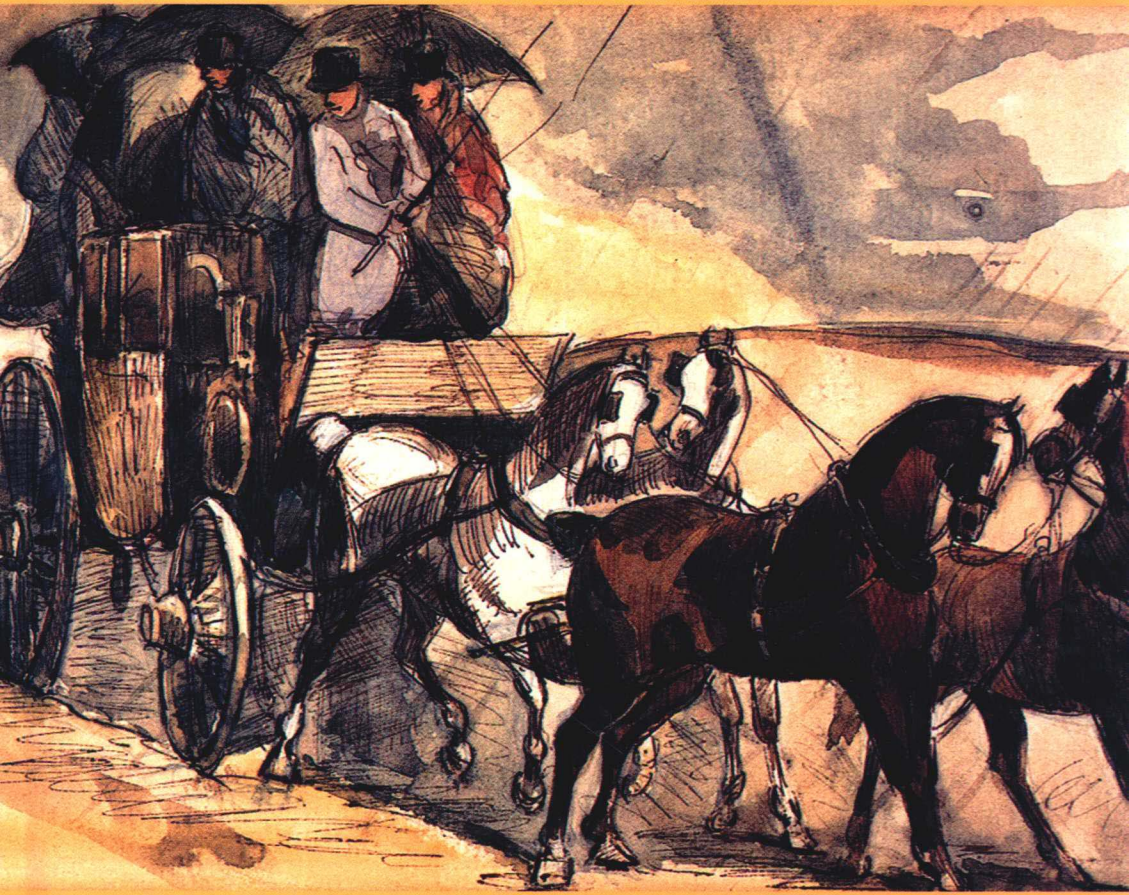


Nancy Henry



The Cambridge **Introduction** to

George Eliot

The Cambridge Introduction to George Eliot

NANCY HENRY



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

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

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521670975

© Nancy Henry 2008

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 2008

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

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

ISBN 978-0-521-85462-7 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-67097-5 paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs 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.

