

## “The Character of Editress”: Marian Evans at the *Westminster Review*, 1851-54

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We have been left a singular image of the working editor, Marian Evans (George Eliot) by William Hale White, bookshop assistant at John Chapman's premises, 142 Strand: “I can see her now, with her hair over her shoulders, the easy chair half sideways to the fire, her feet over the arms, and a proof in her hands, in that dark room at the back of No. 142.”<sup>1</sup> This personal recollection of the great writer at work in her early days in London has become almost iconic, many times repeated in George Eliot biographies to give us some indication of the novelist's so-called apprenticeship years and revived most often to reiterate White's intentions: to suggest something of Evans's drive and the radical, atypical nature of her occupation—for a woman—indicated not least in her sprawling posture. It is an unguarded snapshot, hinting at the “salt and spice” of Evans's life, as White put it, that her husband, John Walter Cross, deliberately kept out of his reverent “autobiography” of the novelist published posthumously in 1885.<sup>2</sup>

In this essay, I want to move beyond White's vignette to focus more purposefully on that editor, “proof in hand,” actively transforming the fortunes of the already well-established periodical, the *Westminster Review*, into an even more significant journal at mid-century. In a working environment where women typically had little room to maneuver, the way in which Evans operated most often anonymously and almost invisibly as editor of this influential quarterly increases our understanding of the somewhat submerged practices of nineteenth-century editors. More particularly, attention to Evans's editorial work helps to illuminate the very haphazard processes of professionalization of women journalists in the mid-Victorian period while also reinforcing the realities of the partial and random records that are available to us to establish the nature and influence of such women's work.

Evans's letters, which are the most useful resource available for information about her editorial career, have been preserved because Evans became a famous novelist. How many other women, long confined to obscurity, occupied equally significant roles as journalists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? In the absence of material evidence, we can never know. Scholars of periodical history, however, have been filling such gaps

in our knowledge in more recent decades, particularly with enriching and revealing accounts of the vital work carried out by women in the nineteenth-century periodical press. In his introduction to the *Victorian Periodicals Review's* special issue *Victorian Women Editors and Critics*, D. J. Trela noted that though we all know women editors, journalists, and critics “occupied more than a niche,” even before mid-century, “what we often don’t know is who these women were, where they worked, what they wrote, what they earned, and also, which is much more difficult to assess, their individual and collective impact.”<sup>3</sup> In part, he claims, this lack of information is “due to a focus on only the most famous authors working in the periodical press, or a focus on the more ‘major’ journals” (p. 1). George Eliot may indeed be one of these more famous authors working for one of the major journals, but her work as an editor in particular has yet to be attended to in the terms outlined by Trela. The fact that she had a pivotal position in a major journal also is worth discussing in more depth.

This essay suggests that there is further work to be done, even on well-known figures such as George Eliot, and that by doing so—by focusing on details of Marian Evans’s editorial work, for instance, that typically have been underplayed, such as her role in the layout and design of individual issues—we can open avenues for investigation into many obscured careers. In the absence of other records, I want to demonstrate how the pages of the periodicals themselves can yield significant insights into the guiding hands of women journalists now lost to us. In particular, I will draw attention to the prominent role Evans played in the pioneering redesign of the book review pages of the *Westminster Review* in 1852. Its new model for reviewing, which was based on an extended survey of national literatures, proved influential and popular. It was a cornerstone of the *Westminster Review's* growing influence in the 1850s, offering extended coverage of newly published work in a format that persists to this day in review-based journals and magazines.

A consideration of what has been marginalized hitherto as the routine ins-and-outs of the trade allows us to flesh out a significant dimension of this seldom-explicated period in Evans’s working life before she became George Eliot. A fuller image emerges of Evans’s formative induction to the commercial world of the text and textual production at mid-century, a world that goes on to provide Evans, as both a journalist and fiction writer, with knowledge of the business of writing that she learns to wield as a significant, useful power. The pragmatic creativity of this woman of letters finds a somewhat unexpected articulation in carrying out what often amounts to mechanical tasks in this short-lived, neglected but significant editorial role. The assumption of that role was not straightforward, and as I will outline below, the work of this editor was often carried out in secret. Just as she corrected proofs hidden away in that “dark room” in the

back of John Chapman's premises in the Strand, she asserted her editorial authority in strategic and necessarily clandestine ways, most often by using Chapman's nominal editorship as her cover.

*The "Character of Editress" and the Work of the Editor*

Almost a decade before the creation of the public mask "George Eliot," Marian Evans experimented with an intriguing covert identity, the "character of Editress." Evans invoked the phrase in a letter to her friend, Mrs. Peter Taylor, warning that should Taylor encounter the *Westminster Review* contributor, writer, and academic Francis Newman at 142 Strand when next visiting, she should not speak of Evans to him "in the character of Editress," explaining, "I think—at least I'm told—that he has no high esteem of woman's powers and functions."<sup>4</sup> The diminutive term, "Editress," and the distancing device of the "character" role are understood as tongue-in-cheek self-deprecations from the fully engaged Editor in this letter to her friend, a letter that is in fact replete with informed commentary on the *Westminster Review*'s latest contents and underscores fully Evans's hands-on editorial work at the periodical. Evans's caution about having her "character" revealed to a *Westminster Review* contributor in the *Westminster Review* premises, is a clear indication of her own awareness of the gender biases of her working environment. The positions that women occupied in the periodical press—the all-pervasive medium of nineteenth-century opinion circulation and formation—were for the most part doubly occluded. First, as is well known, in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, most periodical articles were published anonymously, so the identity of the reviewer, male or female, was rarely known outside of a small coterie. For the middle-class women who constituted the majority of female journalists, however, there was the additional problem of limited access to the public sphere and to professional working lives more broadly. When such women had the opportunity to take leading roles in traditionally rigid patriarchal forums, as journalists in influential periodicals or as celebrated novelists, they had to be strategic in their self-presentation. The "character of Editress" remained hidden in plain view, as in Evans's case, where it was presumed she operated as only an assistant to the *Westminster Review* owner, John Chapman. Almost ten years later, when Evans sought to publish her first fictional work, she took her disguise a step further and assumed an overt masculine masquerade. Evans proposed to her editor, John Blackwood, the deliberately gendered pseudonym, "George Eliot," to ensure, amongst other reasons, that her first fictional work, published in 1857 in the conservative, middle-class, family monthly *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, received a fair hearing from her literary critics.<sup>5</sup> By this time, she was an experienced journalist, specializing in writing reviews for a

range of periodicals throughout the 1850s, and she knew first hand the limitations and biases of her trade when she began to experiment with fiction writing. An arch insight in her acerbic critique of “silly novels by lady novelists” for the *Westminster Review* in 1856 is revealing in this regard, looking forward, as it does, to the need for the “George Eliot” mask and looking back at the invisible “character of Editress”: “By a peculiar thermometric adjustment, when a woman’s talent is at zero, journalistic approbation is at the boiling pitch; when she attains mediocrity, it is already at no more than summer heat; and if ever she reaches excellence, critical enthusiasm drops to the freezing point.”<sup>6</sup> She tellingly employs an implied masculine persona in this essay, written for the radical yet still resolutely masculine production that was *Westminster Review*. It is no surprise that Evans, at the start of her journalistic career with the *Westminster Review* at the metropolitan center, like so many other women journalists, acceded to the realities of her working situation by hiding behind the nominal editorship of Chapman.

