

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-79457-2 - The Journals of George Eliot
Edited by Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

The Journals of George Eliot

The Journals of George Eliot publishes for the first time the entire text of the surviving journals of the great Victorian novelist, and constitutes a new text by her – the closest she came to autobiography. The journals span her life from 1854, when she entered into a common-law union with George Henry Lewes, to her death in 1880, revealing the professional writer George Eliot as well as the remarkable woman Marian Evans. Many aspects of her writing life are illuminated, such as the separation of ‘George Eliot’ – and the account of her work’s public reception – from her ‘private’ self, at the time she began to write fiction. The journals present a George Eliot of many moods, not only the serious sybilline figure so admired in her later years. The edition’s extensive apparatus includes a chronology, introduction, headnotes to each diary, and an annotated index supplying valuable contextual and explanatory information.

MARGARET HARRIS is Professor in English Literature at the University of Sydney. She has edited *The Notebooks of George Meredith* (with Gillian Beer, 1983) and several of Meredith’s novels, and has published on various topics in nineteenth- and twentieth-century English and Australian literature.

JUDITH JOHNSTON is Faculty of Arts Teaching and Research Fellow in the Department of English at the University of Western Australia. She is the author of *Anna Jameson: Victorian, Feminist, Woman of Letters* (1997) and of a number of essays and articles on Victorian prose. With Margaret Harris she edited George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* for Everyman Paperbacks (1997).

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-79457-2 - The Journals of George Eliot
Edited by Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-79457-2 - The Journals of George Eliot
Edited by Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

The Journals of George Eliot

Edited by MARGARET HARRIS *and* JUDITH JOHNSTON



Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-79457-2 - The Journals of George Eliot
 Edited by Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
 Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521794572

© Cambridge University Press 1998

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
 no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
 permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1998

First paperback edition 2000

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

Eliot, George, 1819–1880.

The Journals of George Eliot / edited by Margaret Harris and
 Judith Johnston.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 0 521 57412 9 (hardback)

I. Eliot, George, 1819–1880 – Diaries. 2. Women novelists,
 English – 19th century – Diaries. I. Harris, Margaret.

II. Johnston, Judith, 1947– . III. Tide.

PR4681.A3H37 1998

828'.803–dc21

[B]

98-3679

CIP

ISBN 978-0-521-57412-9 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-79457-2 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or
 accuracy of URIs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in
 this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is,
 or will remain, accurate or appropriate. Information regarding prices, travel
 timetables, and other factual information given in this work is correct at
 the time of first printing but Cambridge University Press does not guarantee
 the accuracy of such information thereafter.

Contents

List of illustrations	vi
Preface	vii
List of abbreviations	xii
Chronology	xiii
Introduction	xvi

The Journals of George Eliot

I. Diary 1854–1861	
1. Weimar, 20 July–3 November 1854	3
2. Berlin, 3 November 1854–13 March 1855	30
3. England, 14 March 1855–19 June 1861	48
II. Diary 1861–1877	91
III. Diary 1879	149
IV. Diary 1880	190
V. Recollections of Weimar 1854	215
VI. Recollections of Berlin 1854–1855	241
VII. Recollections of Ilfracombe 1856	259
VIII. Recollections of the Scilly Isles and Jersey 1857	274
IX. The making of George Eliot 1857–1859	283
X. Germany 1858	303
XI. Recollections of Italy 1860	327
XII. Italy 1864	369
XIII. Normandy and Brittany 1865	380
Explanatory index	391

Illustrations

- 1 'A little bonnet like a flower pot with a broad rim is an indigenous article of dress'. Sketch from Diary 1854–1861, Weimar. 15
- 2 Cloak of printed cotton worn by the peasants of Weimar. Sketch from Diary 1854–1861, Weimar. 20
- 3 A page from Diary 1854–1861, recording the period from 4 February to 1 July 1860, which includes completion of *The Mill on the Floss*, and a brief account of the journey to Italy described in detail in 'Recollections of Italy, 1860'. 85
- 4 'Our lodgings at Weimar were amusing. The sitting room was something like a room cut in a wall, such as you may see at Walmer Castle – low and narrow, with four windows along one side of it'. A page from the manuscript of *Recollections of Weimar*, 1854 with George Eliot's sketch plan. 222

Reproduced by permission of the Beinecke Library, Yale University.

Preface

This edition provides the complete text of George Eliot's surviving journals and diaries, which run from the time of her union with G. H. Lewes in 1854 to her death in 1880. She customarily kept a notebook for daily diary entries, and at times took a different book to record particular journeys, to Germany in 1858 and to Italy in 1864, for example. In addition, she wrote more formal essays, most of them entitled 'Recollections' (usually of travels both within Britain and abroad) in the same journal volumes. The journals were extensively quoted in the three volumes of *George Eliot's Life as related in her letters and journals, arranged and edited by her husband J. W. Cross* (1885), and selections from them included by Gordon S. Haight in his edition of *The George Eliot Letters* (1954–78) and in his biography, *George Eliot* (1968). Certain of the journals, particularly 'Recollections of Ilfracombe' and 'How I came to write Fiction', have been reprinted in collections of George Eliot's non-fiction prose. Only now do the journals appear entire: about one-quarter of the text has not been published previously.

