Fionnuala Dillane revisits the first decade of Marian Evans’s working life to explore the influence of the periodical press on her emergence as George Eliot and on her subsequent responses to fame. This interdisciplinary study discusses the significance of Evans’s work as a journalist, editor and serial fiction writer in the periodical press from the late 1840s to the late 1850s and positions this early career against critical responses to Evans’s later literary persona, George Eliot. Dillane argues that Evans’s association with the nineteenth-century periodical industry, that dominant cultural force of the age, is important for its illumination of Evans’s understanding of the formation of reading audiences, the development of literary genres and the cultivation of literary celebrity.

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Nineteenth-century British literature and culture have been rich fields for interdisciplinary studies. Since the turn of the twentieth century, scholars and critics have tracked the intersections and tensions between Victorian literature and the visual arts, politics, social organization, economic life, technical innovations, scientific thought – in short, culture in its broadest sense. In recent years, theoretical challenges and historiographical shifts have unsettled the assumptions of previous scholarly synthesis and called into question the terms of older debates. Whereas the tendency in much past literary critical interpretation was to use the metaphor of culture as ‘background’, feminist, Foucauldian and other analyses have employed more dynamic models that raise questions of power and of circulation. Such developments have reanimated the field. This series aims to accommodate and promote the most interesting work being undertaken on the frontiers of the field of nineteenth-century literary studies: work which intersects fruitfully with other fields of study such as history, or literary theory, or the history of science. Comparative as well as interdisciplinary approaches are welcomed.

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