Although this book is the product of a long evolutionary process, its origin can be dated with certainty to the day a decade ago that I left a warehouse sale at the Yale University Press, happily burdened with seven blue-covered volumes: Gordon Haight's edition of *The George Eliot Letters*. Free from library due dates, I indulged in the luxury of reading them from cover to cover. It was therein that I met the members of this Victorian circle, and began to sense the rich interrelationships of their world. In the *Letters* and in his biography, Professor Haight first gave us the historical George Eliot; his meticulous scholarship has been a continuing inspiration to me. If Gordon Haight introduced me to the facts, J. Hillis Miller introduced me to the theories. My gratitude to him for stimulating my interest in the Victorians, and for his support and advice in my early researches.

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The love, strength, and faith of my husband, Paul Thiboutot, have been the gift of grace that made it whole.