The contents of six manuscript volumes are reproduced here. Five of them are in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, while the sixth is in the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection, New York Public Library. This last is George Eliot's 1879 Diary, a brown cloth 'Beeching's Annual Diary for 1879'. She chose its black-bound counterpart as her diary for 1880 (16 × 9.5 cm., Beinecke George Eliot MS IV 5). The richest of the Beinecke manuscripts is Diary 1854–1861 (21 × 15 cm., George Eliot MS IV 1), a small exercise book re-covered in oilcloth, now somewhat worn, which (at one end) contains diary entries, and at the other, 'Recollections' of Weimar, Berlin, Ilfracombe, Jersey and the Scilly Isles, and 'How I came to write Fiction' and 'History of *Adam Bede*'. The morocco-bound notebook containing Diary 1861–1877 (15 × 10 cm., George Eliot MS IV 3) is also worn, as might be expected given the long period over which it was in use. George Eliot thriftily made her travel diaries do double duty: thus the trip to Germany in 1858 appears at one end of MS IV 2 (18 × 12 cm.) and 'Recollections of Italy. 1860' at the other, while the journeys to Italy in 1864 and to Normandy in 1865 are recorded at opposite ends of MS IV 6 (12 × 8 cm.).

A typescript transcription with handwritten emendations,

made for Richard Little Purdy, is kept with the manuscript volumes in Beinecke, along with a transcription of the 1879 Diary by R. H. Nims for Gordon S. Haight. Our transcription was made independently of these, though reference has been made to them for purposes of comparison and occasional inspiration.

The preparation of this edition posed several challenges. The first was to confront the question of whether a complete edition of the journals would provide more than a dutiful exercise in scholarship. We were not far into the task of transcription before the question was answered affirmatively, as it became apparent that to read any of the material in the context of companion pieces in George Eliot's diary volumes is very different from reading it in the selections made by Cross and Haight. Here is George Eliot speaking for herself. Our conclusions about the interest and significance of the journals are developed in the Introduction.

The order in which the separate journals were to be presented involved another set of decisions. Initially, we thought of constructing a single chronological sequence, for instance by interpolating 'Recollections of Italy, 1860' with the diary for that year. The realisation of the import of George Eliot's placement of 'How I came to write Fiction', 'History of *Adam Bede*', and the other entries in the section we have called 'The Making of George Eliot' – in brief, that at this stage George Eliot was making an effective separation of her 'public' and 'private' selves in her journal – brought us to the final arrangement, which preserves the integrity of her divisions of her text. The diaries appear in chronological order, followed by a second sequence of the essay-type journals: connections and intertextualities are pointed out in the headnotes.

A major challenge was to determine how traditional an edition this should be. Since the prime justification of this edition is that it makes available more of the writings of George Eliot, we endeavoured to make the journals accessible in every sense by supplying a diplomatic transcription of the manuscripts supported by unobtrusive editorial apparatus.

Our principal concern has been to provide an accurate and readable text with minimal editorial intervention. There are a few words and sentences which have resisted our best efforts to decipher them (notably the first page at each end of Diary 1854–1861, where the oilcloth cover has stuck to the paper in places and obliterated the text): these are noted where they occur.

Some modifications have been made to George Eliot's

manuscript. The ampersand and most other frequently used contractions (e.g. 'wh.', 'art.') have been expanded. In general, obvious errors of spelling (including such matters as errors of case in German) have been silently corrected, though George Eliot's preferred spellings are retained (e.g. she prefers 'staid' to 'stayed', and consistently uses 'surprized' and 'Shakspeare'). Variant forms are generally normalised according to her most frequent usage, but some vagaries are retained (e.g. she alternates between such spellings as 'Charlie' and 'Charley'). Punctuation has been added only where it is necessary to clarify the sense, and removed only where there is evident error, and where she follows the now obsolete practice of inserting a period after numerals in dates, times and the like. Beyond closing inverted commas when George Eliot has omitted to do so, no attempt has been made to regularise the way she indicates titles of books, plays, and so on (which are sometimes italicised, sometimes in inverted commas, sometimes not indicated at all). Similarly her capitalisation and emphases have been retained. Dates have been left in the form in which she wrote them. Occasionally, George Eliot makes a slip in dating her diary entries: correct dates in square brackets follow what she wrote.

The chronology of George Eliot's life provides perspective on the journals. Context and background to each section of the journals are provided in headnotes. Unacknowledged translations in the apparatus in this edition are our own, considerable assistance with German having been provided by Rosemary Ashton. Footnotes have been kept to a minimum, and the weight of annotation carried by the explanatory index which is designed as a glossary as well as a guide to contents. It includes substantive references for example, to people George Eliot met, books she read, and music she heard. George Lewes is omnipresent: the index lists references to his works, but not every mention of him in George Eliot's text. Similarly, after much deliberation, we restricted the index entry for George Eliot to her writings, places of residence, and travels. Principal entries appear under the names of authors or composers, with cross-references from named works. There has been no attempt to index all visual art works by name, though particular artists are indexed (a glance at the Italian journals will indicate the reason for this decision). Not all places mentioned are included, only those where she spent some time or which have particular significance. These entries gloss George Eliot's text: they are not encyclopaedia entries. For the most part, a reader who wants to know who Clifford

