

George Eliot:

An Inventory of Her Collection in the Manuscript Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Eliot, George, 1819-1880
Title:	George Eliot Collection
Dates:	1854-1880
Extent:	11 document boxes (4.62 linear feet)
Abstract:	Galley proofs, page proofs, or printed copies for ten of Eliot's books, all with the author's handwritten corrections, make up the bulk of this collection.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-01298
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Purchase, 1976 (R 7034)
Processed by:	Patricia Monticello, 2004; Stephen Cooper, 2005
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Born Mary Ann Evans in 1819, George Eliot was the daughter of a land agent who managed estates in the rural midlands, a formative experience that gave her an insight into country society that later greatly influenced and enriched her first works of fiction. At different times of her life, she also spelled her name as Mary Anne, Marian, and Marianne, adopting the pen-name of Eliot only after her first work of fiction was published in 1857.

Eliot was brought up in a narrow religious tradition, and at school she became a convert to Evangelicalism. Charles Bray, a free thinking manufacturer, influenced her skepticism of orthodox beliefs, although she never strayed from the ethical teachings of her childhood religion. Her works contain themes of love and duty, and affectionate portraits of clergymen and dissenters. She began her literary career with translations from the German of two works of religious speculation, of which Strauss's *Life of Jesus* was published in 1846 without her name.

In 1849, after the death of her father, she moved to London and quickly became involved in literary circles. In 1851, John Chapman made her the assistant editor of the *Westminster Review* although she had been contributing articles and reviews to the periodical for only a year. It was through Chapman's influence that she met G. H. Lewes, who was then separated from his wife. She began living with him without a legal union in 1854, an arrangement that caused her some anxiety and strife with friends and family, but one that ultimately proved both long lasting and beneficial to her literary career. Only after meeting him did she begin writing works of fiction, and Lewes remained a strong supporter of her work until his death in 1878.

"The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton," one of three stories brought together in *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1858), appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1857 under the name of George Eliot, the first work that bore this pseudonym. These stories were praised for domestic realism, pathos, and humor, and caused speculation about the identity of George Eliot, who many believed was a clergyman or a clergyman's wife. *Scenes* marked the beginning as well of a long relationship with Blackwood Press, which would publish all of her works save *Romola*.

Begun in 1858, *Adam Bede* (1859) established her as a leading English novelist, praised by readers as diverse as James H. Turgenev and Queen Victoria. Following *Bede* were a series of novels, including *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861), *Romola* (1862-3), *Felix Holt*, (1866), *Middlemarch* (1871-2), and *Daniel Deronda* (1876). Until *Romola*, a historical novel about society in Florence, Italy, her novels had concerned country life. In the eighteen first-person character studies in *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879), Eliot's last published work and perhaps most experimental, a contemporary fictional scholar examines both himself and the people around him.

In 1880, she married John Walter Cross, her financial advisor and friend who was twenty years younger than she. Eliot died seven months later.

Sources

"Eliot, George," *The Bloomsbury Guide to English Literature*, ed. Marion Wynne-Davies. New York: Prentice Hall General Reference, 1990.

"Eliot, George," *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Scope and Contents

The Ransom Center's collection of George Eliot materials is arranged in two series: I. Works, 1860-1880 (10 boxes), and II. Letters, 1854-1880 (1 box), with items arranged alphabetically where possible. The majority of the collection was acquired from Blackwood Press in London, the original publisher of all but one of Eliot's novels. This collection was previously accessible through a card catalog, but has been re-cataloged as part of a retrospective conversion project.

Galley proofs, page proofs, or printed copies for ten of Eliot's books, all with the author's handwritten corrections, make up the bulk of this collection. Several of the volumes are print copies corrected by the author for subsequent editions, such as the Blackwood edition of *Romola*, which was originally published by Smith London. (Eliot's proof copy from Smith's original publication of *Romola* is also included in this collection.) Other books appear in "cheap copies": proof copies of the novels gathered loosely in brown paper covers. Still other works are unbound, the longest of which is the page proof copy of *Middlemarch*, composed of nearly 4,000 loose sheets.

The Letters series is composed of two loose letters and a bound volume of letters from Eliot to American writer Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward. In addition to the letters, the volume includes engraved portraits of Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, Herbert Spencer, and Eliot herself. The letters are variously signed "M. E. Lewes" and "M. A. Cross," demonstrating even within such a small collection the multiple ways in which Eliot referred to herself on paper.

Related Material

Additional George Eliot letters in the Ransom Center are located in two bound collections of manuscript letters: PR 4582 F7 1872 copy 2 HAN vol. 3, and Stark 1355.

Index Terms

People

Ward, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, 1844-1911

Subjects

Fiction--19th century

Series I. Works, 1860-1880

Adam Bede (1859), printed copy with handwritten corrections, 1861

Volume One **Container 1.1**

Volume Two **Container 1.2**

Daniel Deronda (1874-1876), page proofs with handwritten corrections, 1876,
bound **Container 2.1**

Impressions of Theophrastus Such (1879), page proofs with handwritten corrections

1879 **Container 1.3**

1880 **Container 1.4**

Middlemarch (1871-72)

Page proofs with handwritten corrections, 1871

Book I **Container 3.1**

Book II **Container 3.2-3.3**

Book III **Container 3.4-3.5**

Book IV **Container 4.1-4.2**

Book V **Container 4.3-4.4**

Book VI **Container 4.5-5.1**

Book VII **Container 5.2-5.3**

Book VIII **Container 5.4**

Miscellaneous pages from Volume 2, Book XIII **Container 5.5**

Page proofs with handwritten corrections, 1871-1872, bound **Container 6.1**

Printed copy with handwritten corrections, undated **Container 7.1**

The Mill on the Floss (1860)

Page proofs with handwritten emendations, undated **Container 8.1**

Printed copy with handwritten corrections, undated

Volume One

Container 7.2

Volume Two

Container 7.3

Romola (1862-1863), page proofs with handwritten corrections, 1877

Volume One

Container 9.1

Volume Two

Container 9.2

Single volume copy

Container 8.2

Scenes of Clerical Life, page proofs with handwritten corrections, 1860

**Container
9.3**

Silas Marner (1861), printed copy with handwritten corrections, 1861

**Container
10.1**

Silas Marner, "The Lifted Veil" (1859), and "Brother Jacob" (1864), page proofs with handwritten corrections, 1878

**Container
10.2**

The Spanish Gypsy (1868), galley proofs with handwritten corrections, 1878

**Container
10.3**

Series II. Letters, 1854-1880

Unidentified recipient, 1854

Container 11.1

Macmillan & Co. (firm), 1877

Container 11.2

Ward, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, 1873-1880, bound

Container 11.3