The Cambridge Introduction to George Eliot

As the author of *The Mill on the Floss* and *Middlemarch*, George Eliot was one of the most admired novelists of the Victorian period, and she remains a central figure in the literary canon today. She was the first woman to write the kind of political and philosophical fiction that had previously been a male preserve, combining rigorous intellectual ideas with a sensitive understanding of human relationships and making her one of the most important writers of the nineteenth century. This innovative introduction provides students with the religious, political, scientific and cultural contexts that they need to understand and appreciate her novels, stories, poetry and critical essays. Nancy Henry also traces the reception of her work to the present, surveying a range of critical and theoretical responses. Each novel is discussed in a separate section, making this the most comprehensive short introduction available to this important author.

Nancy Henry is Associate Professor of English at the State University of New York at Binghamton. She is the author of, among other books, *George Eliot and the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2002; paperback edition, 2006).

Cambridge Introductions to Literature

This series is designed to introduce students to key topics and authors. Accessible and lively, these introductions will also appeal to readers who want to broaden their understanding of the books and authors they enjoy.

- Ideal for students, teachers, and lecturers
- Concise, yet packed with essential information
- Key suggestions for further reading

Titles in this series

- Eric Bulson *The Cambridge Introduction to James Joyce*
Warren Chernaik *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare's History Plays*
John Xiros Cooper *The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot*
Patrick Corcoran *The Cambridge Introduction to Francophone Literature*
Gregg Crane *The Cambridge Introduction to The Nineteenth-Century American Novel*
Kirk Curnutt *The Cambridge Introduction to F. Scott Fitzgerald*
Janette Dillon *The Cambridge Introduction to Early English Theatre*
Janette Dillon *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare's Tragedies*
Penny Gay *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare's Comedies*
Jane Goldman *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf*
Kevin J. Hayes *The Cambridge Introduction to Herman Melville*
Nancy Henry *The Cambridge Introduction to George Eliot*
Leslie Hill *The Cambridge Introduction to Jacques Derrida*
David Holdeman *The Cambridge Introduction to W. B. Yeats*
Adrian Hunter *The Cambridge Introduction to the Short Story in English*
C. L. Innes *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures*
M. Jimmie Killingsworth *The Cambridge Introduction to Walt Whitman*
Pericles Lewis *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism*
Ronan McDonald *The Cambridge Introduction to Samuel Beckett*
Wendy Martin *The Cambridge Introduction to Emily Dickinson*
Peter Messent *The Cambridge Introduction to Mark Twain*
David Morley *The Cambridge Introduction to Creative Writing*
Ira Nadel *The Cambridge Introduction to Ezra Pound*
Leland S. Person *The Cambridge Introduction to Nathaniel Hawthorne*
John Peters *The Cambridge Introduction to Joseph Conrad*
Justin Quinn *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern Irish Poetry*
Sarah Robbins *The Cambridge Introduction to Harriet Beecher Stowe*
Martin Scofield *The Cambridge Introduction to the American Short Story*
Emma Smith *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare*
Peter Thomson *The Cambridge Introduction to English Theatre, 1660–1900*
Janet Todd *The Cambridge Introduction to Jane Austen*
Theresa M. Towner *The Cambridge Introduction to William Faulkner*
Jennifer Wallace *The Cambridge Introduction to Tragedy*

In Memoriam

George Brite Merchant (1920–2002)

Nancy Brite Merchant Henry (1929–2003)

Bitsy (1988–2005)

Preface

Two of George Eliot's fictional heroines fantasize about journeying to see a famous writer. Unhappy Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* harbors a pathetic dream: "she would go to some great man – Walter Scott, perhaps – and tell him how wretched and how clever she was, and he would surely do something for her" (*Mill*, IV:3). Equally wretched Romola leaves her husband with the intention of visiting "the most learned woman in the world, Cassandra Fedele, at Venice" to ask her advice about how she can learn to support herself (*R*, II:36). Perhaps the narrator of *Adam Bede* offers the explanation for why neither Maggie nor Romola realizes her fantasy: "if you would maintain the slightest belief in human heroism, you must never make a pilgrimage to see the hero" (*AB*, II:17).

