

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

The George Eliot Review

English, Department of

1990

Review of Annotated Critical Bibliography of George Eliot

Graham Handley

George Levine

Rutgers University, georgelevine@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/ger>



Part of the [Comparative Literature Commons](#), [Literature in English](#), [British Isles Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Handley, Graham and Levine, George, "Review of Annotated Critical Bibliography of George Eliot" (1990). *The George Eliot Review*. 147.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/ger/147>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English, Department of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in The George Eliot Review by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

BOOK REVIEW
by Graham Handley

**AN ANNOTATED CRITICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF
GEORGE ELIOT**

by George Levine, with the assistance of Patricia O'Hara.
Harvester Press 1988 pp xi x 128. £50.

No complete bibliography of George Eliot's works and the biography, scholarship and criticism on her exists. This compilation, which is heavily selective and inconsistent, is a great disappointment. Editions of George Eliot's writings are not included, and the selection contains a number of gaps. For example, Valentine Cunningham's Everywhere Spoken Against (1975) is not included. I find it hard to justify the publication of this book: 128 pages, with 3-6 entries per page bringing us to a grand total of 382 - a fraction of what is worth recording - means that by any standards this is very expensive. Sometimes there is compensation in the critical commentary. I was pleased to see that Mary Deakin's so often ignored The Early Life of George Eliot (1913) gets 4½ lines of praise, where Haight's 'definitive' biography merits 9½. There is a brief section called 'Advice to the Reader', but what is missing

is a full-scale introduction to the principles of selection and criticism in the book itself.

I have already remarked on the inconsistency, and this is not surprising when one considers the number of contributors whose names are printed on the inside of the back jacket. One gets the overwhelming impression that not enough care has been taken. The Contents Page (vii) has 'GE' in one section heading and 'George Eliot' in three. The other headings make reasonable sense. When we get to Primary Materials we find that the last two volumes of the Letters were 'published almost fifteen years after the first seven', when in fact they were published almost twenty-five years after. Sometimes, estoric articles get much more 'critical' evaluation than a worthwhile book. And books of positive value get much less attention and space than poor ones. For example, G.W. Cooke's George Eliot: A Critical Study (1883), which is feeble and biased, gets 9½ lines: Barbara Hardy's initiatory and influential new criticism The Novels of George Eliot: A Study in Form (1959) gets the same. Felicia Bonaparte's book on Romola (1979) gets 7½ lines, while R.F. Anderson's 34-page article called 'George Eliot and the publication of Romola' gets 10. We have the strong impression that there are too many left hands ignorant of what too many right hands are doing. And by not including modern editions of the works, like the Clarendon, Penguin English Library or, for instance, an edition like Bert G. Hornback's Middlemarch, the editors of this bibliography are ignoring the depth and width of scholarly and critical work on their author.