



George Eliot's Grammar of Being

Melissa Anne Raines

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Description

A study of the meticulous writing process of George Eliot, drawing on original manuscripts and Victorian psychological theory.

'This important book [...] reveal[s] the novelist's meticulous thinking and re-thinking of the shape and pattern of each sentence [...] in this kind of reading we are returned to a familiar text we realize we have read too rapidly, and are grateful. The whole book is a welcome example of close reading [...] Raines earns a place in the history of Eliot criticism.' —*Barbara Hardy, 'The George Eliot Review'*

'Through her intensive engagement with Eliot's language [Raines] admirably strives to articulate aspects of Eliot's writing that are barely audible, beneath the surface of, but resonating with, the themes and plots of the novels [...] The book's strength is its close inspection of Eliot's punctuation and the detailed comparisons of manuscripts, proofs (where they exist), and published editions.' —*Nancy Henry, 'Victorian Studies'*

In the opening chapter of her 1866 novel *Felix Holt*, George Eliot tells her readers that the 'vibrations that make human agonies are often a mere whisper in the roar of hurrying existence'. *George Eliot's Grammar of Being* is developed from the idea that George Eliot wanted to produce these vibrations within her novels, not just at the level of story and character, but also at the level of language. She was a novelist who wanted the public to read her sentences almost as carefully as she wrote them—to make her readers find and subconsciously respond to those places in the prose where the syntax itself delivers subtle shocks to the system 'beneath' context. Relying heavily on examination of original manuscripts and page proofs, this book shows how George Eliot's is a carefully evolved grammar where the vibrations are purposefully created and then enhanced through active revision. Drawing on the influence of Victorian psychological and neuro-physiological theory, as well as study of the manuscripts and writing processes of other Victorian novelists, the book shows how the sentences within a novel can become a kind of nervous system to the narrative, thus highlighting the integral role that language plays in the inspiration of our sympathy as readers.

Readership: Students and scholars of George Eliot, Victorian literature, and Victorian psychological theory.

Contents

Preface; Introduction; A Note on the Text; PART ONE: 'THE UTMOST INTRICACIES OF THE SOUL'S PATHWAYS'—SYNTAX AND INDIVIDUALITY; Listening for the 'Strain of Solemn Music' in *The Mill on the Floss*; Awakening the 'Mere Pulsation of Desire' in *Silas Marner*; *Romola* and the 'Pain of Resistance'; Hearing the Many Whispers 'in the Roar of Hurrying Existence' in *Felix Holt*, *The Radical*; PART TWO: 'THE MERCY OF THOSE SORROWS'—SYNTAX AND SYMPATHY; The Initial 'Transformation of Pain into Sympathy' in *Adam Bede*; 'The View Which the Mind Takes of a Thing' in Anthony Trollope's *The Small House at Allington*; *Middlemarch* and the Struggle with the 'Equivalent Centre of Self'; Developing the 'Outer Conscience' in *Daniel Deronda*; Notes; Bibliography; Index

About the Author

Melissa Anne Raines has studied literature in both the US and the UK. She has completed extensive research on the manuscripts of George Eliot, as well as the manuscripts of Anthony Trollope and Thomas Hardy. She teaches at the University of Liverpool.

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