George Eliot (Marian Evans Lewes) was a literary hero to many during her life and to subsequent generations of readers and writers. In historical memory, she is as compelling and charismatic a figure as she was in life. Her astonishing mind led men and women to fall in love with her even before she began to write fiction. Some fell in love with her through reading her fiction. In the final years of her life, many came to pay tribute at the carefully orchestrated afternoon salons in her London home, the Priory. After her death, some of the pilgrims became disillusioned, and her reputation suffered.

It is not surprising that 150 years since she published her first story, her fiction too has attracted acolytes and detractors, both with a peculiar intensity that reflects the ambivalent feelings of subsequent generations toward the Victorian age, which Eliot so powerfully represents. The realism that was praised in the mid nineteenth century for extending sympathy to common, unheroic people was often criticized at the end of the twentieth century for its essentially middle-class perspective. Such responses suggest that how we read George Eliot's writing has everything to do with our own historical context, but to appreciate her works properly, we need to know something about their contexts.

This book provides an introduction to Eliot's life, reading and historical milieu, contexts that are intimately related: reading was part of her life and her life is part of history. As her much-admired contemporary Elizabeth Barrett

Browning wrote in her verse novel, *Aurora Leigh* (1856): “The world of books is still the world” (Bk. 1, line 808). Interpretations of the individual works offered here may suggest some reasons why today’s readers will find relevance to their world in Eliot’s characters, her plots and the hard philosophical and moral questions they raise. The contexts make the texts more accessible so that readers may discover the intellectual and moral challenges – as well as the pleasures – of reading them.

Eliot’s books remain popular, or perhaps more accurately, “canonical,” generating editions, companions, and books and articles from a wide variety of critical perspectives. The proliferation of interpretations and scholarship is a testament to the richness – and to some extent the difficulty – of her writing. Scholarship adds to our knowledge, and criticism provokes our thinking; both are immensely helpful in exploring the complexities of Eliot’s essays, novels, and poetry. The most compelling experience of her writing, however, will be personal, and will follow only from close, engaged, and informed reading.

Eliot’s works speak to universal human experiences of the young and old: to misunderstood children, like Maggie Tulliver; to anyone who has lived with a secret, like Mrs Transome; to idealists, like Dorothea Brooke, who persist in bad choices with the best of intentions; to ambitious professionals like Tertius Lydgate, who become weighted down with petty politics and domestic cares; to women trapped in bad marriages like Romola and Gwendolen; or to those who have been adopted and wonder about their parentage like Daniel Deronda. Eliot’s subtle, psychological portraits of these and many other characters account for the power her fiction still has today.

Just as Eliot’s fiction showed – boldly for her time – that ordinary people could be the heroes and heroines of novels, so she knew that the great writer she had become, attracting pilgrims in want of advice, was really not a hero at all, but a fallible human being. The novelist Anne Thackeray Ritchie reported Eliot as asking, “if she hadn’t been human with feelings and failings like other people, how could she have written her books?”* Perhaps this is why heroes should not be visited. Eliot knew that the best place to search for the wisdom of great writers was their writings.

* Quoted in Gordon Haight, *George Eliot: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 542.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Tom Cooper, Phil Rogers, and Margaret Wright for reading individual chapters of this book. I thank Graham Handley and Linda Bree for reading the entire manuscript. I have benefited from all of their comments. My ongoing conversation with Graham Handley about George Eliot's life and writing, begun over fifteen years ago, continues to provide insight and inspiration, and I thank him particularly for helping me to write an introduction to George Eliot.