Allbutt was, or whether and where George Eliot refers to him, will simply look under 'Allbutt'. Again for the most part, it has been possible to elucidate allusions or quotations in the index: for example, when George Eliot refers to 'Byron's praise' of the Rhine near Coblenz (p. 18), the reader who turns to 'Byron' in the index will find the relevant passage of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* identified. But at pp. 42 and 237, the Milton quotations and allusions require a footnote since George Eliot did not name the poet to provide a headword. This procedure has been adopted to ensure the readability of the text, and to facilitate the use of the edition for reference. Inevitably there will be some readers who do not find their questions answered as readily as they might wish: to conscientious editors (who none the less hope to have provided more satisfaction than frustration) this must remain a matter of regret. Haight's edition of *The George Eliot Letters* was indispensable to our project, especially because of the detail in his editorial apparatus which has substantially informed ours.

We are most grateful for the permission to publish manuscript material both of George Eliot and George Henry Lewes granted by Jonathan Ouvry, great-great-grandson of G. H. Lewes, and holder of the George Eliot copyright. In addition, we acknowledge the permission of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, and the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection in the Research Libraries of the New York Public Library, to publish manuscript material in their collections. We thank Ralph Franklin, Vincent Giroud, and Marjorie Wynne at Beinecke for their particular courtesies. We have reason to be grateful to helpful staff in other libraries as well, not least the Library of the University of Sydney, the resources of which were equal to all but the most esoteric of George Eliot's demands.

Work on the edition was made possible by the award of an Australian Research Council Large Grant (1991–2) to Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston. Jennifer Moore, as Research Assistant funded by this grant, made an important and inimitable contribution to the edition. Margaret Harris was also awarded the John D. and Rose H. Jackson Fellowship at the Beinecke Library in 1993. The Department of English at the University of Sydney, and also the Department of English at the University of Western Australia, have supported the project in various ways over time: in particular, and in alphabetical order, we thank Amanda Collins, Marion Flynn, Pat Ricketts and Maree Williams in Sydney, and Denise Hill and Sue Lewis in Perth.

Criticism, encouragement, and other forms of assistance have been supplied by Rosemary Ashton, William Baker, Gillian Beer, Virginia Blain, Peter Edwards, Hilary Fraser, Constance Fulmer, Penny Gay, Beryl Gray, Jennifer Gribble, Barbara Hardy, Pamela Law, Judith Maitland, Joanne Shattock, Michael Slater, John Sutherland, Martha Vicinus, Michael Wheeler, and Joseph Wiesenfarth. The professional commitment of Andrew Brown and Josie Dixon at Cambridge University Press has been exemplary. It has been a particular privilege to have the editor of the Clarendon edition of *Romola* associated with our work on the journals: his suggestion that potential difficulties of annotation be addressed by way of an explanatory index proved to be the right one despite the problems of implementation. Colleagues, friends and relatives have borne with us and the project with seeming cheerfulness and evident fortitude. Special thanks to John Burnheim, David Overett, and Marjorie Overett.

We dedicate this edition to our daughters, Catherine Burnheim, Lucy Burnheim, and Mercana Johnston.

Abbreviations

[]

Matter supplied by the editors

Bodenheimer

Rosemarie Bodenheimer, *The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans: George Eliot Her Letters and Fiction* (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1994)

Cross

J. W. Cross, *George Eliot's Life as related in her letters and journals*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, Blackwood, 1885)

GE

George Eliot

GHL

George Henry Lewes

Haight

Gordon S. Haight, *George Eliot: A Biography* (Oxford University Press, 1968)

Journals of GHL

The Journals of George Henry Lewes, held at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

Letters

The George Eliot Letters, ed. Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1954–78)

Letters of GHL

The Letters of George Henry Lewes, ed. William Baker, 2 vols (University of Victoria, English Literary Studies Monograph Series 64, 1995)

Wiesenfarth, Joseph

A Writer's Notebook, 1854–79, and Uncollected Writings (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1981)

Chronology

- 1819 22 November Born Mary Ann Evans, at South Farm, Arbury, near Nuneaton, Warwickshire, to Christiana, née Pearson, second wife of Robert Evans, estate manager.
- 1846 Translation of D. F. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu* (1835–6), as *The Life of Jesus*, published anonymously. Publication of her ‘Poetry and Prose from the Notebook of an Eccentric’ in the *Coventry Herald*, owned by Charles Bray.
- 1849 Travels abroad for the first time, following the death of her father, in company with the Brays.
- 1851 Moves to London: lodges with John Chapman, and works with him on the *Westminster Review*.
- 1853 Moves from Chapman’s home at 142 Strand to 21 Cambridge Street, as relationship with GHL intensifies. Ceases editorship of the *Westminster*, though still contributing to it and other journals.
 Translating Ludwig Feuerbach’s *Das Wesen des Christentums* (*The Essence of Christianity*).
- 1854 July Feuerbach translation, ‘by Marian Evans’, published. Leaves London for Germany with GHL.
- 1855 After seven months in Weimar and Berlin, returns to England, setting up house with GHL. GE publishes articles and reviews in *Westminster Review* and other journals, including a review of GHL’s *Life of Goethe* for the *Leader*.
- 1856 May–August Visit to Ilfracombe and Tenby, mainly because of GHL’s fascination with marine biology.
 September Begins to write ‘The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton’.
 November Publisher John Blackwood accepts the first of the ‘Scenes of Clerical Life’ for *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*.
- 1857 January Last contributions to the *Westminster*; first episode of ‘Amos Barton’ appears anonymously in *Blackwood’s*. During the year, ‘Mr Gilfil’s Love Story’ and ‘Janet’s Repentance’ also serialised in *Blackwood’s*.
 March–July Visit to the Scilly Isles and Jersey, again because of GHL’s ‘seaside studies’.
Adam Bede begun.