When Chapman bought the *Westminster Review* in 1851, he inherited about one thousand subscribers, which is small for a quarterly and disproportionate for the influence that the journal maintained amongst readers of the periodical press. The *Westminster Review* was founded in 1823 by the reformer and philosopher Jeremy Bentham as a radical alternative to the pioneering quarterlies of the nineteenth century, such as the predominantly Whig *Edinburgh Review* and the Tory *Quarterly Review*. Even though it claimed but a fraction of the readership of these two quarterlies, the *Westminster Review*, it is important to note, was an influential organ of reformist politics that attracted leading writers and thinkers to its pages, including philosopher, politician, and women’s rights activist John Stuart Mill (who also edited the journal from 1836-40); the historian J. A. Froude; the Unitarian minister James Martineau; and his sister, writer and journalist Harriet Martineau.<sup>7</sup> Evans was not the first woman editor of a periodical in the nineteenth century, but she was the first woman to be involved with such a prestigious quarterly production. The very public, prominent role the quarterly played in British intellectual, political, and cultural life meant that revelations about the gender of the editor required particular caution.

Chapman had first met Evans in Coventry at the home of her friends, Charles and Cara Bray. He was impressed by her intellect, appealed to her for help with the production of his periodical, and offered her room and board at his home, which he shared with his wife and mistress at 142 Strand. Though their working relationship was complicated initially by the intensity of their personal relations, which most of her biographers have argued was romantic, if not sexual, his need for her skills and her need to access a professional life meant that Evans was persuaded to work at the *Westminster Review* for almost four years without an official wage. Chapman

was aware of his potential shortcomings as an apprentice periodical editor and was much preoccupied with his bookselling and publication businesses that also operated from 142 Strand. His pitch to prospective patrons and contributors for his new vision of the *Westminster Review* included the information that he would not be editing the journal, given his other considerable commitments.<sup>8</sup> Shortly after he negotiated to take over the journal from its previous editor and owner, the author and educationalist William Hickson, Evans wrote to Chapman about the job: "With regard to the secret of the Editorship, it will perhaps be the best plan for you to state, that for the present *you* are to be regarded as the responsible person, but that you employ an Editor in whose literary and general ability you confide."<sup>9</sup> She concluded, "On these practical points, however, you are the best judge" (p. 23). The remark can only be interpreted as a soothing exaggeration of Chapman's qualities since through the course of this very letter, she explicitly directed Chapman on how to deal with prospective contributors and patrons with a series of specific orders, clearly not at all trusting his judgment on "practical points." On 12 June 1851, she assured him, "I am quite willing to agree to your proposition about the nominal editorship, or to anything else really for the interest of the Review."<sup>10</sup>

The front implied by Chapman's "nominal editorship" is significant for two related and obvious reasons. First, the veiled "character of Editress" is an early expression of Evans's duplicitous public roles. As Rosemarie Bodenheimer observed in other terms: "When Marian Evans became George Eliot, she continued the official cover that had served her so well as editor, practicing her art in the double invisibility of writing for publication under a male pseudonym."<sup>11</sup> Second, it is intended to present the illusion that Chapman or some other man was in charge of the *Westminster Review*, and given the fact that women journalists at this time were not typically regular contributors to the leading intellectual quarterlies and *never* edited such productions, this fiction makes it impossible to define with absolute precision the full extent of Evans's role at the periodical. This difficulty combines with a number of other more practical obstacles that are typical of the partial record that is periodical publication history: Evans's journal from this time is missing; the relevant records of the *Westminster Review* have not been preserved; and since Chapman did not pay Evans a salary, no official account of her work ever existed. Therefore, though it is now a well-known fact that Evans edited the *Westminster Review* in the early years of Chapman's proprietorship, some confusion, such as references to her role as Chapman's "assistant," still persist.<sup>12</sup> The mask was successful, and we must admit that the "character of Editress" has kept many of her secrets.

What can we assert, then, about this covert editor? Evans's correspondence with Chapman and with the *Westminster Review's* contributors from 1851-54 indicates that she had a loosely defined coeditor role with

Chapman. As owner and publisher of the journal, and more experienced in literary publishing generally, Chapman clearly had the authority to overrule Evans. As we will see, however, it was because Chapman so often allowed himself to be led by Evans that the journal succeeded in its precarious early years under his new management. As her letters to influential supporters of and contributors to the *Westminster Review* show—and in particular, as I will outline here, in her regular, occasionally gossipy, occasionally business-like exchanges with the Scottish writer, phrenologist, and *Westminster Review* supporter, George Combe—Evans was a key figure in the day-to-day operation and production of the periodical.<sup>13</sup> This claim is not meant to diminish Chapman's sustained influence on the *Westminster Review* for over forty years (from 1851 until his death in 1894). It is clear, however, that for much of the early 1850s Chapman's financial difficulties, which among other things kept him working in his book shop and not on the *Westminster Review*, as well as distractions such as his campaigns against the Booksellers' Association to end fixed-price trading, meant that Evans's role overseeing the letterpress and her management of contributors was vital in getting this influential journal off the ground as a new series.<sup>14</sup>

Two key resources help us to understand better Evans's work as an editor. First, Evans's correspondence from this period clarifies the extent of her role in the production of the journal and her growing awareness of the economic and ideological demands that shaped any literary production. Second, the individual numbers of *Westminster Review*—the issues coedited by Evans from 1852-54 and those from the years before and after her time at the *Westminster Review*—demonstrate explicitly and implicitly Evans's conception of an editor's role and her ability to fulfill that role at a leading mid-Victorian quarterly. Evans ultimately, and unsurprisingly, had little control over the bulk of the content of the journal. The demands of patrons, subscribers, the market, and the limited financial backing available meant that compromises had to be made on content.<sup>15</sup> Her professionalism to a large degree emerges, rather, in the actual form the *Westminster Review* took: in the ways it changed from the journal produced under its previous editors, in the ways it set itself apart from its competitors, and in the ways it adapted features of its rivals' productions.