Abbreviations

References to GE's works will be to volume and chapter numbers and the titles will be abbreviated as follows:

AB	<i>Adam Bede</i> . Ed. Valentine Cunningham (Oxford: World's Classics, 1996).
BJ	"Brother Jacob." <i>The Lifted Veil and Brother Jacob</i> . Ed. Helen Small (Oxford: World's Classics, 1999).
DD	<i>Daniel Deronda</i> . Ed. Graham Handley (Oxford: World's Classics, 1988).
FH	<i>Felix Holt</i> . Ed. Fred C. Thomson (Oxford: World's Classics, 1988).
GEL	<i>The George Eliot Letters</i> . Ed. Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954–5, 1978).
LV	"The Lifted Veil." <i>The Lifted Veil and Brother Jacob</i> . Ed. Helen Small (Oxford: World's Classics, 1999).
Mill	<i>The Mill on the Floss</i> . Ed. Gordon Haight (Oxford: World's Classics, 1981).
MM	<i>Middlemarch</i> . Ed. David Carroll (Oxford: World's Classics, 1988).
Poetry	<i>The Complete Shorter Poetry of George Eliot</i> . Ed. Antonie Gerard van den Broek (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2005).
R	<i>Romola</i> . Ed. Andrew Brown (Oxford: World's Classics, 1994).
Scenes	<i>Scenes of Clerical Life</i> . Ed. Tomas A. Noble (Oxford: World's Classics, 1988).
SCW	George Eliot, <i>Selected Critical Writings</i> . Ed. Rosemary Ashton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
SEPW	<i>Selected Essays, Poems, and Other Writings</i> . Eds. A. S. Byatt and Nicholas Warren (New York: Penguin, 1990).
SM	<i>Silas Marner</i> . Ed. Terence Cave (Oxford: World's Classics, 1996).
TS	<i>Impressions of Theophrastus Such</i> . Ed. Nancy Henry (London: Pickering and Chatto, and Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994).

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	page viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	x
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xi
 Chapter 1 Life	 1
 Chapter 2 Historical contexts	 14
 Chapter 3 Literary influences	 30
 Chapter 4 Works	 41
Reviews and essays	41
<i>Scenes of Clerical Life</i>	46
<i>Adam Bede</i>	52
<i>The Mill on the Floss</i>	56
<i>Silas Marner</i> , “The Lifted Veil” and “Brother Jacob”	62
<i>Romola</i>	70
<i>Felix Holt, The Radical</i>	77
Poetry	83
<i>Middlemarch</i>	88
<i>Daniel Deronda</i>	94
<i>Impressions of Theophrastus Such</i>	101
 Chapter 5 Afterlife	 104
 <i>Notes</i>	 115
<i>Further reading</i>	120
<i>Index</i>	123

Chapter 1

Life

George Eliot's life provides as compelling a narrative as any she ever invented. Born the same year as Queen Victoria, the woman known successively as Mary Anne Evans, Marian Lewes, George Eliot and Mary Ann Cross lived through dramatic personal and cultural changes that track those of the nineteenth century. While George Eliot refused to sanction any biography during her life, she showed a lively interest in the biographies of others. After reading J. G. Lockhart's *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott* (1839), for example, she wrote: "All biography is interesting and instructive" (*GEL*, I:24). Her novels are devoted to following the shape of her characters' lives. Just as she emphasized the significance of early events as clues to the psychology of characters such as Maggie Tulliver, Silas Marner, Tertius Lydgate, and Daniel Deronda, so her well-documented life experiences – of both her childhood and adult years – help us to understand her as a person and artist and provide insight into aspects of her fiction.

Mary Anne Evans was born on 22 November 1819 at South Farm on the Newdigate family estate of Arbury Hall near Nuneaton, Warwickshire, in that central part of England known as the Midlands. Her parents were Christiana Pearson Evans and Robert Evans. Christiana was Robert Evans's second wife and Mary Anne's family included two children from her father's first marriage (Robert and Fanny), as well as her sister Chrissey (b. 1814) and brother Isaac (b. 1816). While second marriages and stepsiblings were common in the nineteenth century, as today, the basic fact of this extended family is important to the portrayal of her fictional families, few of which are simple, nuclear families. Orphans, adopted children, and nieces and nephews living under the care of relatives occur in all of her novels except *The Mill on the Floss* (1860). In *Daniel Deronda* (1876), for example, Gwendolen Harleth is the daughter of her mother's first marriage, and tolerates her younger stepsisters with barely disguised disdain.