- 1858 *Scenes of Clerical Life*, by George Eliot published in two volumes by Blackwood.
April–September Travel to Munich and Dresden.
- 1859 *February Adam Bede* (3 vols.) published. Amidst claims that the novel is the work of one Joseph Liggins, Marian Evans Lewes acknowledges to friends that she is GE.
July ‘The Lifted Veil’ published in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*.
- 1860 *April* Publication of *The Mill on the Floss* (3 vols.).
March–July Visit to Italy, during which GHL suggests Savonarola as the subject for a novel.
 GHL’s eldest son, Charles, leaves Hofwyl School in Switzerland and comes to live with GE and GHL.
- 1861 Publication of *Silas Marner* (1 vol.).
 Second journey to Italy, mainly to do research for *Romola*, a novel which caused her immense difficulty.
- 1862 Publisher George Smith offers £7,000 for *Romola*, which begins publication in the *Cornhill* in July.
- 1863 *Romola* (3 vols., Smith, Elder). GE buys ‘The Priory’, Regent’s Park. GHL’s second son, Thornton, goes to seek his fortune in Natal.
- 1864 *May–June* Visit to Italy, during which GE has the inspiration for *The Spanish Gypsy*.
 ‘Brother Jacob’ (written 1860) published in *Cornhill*.
- 1865 Writes poetry, and articles for *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Fortnightly Review*. Begins *Felix Holt*.
August–September Visit to Normandy and Brittany.
- 1866 Returns to Blackwood for publication of *Felix Holt* (3 vols.).
 Lewes’s third son Herbert joins Thornton in Natal.
- 1867 *December–March* Journey to Spain.
- 1868 *The Spanish Gypsy* published.
- 1869 Working on poetry, and the beginning of *Middlemarch*.
 Thornton Lewes returns ill from Natal; dies 19 October.
- 1871 Publication of *Middlemarch* in parts begins.
- 1872 Part publication of *Middlemarch* continues: four volume edition comes out in December.
- 1874 Publication of *The Legend of Jubal and Other Poems*.
 Working on *Daniel Deronda*.
- 1875 Herbert Lewes dies in Natal.
- 1876 *February–September Daniel Deronda* published in monthly parts: four volume edition follows in December.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-79457-2 - The Journals of George Eliot
Edited by Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Chronology

xv

- 1878 30 November GHL dies.
1879 *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* published.
GE prepares the final volume of GHL's *Problems of Life and Mind*
for publication.
1880 6 May Marries John Walter Cross.
22 December Dies.

Introduction

George Eliot was equivocal about posterity. On 28 November 1880 – almost the second anniversary of the death of her beloved George Lewes, and the day before she and her husband John Cross were to move from Witley in the Surrey countryside to their new London residence in Cheyne Walk – she wrote to Cara Bray:

I think you are quite right to look over your old letters and papers and decide for yourself what should be burnt. Burning is the most reverential destination one can give to relics which will not interest any one after we are gone. I hate the thought that what we have looked at with eyes full of living memory should be tossed about and made lumber of, or (if it be writing) read with hard curiosity. I am continually considering whether I have saved as much as possible from this desecrating fate.¹

She had made such decisions about Lewes's papers after his death. Her diary for 1879 shows her obsessive yet therapeutic reading and re-reading of many of Lewes's manuscripts and published writings as she undertook the commemorative task of completing his *Problems of Life and Mind*, and records that on the first anniversary of his death she prepared his letters to be buried with her. She can hardly have failed to consider ways of disposing of her own manuscripts during the painful process of arranging her personal and business affairs that extended from Lewes's death to hers.

At all events, the manuscript journals that are published here in full for the first time have survived, along with other notebooks and miscellaneous papers, some of them already published.² We believe that the journals are a set of texts as

1 *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. Gordon S. Haight (9 vols., New Haven, Yale University Press, 1954–78), vol. 7, pp. 340–1; subsequently cited as *Letters*. Cf. a letter of 1874 which refers to Dickens and to Mill's *Autobiography*: 'Is it not odious that as soon as a man is dead his desk is raked, and every insignificant memorandum which he never meant for the public, is printed for the gossiping amusement of people too idle to read his books?' (vol. 6, p. 23); and another of 1877 where she speaks of 'my repugnance . . . to autobiography, unless it can be so written as to involve neither self-glorification nor impeachment of others' (p. 371).

