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J. W. CROSS DEFENDS G. H. LEWES

By Margaret Harris

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Early in 1881, John Cross, widowed after only seven months of married life, set about the task of preparing a biography of his famous wife. He faced a number of challenges. The most daunting were the various sensitivities inherent in the life story of the woman best known as George Eliot. Two events were particularly confronting: Mary Ann Evans's loss of faith in the 1840s, and Marian Evans's decision in 1854 to live with George Henry Lewes although they could not marry. For Cross, in effect George Eliot's second husband, the treatment of Lewes and her relationship with him was naturally of particular concern. From the time of the eventual publication of *George Eliot's Life as related in her letters and journals* in January 1885, many readers have been frustrated by its blandness.¹ Prime Minister Gladstone's candid verdict has become famous: 'It is not a Life at all. It is a Reticence in three volumes.'² But Cross's caution was intelligible, and this paper offers insight into some of his decisions as he worked on the *Life*, notably those about the portrayal of Lewes.

It had been a chance meeting that introduced the Leweses to the Cross family. In October 1867, George Lewes was on a short walking holiday with Herbert Spencer, ironically another significant figure in George Eliot's emotional history, when they encountered Mrs Anna Cross and several of her daughters in Weybridge.³ The family was already known to Spencer. It was not until 1869 that the Leweses met John Cross, the second son, in Rome, and from that time a friendship developed. Cross made himself useful in many ways to the Leweses, both of whom addressed to him as 'Nephew'. He was instrumental in the purchase of their country home at Witley, advised them on investments, organized outings to places like the Bank of England, and introduced them to tennis and badminton. He provided considerable emotional and practical support to George Eliot after Lewes's death in November 1878, but the ways in which their relationship intensified into marriage remain obscure, as to some extent does the nature of the short-lived marriage, celebrated on 6 May 1880. Cross's account is in all senses partial, cast in terms of her 'want of close companionship' which enabled the formation of a 'bond of mutual dependence' (*Life*, III, 387).⁴ In writing *George Eliot's Life*, he was resolute though self-effacing in the role of champion, developing the image of a romantic artist and vulnerable woman that was not much challenged for over a century. As Barbara Hardy points out, 'It was a labour of love, and he edited character, life, and language to construct his image.'⁵

The process of composition was arduous. It is necessary to bear in mind first that Cross had known George Eliot only in the last decade of her life, and then that there was only a limited amount of material on the public record at her death, though that was significantly augmented by obituaries.⁶ Cross himself acknowledged the importance of certain obituaries, for instance in his observation that Mathilde Blind's biography 'is clever but adds so little to the articles by Mr Call, Edith Simcox, Fred. Myers, and Kegan Paul that she might have waited till my collection was out'.⁷ He systematically consulted George Eliot's friends and relations, beginning with her brother Isaac (famously reconciled with his sister on her marriage), assembling reminiscences and especially collecting letters (he seems to have settled early on and independently on the form of the work, extracts from letters and journals with minimal commentary). He experienced periods of ill-health, and professed himself conscious of his lack

of learning and literary experience. The patience of the publisher William Blackwood was sorely tried, not only by Cross's delays but also by his fussiness. He was extremely particular about layout and other aspects of the physical presentation of the work, and continued incorporating new material until a very late stage. On 10 January 1885 he sent 'Proof of Preface corrected – for the last time I hope!'; then two days later wrote to confirm an instruction sent by telegram requesting an addition to the Preface, explaining that the format was intended to be 'uniform in appearance with George Eliot's collected works', and commenting that 'until he heard my explanation', Lord Acton had thought 'it was a pity not to have had a larger volume'.⁸ Two days later again, he regrets that publication on 22 January is no longer possible: 'I resign myself to the 27th – but I do hope that this is positively the last delay as I am bothered to death by everybody asking me when it is to appear' (14 January 1885, NLS MS4468).

