

George Eliot's English Travels: Composite Characters and Coded Communications (Context and Genre in English Literature)

By Kathleen McCormack

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George Eliot's more than fifty long and short journeys within England took her to dozens of sites scattered around the country. Revising the traditional notion that George Eliot drew her settings and characters only from the areas of her Warwickshire childhood, Kathleen McCormack demonstrates that English travel furnished the novelist with a wide variety of originals for the composite characters and settings she would so memorably create.

McCormack traces the way in which George Eliot gathered material during her travels and also drafted long sections of the novels while away from her London home. She argues that by examining the choices George Eliot made in transforming, discarding or directly describing her English originals, we might take a significant step forward in the interpretation of her writings. Where other critics have tried to interpret characters as one-to-one renderings of living or dead models, for example, this study reveals more elaborate blendings of what George Eliot called the 'widely sundered elements' that made up her fiction. McCormack also reaches the fascinating conclusion that the novels were a form of coded communication between the author and people in her life, including other prominent Victorians such as Edward Burne-Jones, Robert Lytton and Barbara Bodichon.

Presenting fresh biographical information and original insights into George Eliot's writing strategies, *George Eliot's English Travels* promises a decisive shift in our understanding of one of the most important figures in Victorian literature.



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Editorial Review

About the Author

Kathleen McCormack, Professor of English at Florida International University in North Miami, has written widely on George Eliot and other Victorian authors, notably her book on George Eliot and Intoxication: Dangerous Drugs for the Condition of England. She divides her time between London and Miami.

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