2 For example, *Quarry for 'Middlemarch'* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1950), ed. Anna Theresa Kitchel; *Some George Eliot*

complex as any of George Eliot's writings, which – *pace* their author – are indeed to be 'read with hard curiosity'. The curiosity she feared was prying intrusion, perhaps even simple inquisitiveness; but these texts deflect seekers after the scandalous and sensational. The curiosity the journals invite is a subtler inquiry, rewarded both by immediate gratifications, such as the effulgence of George Eliot in love in the Weimar diary, and by cumulative satisfaction gained from the perspectives on her writing life that variously emerge.

Far from being quaint 'curiosities', the journals form a substantial addition to the canon of George Eliot's work. More than a quarter of the text of the journals has never been published before: for instance, none of 'Italy 1864' and only two sentences of 'Normandy and Brittany 1865' have been published (*Letters*, vol. 4, p. 202 n.); while large sections or episodes in other journals are unpublished – such as the wonderful account of a picnic with Keats and wine in 'Recollections of Weimar'. Even familiar pieces like 'Recollections of Ilfracombe', substantially published soon after her death in *George Eliot's Life as related in her letters and journals, arranged and edited by her husband J. W. Cross*,³ and subsequently reprinted in more or less complete versions, read differently in the context of the other journals.

The extant journals begin as Marian Evans (not yet George Eliot) elopes to Germany with George Henry Lewes in July 1854, and continue almost to her death in December 1880. Pages have been torn from the earliest manuscript volume: internal evidence indicates that the first entries were made in Geneva in the winter of 1849.⁴ The journal entries are most copious in the period before George Eliot began to publish fiction in the late 1850s – indeed, in these years, they *were* her writing, distinguished by much lively description and

Notebooks: An Edition of the Carl H. Pforzheimer Library's George Eliot Holograph Notebooks, MSS 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 4 vols. (Salzburg, Universität Salzburg, 1976–85), ed. William Baker; *George Eliot's 'Middlemarch' Notebooks: A Transcription* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1979), eds John Clark Pratt and Victor A. Neufeldt; *George Eliot. A Writer's Notebook, 1854–79, and Uncollected Writings* (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1981), ed. Joseph Wiesenfarth; and *George Eliot's 'Daniel Deronda' Notebooks*, ed. Jane Irwin (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³ *George Eliot's life as related in her letters and journals, arranged and edited by her husband J. W. Cross*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, Blackwood, 1885); subsequently cited as Cross.

⁴ Haight conjectures that Cross removed forty-six leaves (*Letters*, vol. 1, p. xv).

anecdote. They become more laconic particularly after the publication of *Romola* in 1863, though her chronicling of the composition of that novel is extended and excruciating. Not all the gaps are the result of erratic intervals between entries. For example, George Eliot kept a journal of the expedition to Spain early in 1867, which has disappeared,⁵ and so has her diary for 1878. (We have used the terms ‘diary’ and ‘journal’ loosely and to some extent interchangeably – ‘diary’ is preferred for daily entries, ‘journal’ for longer, more formal compositions. In this edition, ‘diary’ entries are generally printed without justification of the righthand margin, while the ‘journal’ entries have righthand justification.)⁶

There are six manuscript volumes, containing three groups of material. The first consists of diaries, journals of daily record, in four books, 1854–61, 1861–77, 1879, 1880. The second group is travel diaries, which replace the regular diary on a particular journey, in two volumes. One was used for ‘Germany 1858’, and at the other end, for ‘Recollections of Italy 1860’; with similar economy, the notebook used for ‘Italy 1864’ did double duty for ‘Normandy and Brittany 1865’. The third group consists of more formal retrospective essays – the ‘Recollections’ of Weimar, Berlin, Ilfracombe, Scilly and Jersey, together with ‘How I came to write Fiction’ and ‘History of *Adam Bede*’ – and these were written in from the back of the 1854–61 diary.

There is nothing to suggest that these journals were composed for publication, though George Eliot herself reworked her accounts of Weimar in 1854 for two articles in *Fraser’s Magazine*.⁷ In effect, they were first edited by John Cross, whose pencilled markings and occasional annotations appear on the

5 Gordon S. Haight, *George Eliot* (Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 402n. reports that GE’s Journal of her Spanish travel, 26 January–7 March 1867, was sold at Sotheby’s, 27 June 1923, at the same time as her Notebook for *The Spanish Gypsy*, which ‘was broken up and bound with some MS letters into volumes of *The Works of George Eliot*, large paper ed., 25 vols (Boston and N.Y., Houghton Mifflin, 1924), to form a limited ed.’ While sections of the notebook and related memoranda have been traced, the journal has not turned up.

6 Judy Simons, *Diaries and Journals of Literary Women from Fanny Burney to Virginia Woolf* (London, Macmillan, 1990), recognises the issue: ‘Although strictly speaking “diary” can be used as a generic term to cover both a daily record of engagements and more intimate writing, while “journal” tends to refer more specifically to a personal chronicle, writers themselves do not always keep to such nice distinctions.’ (p. 7) Simons’s discussion, particularly her opening chapter, ‘Secret Exhibitionists: Women and their Diaries’, provides a helpful context for reading George Eliot’s journals.