Evans claimed supervision of the "letterpress" as her domain, and attention to the layout and form of the *Westminster Review* during Evans's time at 142 Strand indicates her awareness of the now more widely appreciated fact that "the reader in the nineteenth century was coming to inhabit an increasingly textual environment."<sup>16</sup> Content alone would not guarantee success in this competitive business and consequently, marketing and presentation become important in marking out individual productions from the crowd. Specifically, the changes introduced during her period of management included a revision of the table of contents, which com-

bined the listing of scholarly books typical of the leading quarterlies (the aforementioned *Edinburgh Review* and *Quarterly Review*) with the subject-based, reader-friendly look of increasingly popular monthly magazines such as *Blackwood's Magazine*. This reader-oriented appeal of the layout was developed further by her marshalling of a substantial index that served effectively as an abstract for each individual article; this practice imitated the *Edinburgh Review's* style to emphasise the *Westminster Review's* authority and comprehensiveness. In addition, this new series of the *Westminster Review* saw the introduction of recto headlines that changed every two pages to reflect, step-by-step, the content of each article so that the reader could be led more effectively through often quite long pieces of thirty or forty pages. These design shifts signal an awareness of the need to present the journal as both authoritative and approachable—a canny combination of ideological and business agendas that Evans shaped. Arguably, the most significant and original contribution she made while in charge of the design of the *Westminster Review* was her coordination of a pioneering model for review articles based on “national” literatures. The innovation, as we will see below, reinvigorated the *Westminster Review*, so although the quarterly was never a huge success in commercial terms, it garnered significant cultural status for its influential transformation of how periodicals presented book reviews.

During Mill's intellectually expansive leadership, the actual management of the *Westminster Review* was marked by some crucial inefficiencies that threatened its existence in the increasingly competitive print market. The problematic patterns had been laid down during Mill's editing of the *London Review* in 1835, before its merger with the *Westminster Review* in January 1836.<sup>17</sup> “We advertised the number as out when it was not out” Mill remarked to Thomas Falconer, his coeditor, citing a complaint that “The *London Review* comes out surreptitiously.”<sup>18</sup> During the mid- to late 1830s, the month in which the *Westminster Review* might be published was never established; in fact it failed to maintain a regular pattern over any two years. Some issues lacked an index; some contributors never received copies. Mill concludes of his management style to Falconer: “We are the laughing stock of everybody who knows us, for our way of doing business” (p. 294). Regularity of publication is central to maintaining an audience, especially in a market that is overrun with new publications, as the periodical market was by the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup>

Responsibility for such nuts-and-bolts tasks fell to Evans. In her occasional absences, such as the period towards the end of 1852 when she returned to Coventry following the death of her brother-in-law, Edward Clarke, the *Westminster Review* almost did not make it to press, included more errors than was usual, and infuriated Combe, an important supporter of the journal, by mistakenly placing an advertisement for the



“new publication” of work by his recently deceased brother (which had been printed in a previous issue) instead of the required advertisement for Combe’s own work. Chapman admitted that such errors occurred because of his own inexperience and because of the pressure caused by Evans’s absence, indicating by implication the extent of her responsibilities:

In consequence of Miss Evans’s absence (through the death of her sister’s husband), I had all the proofs and [rewrites?] of the entire Review to read with the exception of the first two articles, some of which entailed great labour and . . . serious delays . . . the printing was thrown very late, making night work essential to get the Review out at anything like the usual time. . . . I consented to forgo seeing the proofs and the consequence was I had no means of detecting the blunder which my assistant had committed.<sup>20</sup>

Evans’s mopping up of Chapman’s errors is a persistent feature of these early years. Mill blamed his failure to provide regular and consistent issues of the journal in part on his difficulties securing contributors. Evans, aware of the importance of gathering together a group of eminent and regular writers for the *Westminster Review*, worked to ensure the periodical got and kept big names. Evans berated Chapman for potentially alienating Hickson during his negotiations to purchase the *Westminster Review* by his precipitate circulation of the new prospectus before the deal was finalized, as well as by his premature publication of named supporters, which angered important financial backers, especially Combe and the philanthropist Edward Lombe.<sup>21</sup> Evans was clearly fearful that Hickson and Combe in particular might take some good will and good names from the new series. She counseled Chapman on how best to manage James Martineau to ensure his cooperation and guarantee that he would continue to write for the journal: “Only tell him that contributors are to be well paid and I think he will not refuse to be one of them,” she concludes pragmatically.<sup>22</sup> Her instincts were correct; Martineau was maintained as a *Westminster Review* contributor from the first number of the new series, along with other prominent figures such as Froude, Mill, the social theorist Herbert Spencer, Harriet Martineau, and the social and political commentator and essayist, W. R. Greg.

More diplomatic work was needed to keep James Martineau on board after Chapman antagonized him over payment for a long article in the first issue of the new series. In January 1852, Evans wrote to her friend, writer Sara Sophia Hennell, about this instance with a sharp irony that indicates her acute sense of the balancing act needed in her vital, directive role to ensure the journal maintained good relations with prominent (and temperamental) contributors while keeping her editorial cover. Not for the first time, in an active illustration of the veiled role of the “character of Editress,” she actually wrote Chapman’s letter of apology for him:



I have brought the James Martineau affair to a satisfactory termination. I convinced Mr. C. that he had expressed himself in a way calculated to mislead and that he owed an admission of this to J. M. He got up early one morning to write this with a renewed request that J. M. would accept the supplementary cheque which had been refused—was taken ill, unable to write, and finally asked me to write for him, he signing the letter. Yesterday came a very kind reply, accepting the cheque, which I had requested him to do in *justice* to Mr. C., and very graciously acknowledging Froude's compliment which I had sent him. . . . So ends the affair, Mr. C. having saved his colours.<sup>23</sup>

Her letters from this period are filled with such gossip about writers, the intricacies and politics of the trade, and most persistently, half-mocking, half-serious litanies of complaints about the effect of the editorial work on her health. We are given a clear sense of both her day-to-day tasks as well as her fine, dry humor: "I am bothered to death with article-reading and scrap-work of all sorts," she wrote to her Coventry friends, the Brays, "It is clear my poor head will never produce anything under these circumstances."<sup>24</sup> As she reached mid-June 1852, two weeks before the deadline for the July issue, the pressure increased: "At 5 o'clock I felt quite sure that life was unendurable and that I must consider the most feasible method of suicide as soon as the revises are gone to press."<sup>25</sup> She lamented to her friend the women's rights campaigner and journalist Bessie Rayner Parkes, that "theatre-going and proof-reading" had left her "spiritual eyes . . . burning as dim and bleared as gas-lights."<sup>26</sup> Having passed on "editorial secrets" to Hennell about the October 1852 issue, she concluded, "There is a great, dreary article on the Colonies by my side asking for reading and abridgement, so I can't go on scribbling."<sup>27</sup> Towards the end of the month she confessed that she had "been stamping with rage—nay, swearing" all morning at the number of misspellings in the printed copy because a delay at the printers meant "no revise of Greg's article or of the two last sheets of the Review was seen—and that tiresome Mrs. Sinnett [who wrote the German literature section at the time] pretends to correct her proof and leaves it as you see."<sup>28</sup> Inadequate work from contributors sent her into an animated fury in a letter to the Brays: "I have been headachey and in a perpetual rage over an article that gives me no end of trouble and will not be satisfactory after all. I should like to stick red hot skewers through the writer whose style is as sprawling as his handwriting."<sup>29</sup> The following month, March 1853, she threatened "to tear [her] hair with disappointment" about the forthcoming volume, concluding, "In short I am a miserable Editor."<sup>30</sup>

