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How Proto-Feminist Was George Eliot?

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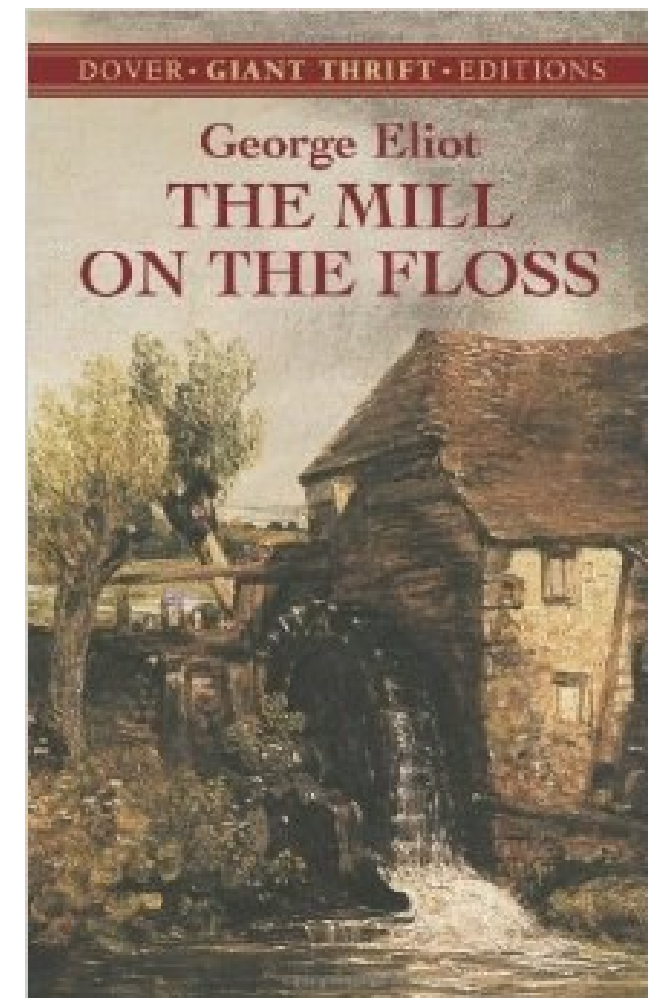
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The Mill on the Floss



"The ladies of St. Ogg's...had their favorite abstraction, called Society, which served to make their consciences perfectly easy in doing what satisfied their own egoism,—thinking and speaking the worst of Maggie Tulliver, and turning their backs upon her"—

The Mill on the Floss

The Mill on the Floss shows the struggle of Maggie, a woman who values education over beauty, in a judgmental society.

Maggie is shamed by her society after her cousin's fiancé, Stephen, tricks her into running away with him. Maggie is forced to live in shame and only escapes public oppression when she dies.