7 See headnote to ‘Recollections of Weimar’.

manuscripts, made during his extensive use of them, along with her letters and other notebooks, for *George Eliot's Life*. Much later, George Eliot's American champion, Gordon S. Haight, drew on the journals not only in his monumental edition of *The George Eliot Letters* but also for the biography, *George Eliot* (1968).⁸ Each of these devotees had his own agenda which determined his use of the journal material, though both print some journals virtually complete. In this edition, the headnotes to each journal include a brief description of the use Cross and Haight have made of it.

The journals have evident biographical significance. They display George Eliot's extremes of emotion, from her happiness with Lewes in Weimar in 1854 (Diary 1854–1861) to her grief at his death (Diary 1879). They tell us how George Eliot and Lewes spent their time – reading, writing, walking, travelling; entertaining and going to theatre, opera and concerts. They show constant concern about the health of one partner or the other, and almost as constant attention to family commitments. They graph George Eliot's extension of her knowledge of natural and physical science, history and languages, and the development of her taste in art and music.

The journals challenge received biographical readings of George Eliot, for instance in their demonstration of her competence in practical matters of finance and business after Lewes's death. She adhered to certain conventions about what she recorded, without being as systematic in her journalising as Lewes ('journalising' is his word). Lewes's diaries (the first extant is numbered 'X', and begins mid-1856) frequently complement hers in giving details about particular social engagements or domestic arrangements. On the evidence of the journals, it might seem that George Eliot is not interested in current affairs: they contain only a couple of references to the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny is mentioned by implication, there are merely hints of the volatile political situation in Italy in 1860, and no attention to the American Civil War – though on 31 December 1870, she comments on the Siege of Paris 'where our fellow-men are suffering and inflicting horrors', and in the late 1870s refers to the Eastern Question. But it would be erroneous to assume that she turned aside from such issues and events. She more frequently displays concern about

⁸ A complete listing of published journal material would include *Essays of George Eliot*, ed. Thomas Pinney (London, Routledge, 1963); *Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings*, eds. A. S. Byatt and Nicholas Warren (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1990); and *Selected Critical Writings*, ed. Rosemary Ashton (Oxford University Press, 1992).

national and international events in letters than in her journals, and that concern finds complex expression in her fiction especially from *Felix Holt* on. Moreover, as the journals show, the Leweses did not always have a daily newspaper, at least in their early years together, but they certainly kept up with the weeklies and quarterlies that were major organs of opinion (often of course Lewes was writing for them). Not surprisingly, George Eliot's vision is Eurocentric. North America does not figure prominently, and colonies such as South Africa and Australia are places to send difficult progeny (Lewes's sons) or in which to invest for profit.

Just as her awareness of events in the public domain is rarely documented in the journals, neither is her personal life fully recounted. The abrupt entry for 9 April 1880, 'Sir James Paget came to see me. My marriage decided', is the most notorious example of her withholding major personal events from even this private record. There are notable reticences in the journals – about such mundane matters as food and dress, on the whole, and more generally about relationships and emotional reactions.

The principal interest of the journals must be their relation to George Eliot's writing life. The early material can be read as prelude to the fiction, and there is some symmetry between the dwindling bulk of the journals and the growing production of stories and novels. Throughout, the journals provide evidence of her ways of working. There are parallel texts within the journals, which among other things cast light on her processes of composition: for instance the diary for Weimar in 1854 parallels 'Recollections of Weimar', and later versions appeared in the *Fraser's* articles already mentioned. There is an extraordinary parallel, discussed later, between the diary from December 1857 to June 1859, and the journal we have called 'The Making of George Eliot'. Another kind of parallel is provided by letters, both of George Eliot and George Lewes. At times our commentary draws attention to a relevant letter, but generally we assume that an interested reader will turn up Haight's edition to find how letters amplify or qualify the narrative of the journals.

The commentary points out particular connections between the journals and other of George Eliot's writings – not only the novels and letters, but also other notebooks. Some of these are dedicated to preparation of particular works, while the one edited by Joseph Wiesenfarth as *George Eliot: A Writer's Notebook, 1854–1879*, was kept concurrently with the journals. It is conspicuous that the journals provide few

literal ‘keys’ to the novels. Locations, yes – Prague for *The Lifted Veil*, Florence for *Romola*, Rome for *Middlemarch*, the Jewish quarter in Frankfurt for *Daniel Deronda*, and so on. Occasionally, personages who later appear as characters in the novels pass through the journals: the young musician Rubinstein, encountered in Weimar in 1854, matures into Klesmer in *Daniel Deronda*; the painter, Overbeck, visited in Rome in 1860, is transposed into Naumann in *Middlemarch*. It may even be that a trace of ‘the social life at Scilly’ in 1857, where George Eliot ‘was repeatedly told, in order to make me aware who Mr. Hall was, that he married a Miss Lemon’ (‘Recollections of the Scilly Isles’), persisted into *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life*, where Rosamond Vincy is irremediably characterised as ‘the flower of Mrs Lemon’s school’ (chapter 11). It is not as a source book for the fiction but as a site for observation of the processes of authorship that the journals have most to offer.