During his years of work on *George Eliot's Life*, Cross naturally discussed progress with his publisher, but for substantive advice he came to depend on the prominent Roman Catholic intellectual Lord Acton.⁹ In a letter of condolence to Cross (25 January 1881), Acton declared his estimate of George Eliot, in terms that were already formed and did not subsequently waver: 'It is as if the sun had gone out. If Sophocles or Cervantes had lived in the light of our civilisation, or if Dante had prospered like Manzoni, George Eliot might have had a rival.' He went on to express the hope that the rumour he had heard, that Cross would write on George Eliot, was true, and concluded: 'Do not refuse the testimony of one earnest and impartial critic – that the second place in English Literature belongs to her, and that in one supreme quality of power she was not second even to Shakespeare'. Acton is quoting himself (a not infrequent occurrence), having written in almost identical terms to Mary Gladstone on hearing that George Eliot had died. That letter spells out more precisely the power he attributed to George Eliot: 'In problems of life and thought, which baffled Shakespeare disgracefully, her touch was unailing. No writer ever lived who had anything like her power of manifold, but disinterested and impartially observant sympathy.'¹⁰ This recognition of George Eliot's moral authority, qualified by censure of her breaches of both moral and civil law, was to drive all Acton's pronouncements.

A brief correspondence followed, in which Cross confided his apprehensions ('I feel the very great responsibility of an untried author undertaking so serious a task' – 1 February 1881), and Acton responded encouragingly ('I trust that you ... will be able to trace the course of studies that determined the growth of that wonderful mind as Lewes did for Goethe' – 9 February 1881: a curious comment, given that as later letters reveal he was no friend to Lewes).

The dialogue then lapsed until early 1883, when the two men met in the South of France. From this point, Cross consulted Acton frequently, showing him large sections of draft. The first batch of material dealt with George Eliot's early adult years, and Acton's response emphasized his admiration of her intellect, and his concern about her loss of faith: matters to which he was constantly to advert. He was disappointed that there was so little evidence of rigorous reading in her move to agnosticism, writing at length about her reading of Hennell and Strauss, and deploring that she did not appear to have read Hume and Kant (6 February [1883]). Such critical commentary was to be a feature of his letters.

Cross soon embarked on a campaign to get Acton to review the *Life* (16 April 1883). Acton demurred perfunctorily, then enunciated his agenda: 'I would try to illustrate your book and her writings by each other, and to fix, as rightly as a contemporary can, her place in history' (4 June 1883). While the review would address this large aim, much of Acton's commentary during the process of composition was on details of fact and matters of interpretation. Most of his advice was taken, as Cross was to acknowledge in his preface (*Life*, I, x). A case in point is to be found in a selection from George Eliot's journals where Cross was unable to interpret Acton's annotation on the manuscript: 'N.B. put against the description of Carrière as a "thin lipped man whom one wished out of the room like a cold draught". Do you think this should be omitted? If it will give pain to anyone of course I will omit it.' (6 February [1884]) Acton responded immediately:

Carrière is still living. He is old and nearly blind. He is a writer of literary criticism and aesthetics; and he is son-in-law to Liebig, by whom, I think, they were kindly welcomed. It occurred to me that the passage might jar on his feelings, if, by chance, he has been an ardent admirer and an intelligent critic of her writings; which I do not know, but which is not improbable. (6 February [1884])

Acton's solicitude is not specious, but his mindset renders him immune to what for other readers is a glimpse of the embryonic skills of the novelist-to-be in George Eliot's vivid descriptive phrase. Cross heeded Acton's concerns, and dropped the comment.¹¹

Some of Acton's suggestions were more constructive – for instance, he suggested that it would be helpful to have empirical data about sales of the works ('the figures, as to circulation and remuneration' – 27 December [1883]) – a proposal Cross adopted, incorporating much correspondence with various members of the firm of William Blackwood and Sons, especially John Blackwood, with inestimable benefit to scholars since. In addition, Acton had some input into the final form of the title (24 April [1884]).

It has occurred to me whether you might not work up to the word autobiography in some such way as this: Journals and Letters – forming an autobiography of George Eliot, or Journals and Letters of G. E. [sic] composing her autobiography, arranged & edited by JWC. [sic] ... I do still think that you might contrive to set that invaluable word on the title page.

It appears from Cross's reply that Acton was tinkering with a form of words Cross had already proposed, now modified to the point where it is almost identical with that adopted when the work was eventually published. In the end, Cross decided against the use of 'that invaluable word', autobiography, explaining that *George Eliot's Life* 'has the advantage over "an autobiography"', in the ordinary acceptance of the term, owing to the fact that it is involuntary – or free from design – and therefore has I think the great merit of being more free from self-consciousness which must always be a great and insuperable difficulty in an actual autobiography' (26 April 1884). Cross was to take up the issue of genre in the famously disingenuous first sentences of his preface: 'I have endeavoured to form an *autobiography* (if the term may be permitted) of George Eliot. The life has been allowed to write itself in extracts from her letters and journals' (*Life*, I, v).