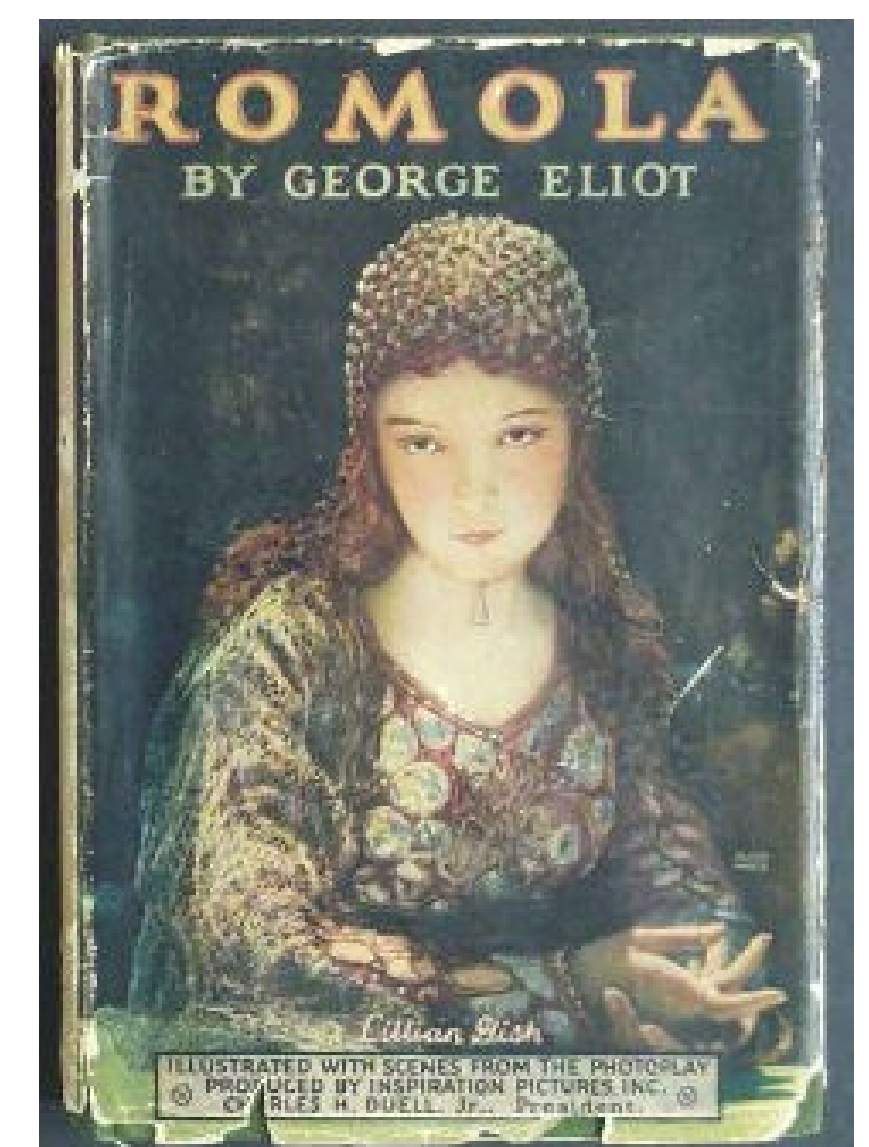


Romola

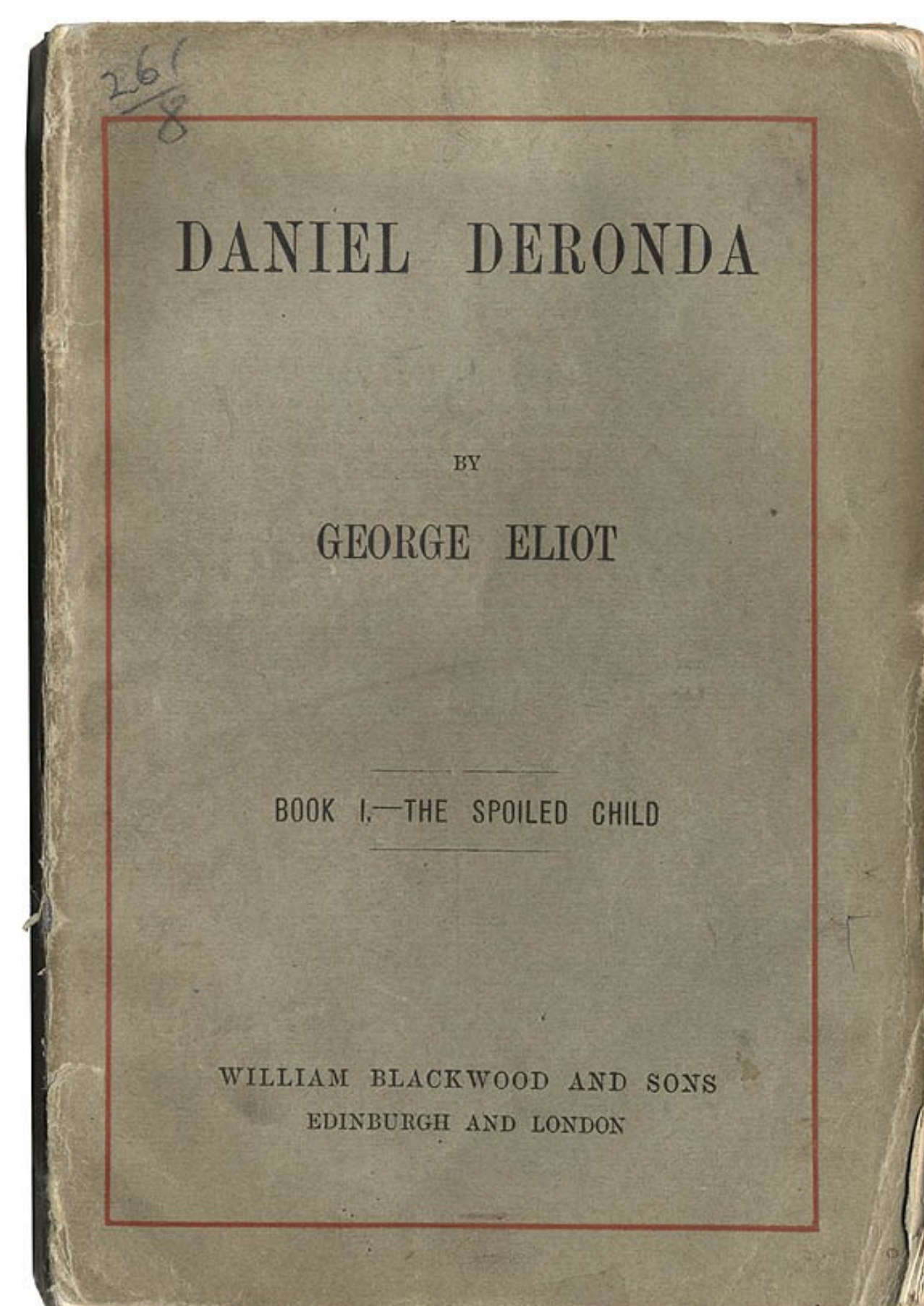
Romola is the story of how a young woman who is forced rely on men for a sense of purpose and safety. Her husband is conniving and has extramarital affairs.