Along with these typical and widespread frustrations that bedeviled the journal editor, we must keep in mind Evans's additional burden: the world of nineteenth-century publishing was, of course, like most other public spheres, a masculine one. As Barbara Onslow's account of women editors demonstrates, "Editorship of the most influential sectors of the press

was virtually banned to women" (p. 18). Onslow's quotation of Harriet Martineau on the qualities that would be needed to edit a new journal on economics—"undertaking a man's duty, I must brave a man's fate" (p. 18)—also has relevance to the challenges Evans faced. Evans's correspondence testifies to constant performance so that she might best fulfill this "man's duty." As already demonstrated, Chapman often simply signed letters that she wrote in his name. Further, though Evans kept her commanding role a secret, it is clear that she generally expected contributors to comply with her editorial directions, often delivered under the guise of Chapman's editorial imprimatur. She remained unruffled by the complaints of Samuel Brown, Scottish chemist and academic, about the editing of his article on atomic theory for the January 1853 issue, and she was tellingly coy but commanding about the assertion of her editorial powers. As she explained to Combe, a good friend of Brown, "He was extremely irate at certain omissions which my editorial obtuseness or self-sufficiency took upon itself to make."<sup>31</sup> As this correspondence emphasizes, her editorial control was achieved partly by using Chapman's "nominal" editorship to manipulate gender prejudice while striking home her message. At times, too, she played the role of female assistant when such a performance was required. She wrote to Hennell of her efforts with philosopher and theologian Robert William Mackay: "I have been using my powers of eloquence and flattery this morning to make him begin an article on the Development of Protestantism. He says 'Thank you' and asks me what books I recommend him to read!!"<sup>32</sup>

Her dealings with Combe, who knew Evans independently of Chapman and who was one of the few people who was fully aware of her commanding role at the *Westminster Review* are most interesting in this context.<sup>33</sup> Their letters from 1851-53 reveal some of the most overt articulations of Evans's sense of her editorial prerogatives and offer important evidence of Evans's ready assumption of authority, liberated from the more restrictive guise of the "assistant" role that marked most of her professional exchanges with *Westminster Review* men. Combe was open with Evans; addressing her as an equal, he regularly conveyed his appreciation of her direct role in dealing with the production of each issue of the *Westminster Review*.<sup>34</sup> In contrast, Chapman's correspondence with Combe was characterized by repeated instances of tetchiness and misunderstanding; Combe's letters to Chapman are generally brief, combative, rather impersonal pieces about advertisements, payment for work done, and so on. With Evans, Combe marked his letters "Confidential" and engaged in much more discursive, familiar tones about suitability of titles for articles, the idiosyncrasy of individual writers' styles, and promises of how he would use his contacts to secure big-name contributors for the journal. These are much more clubby, man-to-man exchanges in contrast to the more administrative or secretarial dealings

with Chapman, presenting what can be read as an ironic reversal of stereotyped gender roles.

Evans responded to Combe's faith in her role with a mixture of collusive camaraderie and authority. Ever alert to the need to appeal to readers through presentation as much as content, she directed Combe on headlines for his articles and on pamphlets he might consider including in his contributions. She also anticipated potential criticism of other works in each issue. Expressing concern about Brown's style, for instance, she displayed her awareness of the balance between entertainment and instruction that guided her understanding of a periodical article's function: "the greatest danger with respect to him would be the tendency occasionally rather to exhibit his own information than to instruct the reader and so to produce a striking article, instead of a popular and useful one."<sup>35</sup> It is a lesson she kept in mind when she wrote her own rhetorically lively and engaging longer pieces for the *Westminster Review* and other journals in the second half of the 1850s: not just useful and informative but conscious of readership and "popular" as well. In advising Combe about his proposed article on prison reform, Evans indicated her acute sense of the importance of timing pieces to coincide with heightened public interest and, it is presumed, better sales. In June 1853 she wrote: "we must beg you to allow us the option of deferring [the article's] insertion until January, unless public discussion on the question should render it peculiarly seasonable in October, in which case we shall of course be anxious to print it at once."<sup>36</sup> In April 1852 Combe replied directly to Evans about the difficulty of "finding fit men, up to the mark, to write for a Review," going on to imply that he meant men who wrote from his particular scientific viewpoint, though he was clearly respectful enough of her position not to insist on this point:

I have spoken to [Dr Cox] about giving you an article for the October No. on Physiology and its application and he agrees to do so. We talked over the subject & arrived at a general outline of the topic. If this therefore still meets your approbation you may rely on the article, and you may mention the length of it that will best suit you.<sup>37</sup>

The letter's rhetoric and tone implicitly delineate a relationship of mutual interests. Evans managed Combe carefully to ensure his support was maintained, and he contributed his articles to the *Westminster Review* free of charge. However, he too wanted to maintain some influence over the content of this metropolitan quarterly. He did not just flatter Evans, though; he took her editorial advice on the presentation of his work, accepting her direction on headings and choice of quotations. In her revealing advice to Combe for his pamphlet on prison reform, which she later abridged for inclusion in the *Westminster Review*, her attention to writing style is matched by an assiduous eye to the "look" of the piece, which includes

her offering to “supply the headings.” Though she did not interfere with the broad content of his work, she made her mark where she could—on its design:

You say in your last letter that you wish me to send a *proof* of your pamphlet to Sir James Clark and Mr. Perry. Will it not be better for me to correct the proof and supply the headings, to forward this corrected proof to you that you may add or cancel what you please, and then to send a *revise* to Sir James and Mr. Perry? . . . Again, will it not be desirable to *leave out of the Pamphlet* the list of books which will be prefixed to the article in the Review? I will take care to supply the necessary references, and make the corresponding omissions in the text. I think the first page of the pamphlet will look more dignified on this plan.

. . . I fear that numerous *verbal* alterations will be inevitable in the proof. Print is like broad daylight—it shews specks which the twilight of manuscript allows to pass unnoticed.<sup>38</sup>

This level of attention to detail carried over into the design and shape of the new *Westminster Review*—and such attention kept her fully occupied.

#### *Management by Design: Reinventing the Westminster Review's Reviews*

Arguably Evans's most influential intervention in the physical layout of the new *Westminster Review* was her redesign of the book review section of the journal. In particular, the contemporary literature articles in the first issue of the new series of the *Westminster Review* comprise a significant innovation in terms of design as much as content. Although the value of literature as a worthy topic for discussion fluctuated between Mill's and Hickson's respective stewardships (with Mill consciously increasing the number of literature articles and Hickson, returning to the original Benthamite principles, foregrounding social and political issues), both editors maintained the standard format established by the original editors: a number of articles followed by a “Miscellaneous” or “Notes” section. The review of books appears as a rather disorganized and chaotic appendix or tag end to the main body of the periodical. The content of this section also was highly derivative, often consisting of substantial extracts from texts or brief notices about recent publications.<sup>39</sup>

