one of the few occupations in this period which middle-class women could pursue, even if they were married.²⁷

The prodigious talent and remarkable productivity of George Eliot were nurtured in the Petri dish of print. They flourished in a period of the growth of print culture, characterized by great diversity and changes in technology and taxes that resulted in an exponential increase of new titles and types of magazines and books. Its abundance and flexibility enabled George Eliot to make significant inroads into the print culture of the day, becoming, like a very few predecessors and contemporaries, a ‘woman of letters’, thoroughly integrated in the nineteenth-century circuit of communications in print media.²⁸

²⁷ Teaching-related occupations were another. It is in this decade that the London-based Langham Place Circle (formed 1855) turned their attention to respectable work for middle-class women, and education to prepare for it; their new title, the *English Woman's Journal* (1858–64) promulgated their views. See Diane Mary Chase Worzala, *The Langham Place Circle: The Beginnings of the Organized Women's Movement in England, 1854–1870* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1985). While friendly with group members, Marian refused an invitation to write for it on the grounds that she was now turning to writing fiction. See Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi, ‘Gender and the Woman Question’, in *George Eliot in Context*, ed. by Harris, pp. 137–44 (pp. 137–39).

²⁸ My warm thanks to Beryl Gray, who, as a fine Eliot scholar and editor, agreed to read (and check) this article.