Christiana Pearson Evans died in February 1836 when Mary Anne was sixteen years old. Her health had been poor since the death of twin boys shortly after their birth in 1821. One may search the numerous mothers in Eliot's fiction

for clues to Christiana's character, yet these figures are contradictory: Milly Barton, Mrs Poyser, Lisbeth Bede, and Mrs Tulliver in the early fiction alone provide various forms of mothering. With little information offered by Eliot's letters, Christiana Evans remains elusive.

Much more is known about her father, Robert Evans, who played a central role in her life. An estate manager for the Newdigate family, he had responsibility for overseeing the tenants, the timber and various forms of land usage including coal mining. He acted as a liaison between the landholding and the working classes, an intermediary role that may shed some light on the origins of Eliot's own social and political perspectives. Her narrator Theophrastus reminisces about a Midlands childhood similar to Eliot's and a father who "knew very well what could be wisely expected from the miners, the weavers, the field-labourers, and farmers of his own time – yes and from the aristocracy" (*TS*, 2). It is clear that Eliot, like Theophrastus, considers those who have experienced the "mixed commonality" of our "national lot" to have a superior perspective on life generally (*TS*, 2).

Her father's privileged position allowed the young Mary Anne a glimpse of the life enjoyed by the landed aristocracy, and she had occasional access to the Newdigate library. She stored her observations from this period, incorporating them into her fiction, especially "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" (1857), with its detailed description of the architecture and interior design of Arbury Hall [Cheverel Manor] and the earlier generation of Newdigates who had "Gothicized" the Tudor manor according to the late eighteenth-century fashion. The influence of this inside perspective on the landed classes is evident in the depiction of characters with an inherited sense of superiority, such as Arthur Donnithorne, Mrs Transome, Mr Brooke, and Sir Hugo Mallinger.

Eliot's memories of her life in Nuneaton and her companionship with her brother Isaac are most vividly recalled in her early fiction. For example, the town of Milby in "Janet's Repentance" (1857) is based on Nuneaton. In *The Mill on the Floss*, St. Oggs is based on Gainsborough and the river Floss on the Trent, but landmarks from her Midlands landscape (like the round pond) are transferred to this fictional composite. Her recollections of her father are incorporated in characters such as Adam Bede and Caleb Garth in *Middlemarch* (1871–2) – hard-working, morally upright men who attain the position of estate agent for wealthy employers.

The young Mary Anne was an excellent pupil at the girls' schools she attended and seems always to have had an intense intellectual life fueled by reading of all sorts and by the study of languages. Beginning with French in 1832, she learned (with the help of tutors) Italian, German, Latin, and Greek. Later in life she would acquire Spanish and Hebrew.

From 1828–1832, she attended boarding school in Nuneaton and became a favored pupil of her devoutly evangelical teacher, Maria Lewis. When she removed to the Misses Franklin's school in Coventry in 1832, she continued to correspond with Miss Lewis. The Franklin sisters were Baptists so that by this time she had come into contact with a variety of unorthodox religious views. In 1834, she underwent her own evangelical conversion and, for a while, all her intellectual energy was channeled into her reading of religious texts and her correspondence with Miss Lewis and a similarly religious friend, Martha Jackson. At times her ardor and renunciation bordered on fanaticism, and yet these letters show the future writer experimenting with metaphor:

We are like poor creatures of whom I have read, who, for some cause or other, have been thrust out of the ship by their companions, try to grasp first one part of the vessel then another for support, until by the successive lashes that are given to make them loose their hold, they have no fingers left by which to venture another hopeless experiment on pitiless hearts. So we, having voluntarily caused ourselves to be cast out as evil by the world, are continually indicating a vacillation in our choice by trying to lean on some part of it within reach, and it is mercy that orders the lashing of our disobedient fingers, even though for a time we be faint and bleeding from the correction. (GEL, I:59)

Images of lashings and bleeding – in the tradition of the Passion of Christ – are frequent in her religious letters. In her fiction too she would not shy away from violent images of cuttings and torture as metaphors for mental anguish, albeit of a secular kind. At this time the Evanses were steadfast members of the Church of England. She exceeded their conventional beliefs and practices, and they thought her melodramatic and odd. But her piety and renunciations – of theatre, music, and novels – were tolerated because they were Christian and reflected the evangelical revolution within the Church of England.