There was a time when George Eliot contemplated an autobiography: Lewes noted in his diary for 22 November 1870 (her fifty-first birthday) ‘Ordered greatcoat, cigars, & bought Polly a Lockup book for her Autobiog.’⁹ There is now no trace of such a volume, nor of such a work, unless it is *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* of which the opening chapter, ‘Looking Inward’, explicitly addresses the challenge of autobiography: ‘It is my habit to give an account to myself of the characters I meet with: can I give any true account of my own?’¹⁰ She saw possible value in an autobiography of a writer, but held express reservations about biography:

The best history of a writer is contained in his writings—these are his chief actions. If he happens to have left an autobiography telling (what nobody else can tell) how his mind grew, how it was determined by the joys, sorrows and other influences of childhood and youth—that is a precious contribution to knowledge. But Biographies generally are a disease of English literature. (*Letters*, vol. 7, p. 230)

It is noteworthy that these remarks relate to a question about whether there is to be a biography of Lewes (himself the author of *The Life and Works of Goethe*), and George Eliot’s concern that his work be properly valued.¹¹

⁹ G. H. Lewes Diary 1870, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

¹⁰ George Eliot, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879; Edinburgh, Blackwood, 1884), p. 3.

¹¹ The record of reading throughout the journals shows that the metaphorical biography ‘disease’ was one to which the Leweses,

Cross, of course, claimed to be producing an autobiography:

With the materials in my hands I have endeavoured to form an *autobiography* (if the term may be permitted) of George Eliot. The life has been allowed to write itself in extracts from her letters and journals. Free from the obtrusion of any mind but her own, this method serves, I think, better than any other open to me, to show the development of her intellect and character. (Cross, vol. 1, p. v)

His claim that ‘The life has been allowed to write itself’ is severely qualified in his comments on his treatment of the letters: ‘Each letter has been pruned of everything that seemed to me irrelevant to my purpose – of everything that I thought my wife would have wished to be omitted.’ (Cross, i. vii) The widower took upon himself the charge of ministering to the image of a George Eliot who led almost exclusively a life of the mind. The project presented some difficulties, and her relationship with Lewes was a particular embarrassment. Though the younger man had been on good terms with Lewes in his lifetime, he appears almost obsessive in eliminating references to Lewes from *George Eliot’s Life*. A small but telling example is the diary entry for 23 April 1855, ‘Fixed on our lodgings at East Sheen’, which Cross emends to read ‘Fixed on lodgings at East Sheen’ (i. 381). Haight diplomatically accounts for Cross’s procedures: ‘Having known her only in the last decade of her life, in her “sibylline years,” he naturally chose the more sententious passages and excluded the spontaneous, trivial, and humorous remarks’, in the process frequently conflating letter with letter and letter with journal (*Letters*, vol. 1, p. xiii).

Haight has amply shown just how far short of acceptable twentieth-century standards of scholarship Cross’s methods fell. Haight’s own scholarship is exceptional, and his edition of the *Letters* an unsurpassable resource for all students of George Eliot – a resource to which our work is greatly indebted. In the *Letters*, he includes certain of the journals complete (‘Recollections’ of Ilfracombe, Scilly and Jersey,

Footnote 11 (*cont.*)

notoriously prone to physical ailments, frequently exposed themselves. One of the first books mentioned in the diary is Moore’s *Life of Sheridan*, ‘a first-rate specimen of bad biographical writing’, and subsequently there are noted numerous biographies, particularly of literary figures. Significantly, George Eliot read Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Life of Charlotte Brontë* almost immediately it came out in 1857, and turned to it in January 1858 to compare the reception of *Scenes of Clerical Life* with that of *Jane Eyre*.

'How I came to write Fiction', 'History of *Adam Bede*'). He includes quotations from the diaries in places, often a sentence or so in a footnote to confirm or elucidate a reference in a letter. But he too was in thrall to an image of George Eliot, derived from Charles Bray's observation that 'She was not fitted to stand alone.'¹² That reductive image governs his reading of George Eliot, the person, and her texts. His biography, while factually authoritative, is not as durable as the *Letters*. Precedence must now be given to two complementary studies. Rosemarie Bodenheimer's *The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans: George Eliot Her Letters and Fiction* (1994), by reading the letters alongside and against the fiction, explores the ways George Eliot wrote her self and life. Though not a conventional biography, this study addresses with subtlety and conviction major crises in George Eliot's life, including her conflicts with her father, her adoption of a pseudonym, and the decision to marry Cross. Rosemary Ashton's more orthodox *George Eliot: A Life* provides formidable literary and intellectual context, delineating an ambitious, anxious subject to whom even so is attributed a robust commonsense connected with her provincial background, and whose avatar in her fiction, rather than any of the Dorotheas, may be the scholar Casaubon: 'Here is strong egoism, a "fastidious yet hungry ambition", pride and self-doubt, and the terrible experience of "laborious uncreative hours" spent in paralysing fear of a "chilling ideal audience"'.¹³ Certainly some of these characteristics emerge in George Eliot's journals, of which she, her own most critical and unsparing reader, was the principal audience.

