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Review of George Eliot A Bibliographical History

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**William Baker & John C. Ross, *George Eliot A Bibliographical History*
(Oak Knoll Press & The British Library, 2002). pp. xxxix + 676.
ISBN 1 58456 069 X & 0 7123 4765 8.**

This enormously impressive history is the fruit of something like thirty-five years of work by William Baker and John Ross. They have brought together a huge and comprehensive body of bibliographical information, broken down into five main sections and two appendixes. There are extensive entries and notes on the major works; minor literary works (novellas and poetry); essays and reviews; miscellaneous writing (unpublished works in publishable genres, compilations of short extracts, partly authored writings, unpublished autobiographical writings); collections and collected works (more poetry, essays, novels and complete works); and 'Eliotiana' (sequels, settings for songs from *The Spanish Gypsy*, collections of illustrations, non-literary writings subsequently published). The indexes alone, 'Works by George Eliot' and 'General Index', run to forty-five pages.

In the Introduction we learn, among other things, about editions, printings, issues and the states of issues, and how to translate a typical entry like 'A5.4.a²':

'A' locates the publication within the Section (A, B, C, D, or E . . . with F and G used for Appendix I and Appendix II items); '5' is the number assigned to the work within the Section (in this case, *The Mill on the Floss*); '4' identifies the fourth edition in the series of editions listed, in this case (following three British editions) the first American edition; 'a' identifies the first printing; and '2' designates what is presumed to be the second issue of it, for reasons explained in the notes. (xiv)

Detailed accounts of editions published outside Great Britain and America, in English and translations, are also included, providing a fascinating picture of the extent to which Eliot was, and still is, read throughout the world.

There are 140 illustrations of title pages, spines, wrappers, bindings, illustrations and advertisings, accompanying the detailed written descriptions, and there are useful introductions on composition dates and the close interest Eliot and Lewes maintained overseeing all publications. Baker and Ross owe a debt of gratitude to Gordon S. Haight and other scholars, which they of course readily acknowledge. And we owe them a similar debt, because *George Eliot A Bibliographical History* is a monumental piece of scholarship, sure to become a standard reference tool for anyone interested in the often bewilderingly complex history of Eliot's prodigious output.

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