In June 1841, Isaac married, and Robert Evans gave him Griff House where the family had lived since 1820. Mary Ann (who had dropped the “e” from her name) and her father took a new residence at Foleshill on the outskirts of Coventry. At least part of the intention of moving to a less isolated locale was to provide Mary Ann with opportunities for marriage, but the move had an effect quite unintended by her father, for here she struck up new friendships that were to transform her religious beliefs and open a new world of intellectual inquiry and fellowship.

She was already beginning to have religious doubts. At some point in 1841 she read Charles Christian Hennell's *An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity* (1838), a persuasively written treatise that was sympathetic to Christianity

but concluded that there was no rational basis for belief in the miracles of the New Testament. In Coventry, Mary Ann found an environment in which she could debate and discuss such ideas, which would have been neither understood nor tolerated by her family or her religious friends. Her developing friendships with the local ribbon manufacturer Charles Bray, his wife Cara, her sister Sarah Hennell, and brother Charles Hennell, author of the *Inquiry*, led to a new regimen of reading in non-religious literature and exposure to progressive intellectual and social thinking among the guests at the Bray's home in Coventry. As a result, she experienced what might be called a reverse conversion as she began to question and eventually reject formal Christianity. Just as she had gone too far for her family in her religious fervor, so now she went too far in her scruples about practicing a religion in which she could no longer believe.

The story of Eliot's intellectual, religious, and political development is an interesting combination of susceptibility to influence by friends like Miss Lewis and the Brays, and an independence that set her at odds with specifically patriarchal authority (her father and brother). This is a combination of traits that she shares with Maggie Tulliver, and which, more than any situational parallels between Eliot's life and that of her heroine, shows why *The Mill on the Floss* may be considered a partially autobiographical novel.

Her refusal to attend church with her father and friend Maria Lewis on 2 January 1842 was a profound experience in her intellectual and emotional development, primarily because she came to repent this "Holy War." She later saw the damage she had done by not compromising her principles for the sake of her personal relationships, regretting that she had caused pain and dissension.¹ And yet, her intense desire to pursue truth and knowledge, as well as personal fulfillment, would lead to further rifts with her family and her past. According to Rosemarie Bodenheimer, the most astute reader of Eliot's letters: "The incident established her intellectual and moral honesty, her understanding that such honesty would be socially misunderstood and punished, and her need to expiate or redeem the consequences of her unconventional intelligence through sacrificial service."²

For the next several years, she performed the duties of an unmarried daughter to her widowed father, even attending church, but her intellectual expansion continued. She took over from Charles Hennell's wife Rufa the task of translating David Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu* (1835–6) as *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined*. In completing this demanding labor, she brought one of the foremost examples of the historical biblical criticism called the German Higher Criticism to English audiences. The book examines the life of Jesus as told in the four Gospels, finding evidence for the origins of the story in myths rather

than in history. It applied a rational, scientific method to its study of texts that Eliot, who already viewed the Scriptures as “mingled truth and fiction” (*GEL*, I:128), also saw as great literature, and dissecting the beautiful story of the Crucifixion depressed her (*GEL*, I:206). Yet characteristically, she fretted over every detail to produce an impressive translation, which was published anonymously in 1846.

Meanwhile, Charles Bray purchased the radical newspaper, *The Coventry Herald and Observer*, and she began to contribute essays and reviews so that reading, writing, and discussions with friends rendered the daily caring for her demanding father less oppressive than it might otherwise have been. She was rewarded by the sense of fulfilling her duties, especially in her father’s last year when he required constant nursing. At the same time, her mind had transcended the limitations of her country upbringing and she was longing to see the world beyond her Midlands home.