In contrast, the editors of the new series of the *Westminster Review*, seeing a gap in a market increasingly overwhelmed with new publications, sought to establish itself as the forum for substantial critical debate of new texts. From 1852 the *Westminster Review* thus moved away from sketchy summaries of contemporary publications presented in an irregular fashion almost as an afterthought to each volume. Instead, the last four articles of each number of the *Westminster Review* provided a substantial account of contemporary publications from America, England, France, and Germany,

respectively. In all, the *Westminster Review* addressed over a hundred books per issue in these four articles, which became a standard feature of the periodical for the next nine issues. The editorial note announced the reason for this revised format in the first issue of the new series:

*Under the conviction that brief and incidental literary notices, such as have been hitherto appended to the more important portion of the "Westminster Review," are of little value in a quarterly periodical, it has been determined to substitute for them a connected survey of the chief additions made to our literature during the preceding quarter . . . it is intended that the entire series shall give as complete a retrospect of the course of literary production during the year as the prescribed space will allow.*<sup>40</sup>

The very notion of a national literature, suggested by this alternative to a discipline-driven review section, tapped into current ideas of cultural nationalism that the *Westminster Review* itself promoted under its new editors, and it became a particularly notable selling point. More pragmatically, though, the decision to separate reviews of contemporary literature into distinct articles organized by country of production was a masterful exercise in other ways. By placing often brief, often unconnected reviews under the banner of a national literature, and by naming each section as a distinct "article" in the table of contents (and not "miscellaneous notes" for example), the reviews were given a sense of purposeful unity and structure that belied not only the actual content but also the means of production: various "hands" went in to the writing of each so-called "individual article."<sup>41</sup> Evans herself regularly stitched together disparate sub-sections, and although individual writers were responsible for each "nation" (Jane Sinnett wrote "Literature of Germany"; George Henry Lewes "Literature of France"; and R. W. Griswold "Literature of America," for instance), the actual patchwork nature of the pieces allowed for inserting and excising sections at will. Gordon Haight claims that Evans and Herbert Spencer contributed to the January 1852 "Literature of England," with Evans doing the bridging work.<sup>42</sup> She herself is credited with the last three pages of the "Literature of America" section for April 1852, where she reviewed *The Life and Letters of Joseph Story* (1851) and the *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli* (1851).<sup>43</sup>

In essence, then, the "note-based" coverage continued but the notes seemed more substantial—seemed to *be* articles—because they were collected under that one heading and entitled, somewhat brazenly it must be said, "Article." The section on "Literature of Germany" for April 1852, for instance, consisted of brief notices of books under the following fairly random sub-headings: Speculative Philosophy, Poetry, Voyages and Travels, and Miscell; the "Literature of France" article that followed displayed a different set of headings—again over notices of very different lengths—including Philosophy, Politics, History, and so-called Light Literature (covering

novels by Dumas, Eugène Sue, and Alphonse Karr).<sup>44</sup> The contemporary literature sections of the new *Westminster Review*, however, worked as one of the most obviously original innovations in mid-century periodical design, adding new authority to its claims of review status. Even the most cursory glance at competing and contemporary publications reveals the exceptional nature of the *Westminster Review*'s new approach. There was a distinct absence of clearly segregated review sections in the rival *Edinburgh Review* and *Quarterly Review*, for instance. This lack was also characteristic of many other quarterlies, such as the *British and Foreign Review* and *Prospective Review*. Otherwise, periodicals had minor review sections that appeared usually at the end of the journal in inconsistent formats and various lengths, often ranging from two to approximately twenty pages. This was true, for example, of the *Dublin Review*, *London Quarterly Review*, and *Tait's Edinburgh Review*. The *British Quarterly Review*'s "Books and [foreign] literature" section, which appeared occasionally as simply "Criticism of Books" (November 1846) or as "Foreign Literary Intelligence" (April 1846) or not at all (February 1848; November 1851), was transformed after the first appearance of the revised *Westminster Review* into a much more consistent and substantial section and expanded from twenty-four pages to almost one hundred by 1855.<sup>45</sup> Arguably, the attractions of the *Westminster Review*'s new design provoked the editor of the *British Quarterly Review* to revise his own editorial approach. The competitive cross-checking was mutual, as is clear from Evans's observation in her long letter to Chapman of July 1852 that the *British Quarterly Review* remained one of their main competitors.<sup>46</sup>

There is evidence to suggest that the idea for this new layout was Evans's, though it is never directly stated. As is common with the work of women editors in particular, we are left to infer or extrapolate from extant sources to establish her editorial influence. It is Evans, I suggest, who was clearly in command of this section during her time at the *Westminster Review*, weaving the various sub-sections into tighter units, as noted above. Furthermore, Chapman, listing the contents for the April issue in a letter to Combe in March 1852, quite tellingly lumped the review section into one "article" ("VIII Contemporary Literature"). That is, he was inattentive to the striking significance of the new layout and design.<sup>47</sup> Throughout 1852, his letters and Evans's testify to the fact that his first priority was not the layout of the *Westminster Review*. Evans explained his more pressing concerns in a letter to Sara Hennell as early as January 1852, reporting that "Mr. C." was "up to the ears in a business affair all about Bookselling and discounts."<sup>48</sup> The pattern of his preoccupation continued: in February she reported that "Mr. Chapman can't spare my head and hands this week," giving some indication of her invaluable dual functions, intellectual as well as practical.<sup>49</sup>

The revised appearance of the *Westminster Review*, a potential source of envy for its rivals, was popular with its backers, the critics, and the public. Subscriptions increased throughout 1852, and critics commented positively on the new energy reviving the long-standing quarterly.<sup>50</sup> The *Examiner* was fulsome in its praise and conscious of the effects of editorial changes on the buying public:

The *Westminster Review* which has failed under so many managements, under its new management promises to be no failure at all . . . The notion of treating quarterly in four final articles the general contemporary literature of England, America, Germany and France, is very good; the articles are well done and they place the Reader of the Review in possession of a kind of information which he wants about the literature of the day.<sup>51</sup>

The *Manchester Times*, reviewing the first two volumes in May 1852, noted of the second number that “the notices of the contemporary literature of England, America, France and Germany, are as careful and ample as in the first number, and this promises to be a most useful and sterling department of the ‘Review.’”<sup>52</sup>

#### *Conclusion: The Editorial Compromise*

In an important letter to Chapman in July 1852, full of details about the day-to-day running of the *Westminster Review*, Evans acknowledged the limitations of her editorial role, noting, in a compact understatement, that the only route open to her at the *Westminster Review*, “is . . . that of Editorial compromise.”<sup>53</sup> Mill, Martineau, and Froude all wrote much “we can agree with and admire,” she admitted of her leading writers (p. 49). However, there is an important difference implied in both verbs (“to agree with” and “to admire”) that is reinforced by her muted assessment:

They are amongst the world’s vanguard, though not all in the foremost line; it is good for the world, therefore, that they should have every facility for speaking out. Ergo, since each can’t have a periodical to himself, it is good that there should be one which is common to them—*id est*, the *Westminster*. (p. 49)