There were places where Cross explicitly asked Acton's advice, notably the section relating to George Eliot's union with Lewes. In the published version, Cross quotes George Eliot's brief letter of 20 July 1854 to the Brays and Sara Hennell: 'Dear Friends, – all three – I have only time to say good-bye, and God bless you. *Poste Restante*, Weimar, for the next six weeks, and afterwards Berlin' (*Life*, I, 325; cf GEL, II, 166). And continues:

We have now been led up to the most important event in George Eliot's life – her union with Mr George Henry Lewes. Here, as elsewhere, it seems to me to be of the first importance that she should speak for herself; and there is, fortunately, a letter to Mrs Bray, dated in September 1855 – fourteen months after the event – which puts on record the point of view from which she regarded her own action. I give this letter here (out of its place as to date); and I may add, what, I think, has not been mentioned before, that not only was Mr Lewes's previous family life irretrievably spoiled, but his home had been wholly broken up for nearly two years. In forming a judgment on so momentous a question, it is above all things necessary to understand what was actually undertaken – what was actually achieved – and, in my opinion, this can best be arrived at, not from any outside statement or arguments, but by consideration of the whole tenor of the life which follows, in the development of which Mr Lewes's true character, as well as George Eliot's will unfold itself. No words that anyone else can write, no arguments anyone else can use, will, I think, be so impressive as the life itself. (*Life*, I, 325-6)

He then quotes George Eliot's long letter of 4 September 1855 to Cara Bray, in which she confronts what she believes to be misinterpretation of her action in living with Lewes. She addresses the situation in general terms, acknowledging that there can be different interpretations of and attitudes towards the marriage laws. She advances more particular considerations also, maintaining that Sara is unaware of 'Mr. Lewes's real character and the course of his actions' (*Life*, I, 327). Her self-vindication is dignified (and accurate):

I indulge in no arrogant or uncharitable thoughts about those who condemn us, even though we might have expected a somewhat different verdict. From the majority of persons, of course, we never looked for anything but condemnation. We are leading no life of self-indulgence, except indeed, that, being happy in each other, we find everything easy. We are working hard to provide for others better than we provide for ourselves, and to fulfil every responsibility that lies upon us. (*Life*, I, 328; cf GEL, II, 213-5)¹²

In devising his tactics for presenting the union, Cross followed the line George Eliot laid out. We can only conjecture how the first version of his careful apologia may have read, though there are some clues in Acton's comments in a long letter of 21 December 1883. Acton began by taking out some insurance, telling Cross that 'The sentence at the beginning, in which you distinguish the broader and the subtler aspects, is one which you must discuss, not with me, but with the oldest friends you have. But I think I see my way to a suggestion or two farther on, always putting myself in the attitude of a perverse reader.' He goes on to interrogate Cross's proposition that 'They considered the impossibility of complying with the legal form to be a

defect in the law', revolving different angles and implications of 'the want of legal sanction' (in the process, curiously attributing a sister to Charles Lewes: possibly one of his half-sisters fathered by Thornton Hunt). He objects to an account of G. H. Lewes that 'appears to me to be introduced for the sake of his family ... I can imagine somebody saying that he is damned with faint praise.' Before long, his major and recurrent concern emerges:

If I say, as I do say every day, that George Eliot's theory of life and duty is loftier than that of all the divines in Christendom, I know that I lay myself open to the objection that her own rule formed an exception to her general rule, that the possibility of reconciling the two has never been shown, and, therefore, that the elevating power of the books is diminished, at least in the eyes of persons impatient of lofty teaching.

There is more in this vein before he shifts to Lewes. He speaks of 'the practical consequences' of her decision to live with Lewes:

looking to the long period of isolation, to the consequent excessive importance of Lewes in her social horizon, to the loss of much useful contact and the exclusion of some kinds of influence and experience, I must think that too much was sacrificed to Lewes, and that it is apparent that, in 1853, she immeasurably underestimated herself, to say nothing of her estimate of him, and of some of the literary and social consequences, all of which, if I develop [sic] it, I propose to say, without offence to any interested person. It seems to me the key to many things.

His letter ends with a mixture of insight and self-deprecation: 'Please forgive my carping spirit. It is my *raison d'être*.'