Upon Robert Evans’s death at the end of May 1849, she set off with the Brays to enjoy the experiences of foreign travel that would eventually become central to her intellectual and creative life. After traveling to France, Italy, and Switzerland, she parted with her friends, electing to stay in Geneva and live alone for the first time (July 1849–March 1850). Drawing on her small inheritance, she passed the time reading, people-watching, and getting to know the family in whose home she lodged, the D’Albert Durades, who remained life-long friends.

When she returned “home,” she found herself outcast and unhappy amongst her family, and having had a taste of independent living, decided to try London. The significance of her decision to move to London cannot be overestimated. Young women in mid-nineteenth-century England did not do such things. She commented that it always surprised her when people found her being alone odd (*GEL*, I:301), and she would not allow other people’s opinions now, or later, to deter her from pursuing her desire to be at the intellectual center of the country, indeed – at this time – of the world.

In London, she lodged at 142 the Strand, office and home of John Chapman, friend of the Brays and publisher of progressive books, including her own translation of Strauss’s *Life of Jesus*. He had recently purchased the *Westminster Review*, a periodical that had a long history of advancing liberal thought. The enthusiastic, over-committed Chapman was at a loss how to regenerate the journal as a newly important medium of intellectual debate. Marian (as she now called herself) had contributed her first of many reviews to the *Westminster* in January 1851 (of R. W. Mackay’s *The Progress of the Intellect*). Chapman recognized the extraordinary talents of his lodger and invited her to become his editorial assistant, the (unacknowledged) editor of the journal.

Marian Evans acted as the editor of the *Westminster Review* – without formal credit or pay – from 1851–1854, an intellectually exciting and emotionally turbulent period. Chapman's domestic life was as chaotic as his professional life. He lived with his wife, children, and the children's governess who was also his mistress. Despite becoming entangled in a romance with Chapman that put her into conflict with both his wife and mistress (and which sent her temporarily packing to Coventry), she kept her focus on work. She wrote a Prospectus for the journal and was responsible for keeping it at the forefront of mid-Victorian intellectual life. This work introduced her to the leading thinkers of the day.

At a meeting on 4 May 1852 to protest price fixing among publishers, for example, she was the lone woman in the room where Charles Dickens, the scientific and sociological theorist Herbert Spencer, novelist Wilkie Collins, naturalist Richard Owen, and others made speeches and discussed a strategy to oppose the attempts of large publishing houses to squeeze out competition from smaller operations, such as Chapman's.³ During this period, she also met the most important women on the intellectual scene, including the widely accomplished and published author Harriet Martineau and the early advocates of women's rights, Bessie Rayner Parkes and Barbara Bodichon. Bodichon would become perhaps her closest friend in the years ahead.

As her flirtation with Chapman was cooling into a professional relationship, she found herself drawn to Herbert Spencer. Then an editor at the *Economist*, he would become a major proponent of evolution theory, coining the phrase "survival of the fittest" usually associated with Darwin. She had a brief, intense emotional involvement with him, which ended in July of 1852 with his rejection of her affections (at least partly on the grounds of her physical unattractiveness). Meanwhile, she was coming to respect and admire Spencer's friend and *Westminster* contributor George Henry Lewes, a highly intellectual and versatile journalist, playwright, actor, drama critic, and novelist with a growing interest in natural science.

Lewes's domestic life was, like that of so many Victorians, irregular. When he first met Marian, he was still living with his wife, with whom he had three sons. Agnes Lewes had become involved with her husband's best friend, Thornton Hunt, who had his own wife and children. The two men co-founded the radical periodical, *The Leader* in 1850 and continued to publish in the midst of their interpersonal entanglements. It is thought that by the time Lewes moved out of their home in 1852, Agnes had had two children with Hunt, though Lewes signed as father on both of their birth certificates (1850 and 1851).

Although the facts about this period of their lives are obscure, biographer Rosemary Ashton believes that they became intimate at the end of 1852 or