She followed up her declaration that there is space in the *Westminster Review* for all with an important caveat that obscures the degree to which we can assume she supported personally the actual contents of any individual issue: “The grand mistake with respect to this plan is the paragraph in the Prospectus which announces the Independent Section and which thus makes the Editors responsible for everything outside that railing—Ah me! how wise we all are *après coup*” (p. 49). Tellingly, the “Independent Contribution” section, and probably by her own idea given the tone of the remarks above, was dropped from this point (after just two issues) and did



not return again until after Evans's departure from the day-to-day management of the *Westminster Review* in 1854.<sup>54</sup>

The changes Evans made in the journal over the course of two years suggest that though she was aware that there would always be compromises on content that were outside of her control, she was not entirely without power. Her authority was exercised in terms of how that content was delivered. In the ways in which she helped transform the layout of the *Westminster Review* then, she did not fulfill either of W. T. Stead's categories of mid-century editors. She lacked the "missionary" zeal he hoped for in editors, but neither was she simply one of the "eunuchs of the craft."<sup>55</sup> Evans never offered a clearly articulated vision of what she thought the *Westminster Review* was or could be under her influence. Always conscious of her negotiating role in a business that forces compromise, she was nonetheless not entirely silenced. She was not a "eunuch of the craft" then, I suggest, but rather more like the dominant model of mid-century editor that Helen Small calls a "facilitator."<sup>56</sup> Small's version of the Stead binary is offered in her analysis of John Morely's and James Thomas Knowles's editorships of the *Fortnightly Review* and *Contemporary Review*, respectively. In his role at the *Fortnightly Review*, Morely, she concludes, followed the dominant mid-century editor type, the facilitator; Knowles, in contrast, revived the early century model of editor as impresario, more authoritative, visionary, and entrepreneur-like (p. 68). This latter role, I suggest, would be next to impossible for a woman editor of one of the dominant intellectual quarterlies at mid-century, so the character of editress is best described as a "facilitator."

That said, it was more and more difficult to continue facilitating Chapman and his business as Evans's work load expanded with the *Westminster Review's* growing momentum. She became increasingly vocal about the need to earn a more substantial living to support not just herself but also her recently widowed sister and family. Tensions between Chapman and Evans increased throughout 1853, and Evans asserted her independence by eventually moving out of 142 Strand. To the Brays in Coventry, she explained in early 1853: "I am out of spirits about the W[estminster] R[evue]. The editorship is not satisfactory and I should be glad to run away from it altogether. But one thing is clear—that the Review would be a great deal worse if I were not here. This is the only thought that consoles me."<sup>57</sup> The initial coherence in the journal's layout and management, followed by disruption as Evans left, together suggest the importance of her editorial role. The waning attention to editorial details was reflected also, and more obviously perhaps, in inconsistencies in the *Westminster Review's* format that surfaced after her departure. The contemporary literature sections that developed under Evans, and that were so important in transforming the periodical into a lively, dominant force in nineteenth-century criticism,

became increasingly inconsistent and fragmented, even as they remained as a substantial and original portion of each volume. Through the late 1850s and 60s, reviews of contemporary fiction and poetry (renamed as a *Belles Lettres* section) at times never even appeared. The featured index and headline systems disintegrated, and, as noted above, the so-called “Independent Contribution” section, abandoned by Evans, returned in July 1854 and again sporadically in the following years.

In her general exasperation with the difficulties of her editorial role, Evans participates in a long tradition of frustrated writer/editors that includes Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, and Anthony Trollope. In the secrecy that surrounded her work, however, Evans is unlike her nearest contemporaries, all of whom were established authors by the time they edited their most successful periodicals. She was an unknown both in the sense that her editorship was mostly secret and in that when she took on the editorial work, she was newly arrived in London with few friends and no reputation save for the very small circle of admirers who knew of her translation of David Strauss’s *Das Leben Jesu* (1835; *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined*, 1846). In marked contrast, Dickens, Trollope, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, and Thackeray in his last editorial role at the *Cornhill Magazine*, all used their names as editors or, even more overtly, were used for their names.<sup>58</sup> Dickens, for example, not only had his name displayed across the title page of *Household Words*, it also appeared as a headline on every page in the magazine. Braddon, though not involved in the routines of trade of *Belgravia*, wrote to the novelist Edward Bulwer Lytton of how well he might wonder to see her name “blazoned . . . on hoardings & railway stations in connection with our new Magazine,” so essential was her name to the success of the new journal.<sup>59</sup>

George Eliot’s writings were never associated in the public mind with the work of the periodical editor and journalist. Part of the deliberate separation of the artist from the trade has to do with Evans’s careful cultivation of her new fictional identity. Marian Evans never presented herself as a subject of the press; journalism rarely surfaced in explicit ways in her writings after 1857 until her final work, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879).<sup>60</sup> The example of Evans’s editorial career, however, among other things, reinforces and enhances our understanding of how the layout or design format of periodicals began to operate with more purpose as a hypertext that helped the reader to negotiate individual articles, signalling at once the periodical’s sense of itself as a commercial and cultural concept. Altogether, we are reminded of the “stylistic and semiotic modes of carving out readerships,” as Jon Klancher has put it, that were part of the editor’s brief.<sup>61</sup> In making this shift from attending to design rather than just content, we are alerted to the need to provide more contextualized assessment of individual articles or the work of individual periodical writers to emphasize, again, the corporate character of the periodical press.

Attention is drawn also to the marshalling of design that unveils in part the authority, so often occluded, of individual nineteenth-century editors. More particularly, as demonstrated here in the example of Evans's work, attention to design and layout can provide some evidence of the work carried out by women editors and assistant editors. Such women are rarely remembered as public figures; their work has been too long dismissed as marginal, and any official records of their tasks have been lost to history, if such records existed at all. Nonetheless, in the periodicals with which they are associated, we can trace their imprint on the page, and, if only partially, lift the veil on the often crucial roles played by these women of the press.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> [William] Hale White, letter to the editor, *Literary Gossip*, *Athenaeum*, 28 November 1885, 702.

<sup>2</sup> White, letter to the editor, 702. See *George Eliot's Life, as Related in her Letters and Journals*, ed. J[ohn] W[alter] Cross (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1885). Cross presented the volume as an "autobiography" because the text consisted predominantly of extracts from Evans's personal writings and letters, which Cross edited quite heavily in places.

<sup>3</sup> D. J. Trela, "Communities of Women, Widening Spheres," *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 31 (1998), 1. The work of lesser-known women journalists has been well served by organizations such as the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals and its *Victorian Periodicals Review* over the past three decades and more recently by a number of special issues related to women journalists in publications such as *Nineteenth Century Gender Studies*, 5, No. 2 (2009) and 6, No. 2 (2010). See also the seminal work by Barbara Onslow, *Women of the Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Macmillan, 2000). Subsequent references to Trela and Onslow will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>4</sup> Eliot to Mrs. Peter Alfred Taylor, London, 1 February 1853, in *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. Gordon S. Haight, vol. 2, *Letters 1852-1858* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 85.