In reply Cross as usual expressed gratitude to Acton for criticism which 'holds the mirror up to my shortcomings' (23 December 1883), indicating that he has modified his original draft in response. In this instance he went on to venture mild dissent, referring directly to Acton's comments on 'They considered the impossibility of complying with the legal form to be a defect in the law', saying that he meant it to refer specifically to the law which debarred Lewes from divorcing Agnes because he had 'condoned his wife's offence'. He continued more firmly:

If GE [sic] had chosen an easy life free from ties and obligations then I think the want of legal sanctions might well have been used as an argument to weaken the authority of her teaching. But I think she chose what was difficult.

However from the effect left on your mind by what I have said – or left unsaid – I am not only convinced that for the ordinary reader any statement must be incomplete but I am drawn to the conclusion that it is perhaps more fitting for me not to touch upon it at all. It is a very difficult question for anyone – most of all for me – and I think perhaps it will be wiser for me simply to leave the explanation in her own words in the letter to Mrs Bray.

Perhaps hubristically, he added 'It will be a very great interest to me to see how you treat this

point and I feel that you see it from many sides. I so cordially agree with you in the “immeasurable underestimation” of herself in 1853.’

Although Cross called on the services of a number of friends to vet late drafts and proofs (including Court of Appeal judge Sir Charles Bowen, and Cambridge philosopher Henry Sidgwick), he had no such sustained interaction with them as with Acton. Moreover, Cross like many of his contemporaries had virtually unbounded respect for Acton’s moral and intellectual authority. His high hopes of Acton’s review were explicable in the light of such comments as ‘I congratulate you most sincerely on the completion of a work that will be prized as one of the best, one of the three best, biographies in the language’ (3 January 1885). Cross wrote to William Blackwood two days after publication that the review in the *Standard* distressed him, but the *Times* provided antidote to the bane. In addition, ‘your opinion following Lord Acton’s and Charles Lewes’s and followed by Frederic Harrison’s and one or two other competent critics (amongst my most intimate friends)’ reassured him (29 January 1885, NLS MS4468).¹³ In the event, what Acton wrote caused him deep consternation.

Acton on 1 March 1885 delivered himself of something of an apologia: ‘To my great regret, I have had to stop at the very threshold of my review ... I wanted to describe the peculiar interval of the progress of thought into which she stepped ... I have only contrived to analyze [sic] your book, as I understand it.’ He seems almost apologetic in saying that he had ‘looked, at my Club [the letter is written from the Athenaeum], for some friend of yours, to show him my proofs’ – but Bowen had gone when Acton came back with them. ‘I could only consult Maine on particular points. Anybody who reads the last paragraph with a very strong magnifier, will detect much unspoken matter in it.’

The theme of that closing paragraph is enunciated in its opening sentence: ‘She has said of herself that her function is that of the aesthetic, not the doctrinal teacher – the rousing of the noble emotions which make mankind desire the social right, not the prescribing of special measures.’ As he has done throughout the review, Acton wrestles with George Eliot’s denial of Christianity, and comes to the acknowledgement that ‘Her teaching was the highest within the resources to which Atheism is restricted’, and concludes:

In spite of all that is omitted, and of specific differences regarding the solemn questions of Conscience, Humility, and Death, there are few works in literature whose influence is so ennobling; and there were people divided from her in politics and religion by the widest chasm that exists on earth, who felt at her death what was said of the Greek whom she had most deeply studied – σκότον εινα τεθνηκότος.¹⁴

This conclusion resoundingly reiterates his earliest recorded judgements on George Eliot, even to the Aristophanes quotation.

On 3 March, Cross plaintively responded to Acton’s letter, and to his essay:

as I expected I have learnt a great deal from it and I expect to learn a great deal more – as it is compressed food which will require time to digest. I am always a slow reader and it takes me a long time to master even ordinary writing: much

longer to master writing where every paragraph is full of meaning.

He picked up on Acton's comment by saying that he was confident 'every careful reader' would detect 'much unspoken matter' in Acton's closing sentence. Then, having demurred that Acton had been 'too kind' in references to Cross himself, he laid a gentlemanly complaint, before closing with renewed protestations of thanks.

If I could have expressed a wish before the article was published it would have been to ask you to reconsider one or two phrases in regard to Lewes' position – before she knew him. I look at the whole question naturally from her point of view and I am confident that the less that had been said about it the better she would have been satisfied ... On the question of the want of historic faculty you of course speak as an expert. I shall like very much some day to hear from you on what you ground it.