Romola finds a happy ending when she is free from patriarchal influence and relies solely on servitude and female companionship for fulfilment.

"But be comforted, my Tessa," said Romola. 'I am come to take care of you always'"
—Romola



Daniel Deronda

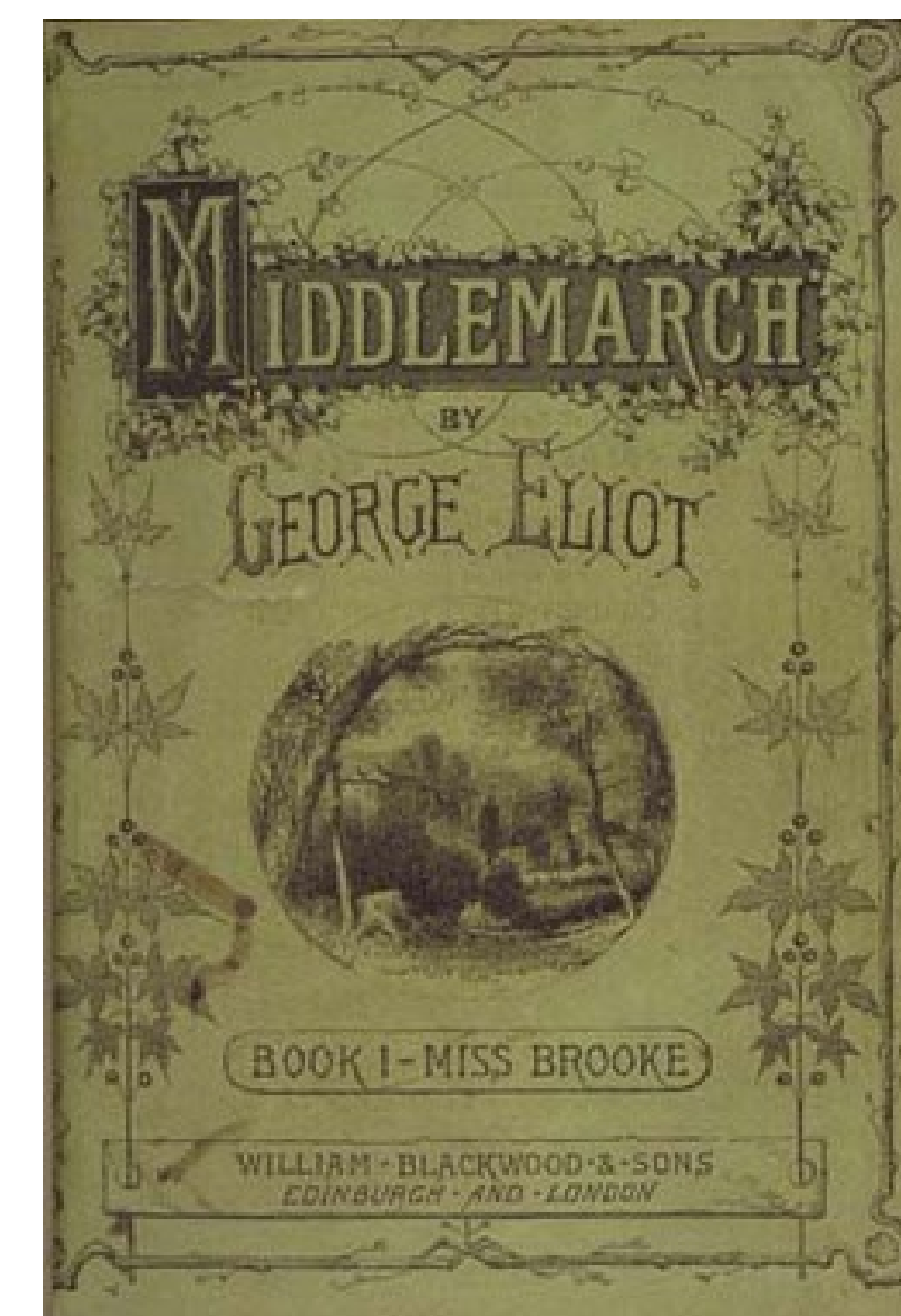


"When we take to wishing a great deal for ourselves, whatever we get soon turns into mere limitation and exclusion. Still there was the reassuring thought that marriage would be the gate into a larger freedom"—

Daniel Deronda

In *Daniel Deronda*, the main female character Gwendolen Harleth marries a man who she knows is abusive in his relationships because her all-female family needs money. She believes she will have power in her marriage, but she is emotionally abused and forced into submission. She finds true freedom only when her husband dies.

Middlemarch



"A woman dictates before marriage in order that she may have an appetite for submission afterwards"--

Middlemarch

"Had she not been repressing everything in herself except the desire to enter into some fellowship with her husband's chief interests?"—

Middlemarch

Dorothea Brooke wants to improve her community. But to have power, she must marry. She marries a man whom she believes she will learn from, but she is forced to abandon her own aspirations for the sake of her husband. Even after his death, the impact of his abuse continues to emotionally control her. She ultimately abandons her dreams and finds a happy ending only when she marries again.