<sup>5</sup> Evans first suggested the pseudonym in a letter addressed to John's brother William Blackwood, Richmond, 4 February 1857, in *The George Eliot Letters*, 2:292. John, Evans's primary correspondent, assumed their new author was a man and addressed Evans in correspondence as "My Dear Sir" or "My Dear Amos," following the title of Evans's first story, "The Sad Fortune of the Reverend Amos Barton," which was published in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* as a serial in January and February 1857. See for example, John Blackwood's letters to Evans on 29 December 1856 and 30 January 1857, Edinburgh, in *The George Eliot Letters*, 2:283, 2:290.

<sup>6</sup> George Eliot, "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists," *Selected Essays, Poems, and Other Writings*, ed. A. S. Byatt and Nicholas Warren (London: Penguin, 1990), 161.

<sup>7</sup> At mid-century, the *Edinburgh Review's* circulation had fallen to approximately 7,000 and the *Quarterly Review's* to around 8,000. For further details, see Alvar Ellegård, "The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain: II. Directory," *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 13 (1971), 13.

<sup>8</sup> Haight cites Thomas Carlyle's letter to Robert Browning, recounting his visit from Chapman, with the news that Chapman had an "able Editor" on board whose name could not yet be given; see Haight, *George Eliot's Originals and Contemporaries: Essays in Victorian Literary History and Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1992), 91.

<sup>9</sup> Evans to Chapman, Coventry, 9 June [1851], in *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. Haight, vol. 8, *Letters 1840-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 23. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>10</sup> Evans to Chapman, Coventry, 12 June 1851, in *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. Haight, vol. 1, *Letters 1836-1851* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 351.

<sup>11</sup> Rosemarie Bodenheimer, *The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans: George Eliot, Her Letters and Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 169.

<sup>12</sup> In Rosemary Ashton's *142 Strand: A Radical Address in Victorian London* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2006) for instance, Evans is referred to as an editorial "adviser" (p. 23); "joint" editor (p. 48); "chief assistant" (p. 81); "best of assistants" (p. 85); "active and decisive lieutenant" (p. 122); and "industrious and judicious co-editor" (p. 208), reflecting the difficulty of categorizing her work and her influence at the journal.

<sup>13</sup> Ina Taylor has argued that George Combe supported the *Westminster Review* because of his respect for Evans as editor; see Taylor, *George Eliot: Woman of Contradictions* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1989), 99. Ashton also makes this claim in *George Eliot: A Life* (London: Penguin, 1996), 89, 100-01.

<sup>14</sup> Chapman signaled the new regime at the *Westminster Review* by introducing each volume with a "New Series" number. As a result, although the *Westminster Review* had been in publication continuously since 1824, the first issue with Chapman as owner/editor appeared as New Series, Vol. 1, alongside the Old Series volume number. On Chapman's distraction from the day-to-day business of running the review, see, for instance, Eliot to Cara Bray, London, 27 May [1852], in *The George Eliot Letters*, 2: 29.

<sup>15</sup> For example, philanthropists Edward Lombe (1798/99-1852) and Thomas Horlock Bastard (1796-1898), both of whom had particular interests in educational reform, paid for articles that promoted their liberal views; for a summary of the contents of the *Westminster Review* during Evans's time, see Ashton, *142 Strand*, chapters 4 and 5; and Shelia Rosenberg, "The 'wicked Westminster': John Chapman, His Contributors and Promises Fulfilled," *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 33 (2000), 225-46.

<sup>16</sup> Laurel Brake, Bill Bell, and David Finkelstein, eds., *Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities* (London: Palgrave, 2000), 3.

<sup>17</sup> The *London Review* was founded in 1835 with Mill as editor and financial backing from Sir William Molesworth. Molesworth bought the *Westminster Review* in 1836, and the new title *London and Westminster Review* was established with Mill as editor.

<sup>18</sup> John Stuart Mill to Thomas Falconer, 27 January 1836, in *The Earlier Letters of John Stuart Mill, 1812-48*, ed. Francis E. Mineka (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), 293. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>19</sup> Valerie Dodd notes that between 1821 and 1830 over a hundred new periodicals were established in London alone; see Dodd, *George Eliot: An Intellectual Life* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 161.

<sup>20</sup> Chapman to George Combe, 10 January 1853, Combe Papers, No. 136, MS 7337, National Library of Scotland.

<sup>21</sup> See Chapman's letter to Combe, 3 December 1851, Combe Papers, No. 48, MS 7313. Lombe, for instance, had committed support for commissioned articles, not a general subscription. Protracted disagreements with Chapman followed. For a fuller account of Chapman's negotiations with his supporters, see Ashton, *142 Strand*, chapters 3 and 5.

<sup>22</sup> Eliot to Chapman, Coventry, 9 June [1851], in *The George Eliot Letters*, 8:23. Contributors were well paid: £12.12 per sheet, reduced to £10 a sheet in the first year of business to help finances.

<sup>23</sup> Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, London, [21 January 1852], in *The George Eliot Letters*, 2:4.

<sup>24</sup> Eliot to Charles Bray, Cara Bray, and Hennell, [London, 2 June 1852], in *The George Eliot Letters*, 2:31.

<sup>25</sup> Eliot to Charles and Cara Bray, [London, 14 June 1852], in *The George Eliot Letters*, 2:34.

<sup>26</sup> Eliot to Bessie Rayner Parkes, London, [15 June 1852], in *The George Eliot Letters*, 2:36.

<sup>27</sup> Eliot to Hennell, London, 2 September [1852], in *The George Eliot Letters*, 2:54.

<sup>28</sup> Eliot to Hennell, [London, September 1852], in *The George Eliot Letters*, 2:58, 57.

<sup>29</sup> Eliot to Charles and Cara Bray, [London, 26 February 1853], in *The George Eliot Letters*, 2:89-90.

<sup>30</sup> Eliot to Charles Bray, [London, 18 March 1853], in *The George Eliot Letters*, 2:93.

<sup>31</sup> Eliot to Combe, London, 16 April 1853, in *The George Eliot Letters*, 8:73.

<sup>32</sup> Eliot to Hennell, London, [13 October 1851], in *The George Eliot Letters*, 1:368. Evans had reviewed his *Progress of the Intellect* for the *Westminster Review* in January 1851. Mackay contributed £200 as a subscription to the new series of the *Westminster Review* in late 1851; see Eliot to Charles Bray, Cara Bray, and Hennell, London, [22 October 1851], in *The George Eliot Letters*, 1:369.

<sup>33</sup> Combe has suffered badly in biographies of George Eliot, mostly, arguably, for his horrified reaction to her relationship with the separated but still married George Henry Lewes: "We are deeply mortified and distressed; and I should like to know whether there is insanity in Miss Evans's family; for her conduct, with *her* brain seems to me like <insanity> morbid mental aberration"; see Combe to Charles Bray, Edinburgh, 15 November 1854, in *The George Eliot Letters*, 8:129.

<sup>34</sup> See for instance the flurry of letters between Bastard, Combe, and Evans in October and November 1852 regarding Bastard's views on the article concerning school reform (which he was sponsoring) for the *Westminster Review*, Combe Papers, Nos. 78, 80, 82, and 83, MS 7322.