Bearing in mind the correspondence between them, it is not surprising that Cross should have been taken aback by Acton's review. The particular comments on Lewes to which Cross refers are of the order of 'Disaster had settled on his domestic life; he had set his hand to too many things to excel in any, and the mark of failure and frustrated effort was upon him' (478). Acton's treatment of Lewes is relentlessly savage. 'Mr. Cross is loyal to the memory of Lewes, and affords no support to the conjecture that she longed to be extricated from a position which had become intolerable, or ever awoke to the discovery that she had sacrificed herself to an illusion' (476). He credits George Eliot with having brought Lewes to such success as he had: 'She helped him to attain a prominent if not quite an important place among men of letters' (478). He acknowledges that 'Lewes helped to dispel the gloom and despondency of George Eliot's spirits, and stood manfully between her and all the cares he did not cause' (478). But Lewes's perceived iniquities are detailed at length: 'He was not quick in detecting her sovereign ability, and must bear the reproach that he undervalued his prize, and never knew until it was too late that she was worthy of better things than the position to which he consigned her' (478). That position was one sequestered from society, and here Acton's view is that while Lewes's influence on George Eliot's intellectual development was beneficial in many respects, it was malign in one unforgivable respect, namely religion. Acton is unshakable in his conviction that George Eliot was really of God's party.

She had kept up her early love of the Scriptures, and she contracted a great liking for the solemn services of the Catholic churches. Lewes saw no harm in these tastes, and he even bought her a Bible. But he ... was a boisterous iconoclast, with little confidence in disinterested belief and a positive aversion for Christianity ... George Eliot's interest in the religious life was therefore kept up under resistance to adverse pressure (479).

Acton's reply of 4 March to Cross's remonstrance is not extant, but provoked Cross to write again at length on 6 March. His comments on Lewes are of particular note. For once he takes a stand against Acton (incidentally turning Acton's own arguments about Carrière back on him):

Your article seems to me cram full of thought and suggestiveness and demands

very close attention and scrutiny and I hope you will pardon the liberty I have taken in making the observations I have made about it. What was really in my mind about your allusions to Lewes was a fear that they might give pain to those to whom he was very dear. And I know that is what you would have wished to avoid. There is this to be said too. What might have been if they two had never met is of course an unverifiable hypothesis. We don't know. But we do know what she achieved in the life that she chose for herself. With all his deficiencies and faults of character Lewes combined a rare – in my experience a unique – generosity and sympathy. If she had married the best man in the world without that quick sympathy – that artistic sense – she would never have written her books. Again if she had remained single would she have had the courage to go on writing? I don't know. Nobody can say. My own impression is that such a mind would have found a vent for itself. But what the rest would have been is part of the unknown and the unknowable. No one probably – nay certainly – can ever have known except Lewes and myself how easily she might have been rendered quite dumb. And that she should have written what she did write in his companionship is I think the greater tribute to his qualities. From my point of view this should always be remembered and emphasized to his credit. And I think in this you will agree with me.

Here is an unparalleled assertion by Cross of *his* authority. He had been deferential to Acton throughout, but quite unprepared for so vehement an attack. In this letter there is a unique glimpse of George Eliot's champion on the offensive. For the most part he claimed no more than many observers (and indeed some reviewers of the *Life*), both pro and con, allowed. This defence of Lewes is a significant – and admirable – breach of Cross's decorous discipline. Moreover, perhaps surprisingly he kept on at Acton, calling him out on a matter of critical opinion in a way that shows Cross to be a better literary critic than he thought:

Although I am afraid I have very little of the historic faculty myself I am very greatly interested in what you write about it and with your explanation I think that I quite see what you mean in regard to Romola. But is a novel the proper vehicle for developing that attitude? Is not fiction obliged to rely for its interest to the mass of men on the working out of the tendencies of character in individuals?

Many readers still would mutter 'Hear, hear'.

Cross himself needs defence.¹⁵ *George Eliot's Life* has not always had good press, from the time of publication down to Gordon Haight's demonstration of its lack of scholarly rigour which put it thoroughly into eclipse (GEL, I, xiii-xv). But Cross's work in compiling *George Eliot's Life* performed an invaluable service for George Eliot and her readers, by its assembly of versions of so many letters together with extracts from the journals. Until relatively recently, it has been the basis for much scholarship and criticism (Haight's included). Its inestimable value is that from his privileged position Cross set down a particular interpretation of George Eliot's career that will always have to be reckoned with.