The journals give considerable evidence of George Eliot as reader of and commentator on her own text. On 31 December 1857 appears the first of what becomes a fairly regular passage of the past year in review, summarising its events, and typically testifying to the empowering strength of her bond to Lewes. This entry comes significantly as she awaits the book publication of *Scenes of Clerical Life*, and while it is largely 'personal', describing her role as woman rather than as writer, her work has an important place in it. Later there is evidence of her

¹² Bray, *Autobiography*, p. 75, quoted in Haight, *George Eliot*, p. 51.

¹³ Rosemary Ashton, *George Eliot: A Life* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), p. 325: the internal quotations are from *Middlemarch*, book 1, chapter 10. F. W. H. Myers records that George Eliot herself acknowledged an affinity with Casaubon. She was asked "'But from whom . . . did you draw Casaubon?" With a humorous solemnity, which was quite in earnest, nevertheless, she pointed to her own heart.': 'George Eliot', *Century Magazine*, 23 (November 1881), p. 60.

using the journals not only for stocktaking, but for comfort and reassurance. During the awful time when she was struggling with *Romola*, she wrote, 'This evening I have been reading to G. some entries in my note-book of past times in which I recorded my *malaise* and despair.' (31 January 1862). Late in 1870, 'suffering from headache and depression . . . I look into this little book now to assure myself that this is not unprecedented'; and again on Christmas Day 1875, she uses her diary record for assurance.¹⁴ These occasions support Rosemarie Bodenheimer's comment that 'her mind reorganized autobiographical material in conceptual ways'.¹⁵ At times there is a willed quality in her working through emotional and intellectual challenges, as if she is testing the belief in which Tennyson supports Goethe:

That men may rise on stepping-stones
 Of their dead selves to higher things.¹⁶

Her self-appraisal is sometimes quite formal. When each of the two diary volumes that has been kept over a number of years is full, George Eliot offers both retrospect and prospect. On 19 June 1861, she aspires to 'produce *better* work than I have yet done', as she declares 'This is the last entry I mean to make in my old book in which I wrote for the first time at Geneva, in 1849.' On 31 December 1877, in a different vein of resolution: 'Today I say a final farewell to this little book which is the only record I have made of my personal life for sixteen years and more . . . I am going to keep a more business-like diary. Here ends 1877.'

This body of material, made up of discrete and various pieces of writing, constitutes a discontinuous text. We suggest that George Eliot's division and placement of material is at times purposeful, while at other times it is marked by the seeming haphazardness common in such informal writing. For all their reticence, these journals are the least formal and guarded of her writing that survives. While they do not encourage the construction in retrospect of a unified identity out of fragmented experiences, there is none the less a case for reading them as an autobiography of George Eliot. The name

¹⁴ Judy Simons, *Diaries and Journals*, p. 10, gives examples of other writers, notably Virginia Woolf, similarly engaging with their textual selves in their diaries.

¹⁵ Rosemarie Bodenheimer, *The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans: George Eliot Her Letters and Fiction* (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1994), p. xv.

¹⁶ Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, 1.3–4 in *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. Christopher Ricks (London, Longman, 1969 p. 864.)

'George Eliot', chosen when she began to publish fiction, was only one of the names taken by the woman born Mary Ann Evans, though it is the one about which the journals have most to tell, for the journals, which render abruptly or incidentally some of George Eliot's major life passages, patently document the launching of her authorial identity.

In Diary 1854–1861, at the end that begins on 20 July 1854, there are entries running from 6 December 1857 to 9 May 1859. At the other end, already used for various 'Recollections', appears 'How I came to write Fiction', dated 6 December 1857, then a succession of entries all to do with *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 'History of Adam Bede' and further dated entries to do with the fortunes of that novel. In June 1859 she inadvertently writes her regular diary entry at this end, and continues so to 19 June 1861 when she signs off from this book, now full. By June 1859, *Adam Bede* had been published, and she was beginning to acknowledge to her friends that Marian Evans Lewes was George Eliot. In the time during which she is establishing her authorial signature with the publication of her fiction in book form, there is in her concurrent use of the two ends of the volume a definite separation of the construction 'George Eliot' and the account of the public reception of George Eliot's work, from the 'private' narration of the journals. This phenomenon is discussed more fully in the headnote to 'The Making of George Eliot', and is the most striking instance of her authorial self-consciousness at work in the journals.

The publication of the journals entire restores George Eliot as the speaking subject. They are as much acts of self-representation in writing as her letters and fiction. We can consider *her* self-construction in them, rather than the contribution of a partial version of the journals to someone else's construction of her. The enactment of her claiming authority is the most striking single illumination provided by these journals. Elsewhere, though, George Eliot's dialogical processes of self-writing are to be discerned in moods as different as the exhilaration of seaside recreation at Ilfracombe in the 1850s, the dreary detail of research for *Romola* in the 1860s, and the contentment and occasional cantankerousness in the early 1870s. There were times in our work on this edition when we echoed her exclamation on receiving applications for the George Henry Lewes Studentship, 'wonderful out of all whooping!' (5 October 1879). This author, in whichever of her guises, has endless capacity to surprise and move her readers.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-79457-2 - The Journals of George Eliot
Edited by Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston
Frontmatter
[More information](#)