<sup>35</sup> Eliot to Combe, Broadstairs, 16 July [1852], in *The George Eliot Letters*, 8:55.

<sup>36</sup> Eliot to Combe, London, 7 June 1853, in *The George Eliot Letters*, 8:75. See also her letters to Combe in *The George Eliot Letters* (written from London unless specified): 27 January 1852, 8:33-35; [24 February 1852], 8:35-36; 30 March 1852, 8:37; Coventry, 8 April 1852, 8:40-41; 22 April 1852, 8:43-46; 7 June 1852, 8:46; 11 June 1852, 8:47-48; 22 June 1852, 8:48-49; 29 June 1852, 8:49; 30 June 1852, 8:50; Broadstairs, 25 July [1852], 8:60-61; 13 November 1852, 8:65-66; 14 December 1852, 8:67; 21 December 1852, 8:68; 22 January 1853, 8:69-70; 18 February 1853,

8:71-73; 16 April 1853, 8:73-74; and 9 July 1853, 8:76.

<sup>37</sup> Combe to Miss Evans, Edinburgh, 10 April 1852, copy in Combe's Letter Book, Nov. 1849-April 1854, Combe Papers, No. 548, MS 7392.

<sup>38</sup> Eliot to Combe, London, 25 January 1854, in *The George Eliot Letters*, 8:93, emphasis in the original. This type of intervention was a regular feature of her editorial work for the *Westminster Review*; see, for example, her letter to Combe, London, 24 February 1852, in *The George Eliot Letters*, 8:35, where she tells Combe that when she receives the proof of the manuscript for his article from the printers, she will insert some Montaigne quotes.

<sup>39</sup> For an account of reviewing in these early years, see George L. Nesbitt, *Benthamite Reviewing: The First Twelve Years of the "Westminster Review," 1824-1836* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934).

<sup>40</sup> *Westminster Review*, n. s., 1 (1852), 247.

<sup>41</sup> The new review section also made good business sense because Chapman was a major importer and distributor of American books. As a result, the so-called "Literature of America" article provided useful advertising space for works that he hoped to sell.

<sup>42</sup> Haight, *George Eliot: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 98. Haight advises caution in attributing review work from this time to Evans, since there are no records to prove what she might have written while editor of the *Westminster Review*.

<sup>43</sup> *The Life and Letters of Joseph Story*, ed. William W. Story, vol. 1, (Boston: 1851); and Margaret Fuller, *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli*, vol. 1 (Boston: 1851).

<sup>44</sup> "Contemporary Literature of Germany," *Westminster Review*, n. s., 1 (1852), 323-46; and "Contemporary Literature of France," *Westminster Review*, n. s., 1 (1852), 346-56.

<sup>45</sup> See, for instance, "Our Epilogue on Books," *British Quarterly Review*, 21 (1855), 246-315 and 547-612.

<sup>46</sup> Eliot to Chapman, Broadstairs, [24-25 July 1852], in *The George Eliot Letters*, 2:47-50.

<sup>47</sup> Chapman to Combe, 15 March 1852, Combe Papers, No. 61, MS 7323.

<sup>48</sup> Eliot to Hennell, London, 31 January 1852, in *The George Eliot Letters*, 2:8.

<sup>49</sup> Eliot to Charles Bray, Cara Bray, and Hennell, London, 2 February 1852, in *The George Eliot Letters*, 2:9. There is little wonder that Evans wrote in February that she had "shirked all labour but what is strictly editorial this quarter"; see Eliot to Charles Bray, London, 16 February 1852, in *The George Eliot Letters*, 2:11. Chapman wrote to Combe in June 1852, for instance, that he had been "confined in the shop from morning until night and have found my work, including the Review almost more than I could get through"; see Chapman to Combe, 28 June 1852, Combe Papers, No. 67, MS 7323.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, "The Westminster Review," *The Leader*, 10 January 1852, 37-38.

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in an advertisement for the *Westminster Review* that appeared in the *Leader*, 4 September 1852, 860.

<sup>52</sup> "The Westminster Review. New Series. Nos 1 and 2. January and April," *Manchester Times*, 22 May 1852, 3. The *Daily News* called them "pungent and telling"; see "Literature," *Daily News*, 5 April 1852, 2. The substantial review sections continued to attract attention as defining features of the periodical and, as one

critic put it, "the best thing of its kind attainable"; see "The Literary Examiner," *Examiner*, 12 April 1856, 228. By 1854, the *Daily News* noted that the review section had become *Westminster Review*'s "most distinctive feature . . . under its present management"; see "Literature," *Daily News*, 10 April 1854, 2.

<sup>53</sup> Eliot to Chapman, Broadstairs, [24-25 July 1852], in *The George Eliot Letters*, 2:49. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>54</sup> This "Independent Contribution" feature was trumpeted in the first issue of the new series, *Westminster Review*, n. s., 1 (1852), 227:

for the reception of articles ably setting forth opinions, which, though harmonizing with the general spirit and aims of the work; may contain opinions at variance with the particular ideas or measures it will advocate. The object of the Editors, in introducing this new department, is to facilitate the expression of opinion by men of high mental power and culture, who while they are zealous friends of freedom and progress, yet differ widely on special points of great practical concern, both from the Editors and from each other.

A few months before Evans's letter disavowing this "innovation," the *Manchester Times* suggested a certain disingenuous evasiveness on the editor's part in response to the "Independent Contribution" article: "we confess we do not understand this method of evading responsibility for the publication of sentiment which the editor, on his own grounds, cannot but regard as mischievous in a high degree"; see "The *Westminster Review*. New Series. Nos 1 and 2. January and April," 3.

<sup>55</sup> W. T. Stead, "Government by Journalism," *Contemporary Review*, 49 (1886), 66; quoted in Joel Wiener, ed., *Innovators and Preachers: The Role of the Editor in Victorian England* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1985), xviii.

<sup>56</sup> Helen Small, "Liberal Editing in the *Fortnightly Review* and the *Nineteenth Century*," in *Authorship in Context: From the Theoretical to the Material*, ed. Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi and Polina Mackay (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 62. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>57</sup> Eliot to Charles and Cara Bray, [London, 19 February 1853], in *The George Eliot Letters*, 2:88.

<sup>58</sup> Jennifer Carnell has suggested that Mary Elizabeth Braddon did not contribute to the day-to-day running of *Belgravia* and in many respects had a nominal editorial role at the magazine; see Carnell, *The Literary Lives of Mary Elizabeth Braddon: A Study of her Life and Work* (Hastings: Sensation Press, 2000), 74-75.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Robert Lee Wolff, "Devoted Disciple: The Letters of Mary Elizabeth Braddon to Edward Bulwer Lytton 1862-1873," *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 22 (1974), 136. See also Solveig G. Robinson, "Editing *Belgravia*: M. E. Braddon's Defense of 'Light Literature,'" *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 28 (1995), 109.

<sup>60</sup> The exception being the enmeshing of local politics and regional, partisan, daily newspapers that features in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72).

<sup>61</sup> Jon P. Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 4.