Notes

- 1 *George Eliot's Life as related in her letters and journals*, arranged and edited by her husband J. W. Cross, 3 vols. (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1885). I have quoted throughout from this edition, incorporating references parenthetically in the text.
- 2 E. F. Benson, *As We Were: A Victorian Peepshow* (London: Longmans, Green, 1930), p. 111.
- 3 Rosemary Ashton, *G. H. Lewes: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 242. See also *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1954-78), IV, 392-3 (subsequently cited parenthetically in the text as GEL).
- 4 The most searching analysis is that of Rosemarie Bodenheimer, who in essence sees George Eliot choosing Cross to manage her affairs in her lifetime and beyond. Her concluding observation that 'He was to be the editor who excised the sharp separateness of her letters, and strung them together in a continuous narrative' figuratively identifies in Cross's editorial function the particular charge he accepted, of mediating between his wife and the world: *The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans: George Eliot, Her Letters and Fiction* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 118.
- 5 *George Eliot: A Critic's Biography* (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 104.
- 6 See my entry, 'Obituaries', in *Oxford Reader's Companion to George Eliot*, ed. John Rignall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 292-3.
- 7 Cross was writing to Lord Acton, 12 May 1883 (Acton Collection, Cambridge University Library, Add 8119 (2)/C293), referring to the first book-length biography, Mathilde Blind's *George Eliot* in the 'Eminent Women Series' (London: W. H. Allen, 1883). Blind herself acknowledges the significance of these and other obituaries, together with the assistance of George Eliot's friends, notably the Brays and Sara Hennell (pp. iv-v). Cross's letters to Acton are in the Cambridge University Library, Add Ms 8119 (2)/ C285-322; Acton's to Cross are among the George Eliot Papers in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale. I am grateful to these two libraries for permission to quote from the correspondence. Subsequent references are included parenthetically in my text, giving date only.
- 8 Blackwood Papers, National Library of Scotland MS4468, 205 and 206: cf *Life*, I, xi. Subsequent references to the Blackwood Papers are incorporated parenthetically in the text.
- 9 John Emerich Edward Dalberg, first Baron Acton of Aldenham (1834-1902), is described by Josef L. Altholz in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography as 'historian and moralist ... [c]osmopolitan by birth and breeding'. He sought actively to establish high-order intellectual debate among English Catholics, then turned to

historical research, though his projected magnum opus, a 'History of liberty', never eventuated.

- 10 Quoted from David Carroll, ed., *George Eliot: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 461.
- 11 The full text is in *The Journals of George Eliot*, ed. Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 314): cf *Life*, II, 32.
- 12 This letter has been discussed frequently by biographers: e.g. Bodenheimer, pp. 97-9; and Rosemary Ashton, *George Eliot A Life* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp. 115-8 and 138-9. Haight quotes it in full, calling it 'an extraordinary statement of her position' but not expounding: *George Eliot A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 189. Some reviewers picked up on it. Cross referred to the letter as 'the most important thing in the Life' (to William Blackwood, 3 November 1884, NLS MS4455).
- 13 The work was extensively reviewed, with important discussions by (among others) John Morley, *Macmillan's Magazine*, 51 (April 1885), 241-56; Frederic Harrison, *Fortnightly Review*, 43 (1885), 309-22; and Margaret Oliphant, *Edinburgh Review*, 161 (April 1885), 514-53. Cross kept a comprehensive clippings file, now in Beinecke.
- 14 Acton, 'George Eliot's Life', *Nineteenth Century*, 17 (March 1885), 485. The Greek phrase is Aristophanes' comment on Aeschylus, 'there was darkness when he died' (Fragment 643).
- 15 Just as Acton's review overall was equivocal about Cross's work, so he was equivocal about Cross's reputation. His note on the drama of Cross's honeymoon illness in Venice is frequently cited: 'At Venice she thought him mad, and she never recovered the dreadful depression that followed. Sent for Ricchetti, told him that Cross had a mad brother. Told her fears. Just then, heard that he had jumped into the Canal.' (CUL MS5109, item 1571, quoted by Haight, *George Eliot: A Biography*, pp. 544-5).