

**FICTION AND PURPOSE IN *UTOPIA*, *RASSELAS*, *THE
MILL ON THE FLOSS* AND *WOMEN IN LOVE***

By the same author

GEORGE CRABBE'S POETRY

FICTION AND PURPOSE
IN
*UTOPIA, RASSELAS,
THE MILL ON THE FLOSS
AND WOMEN IN LOVE*

Peter New

M
MACMILLAN

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*'One slim volume'
for my family*

The poor woman was not content simply to write amusing stories. She is convicted upon conclusive evidence of having indulged in ideas; she ventured to speculate upon human life and its meaning, and still worse, she endeavoured to embody her convictions in imaginative shapes, and probably wished to infect her reader with them. This was, according to some people, highly unbecoming in a woman and very inartistic in a novelist. I confess that, for my part, I am rather glad to find ideas anywhere. They are not very common; and there are a vast number of excellent fictions which these sensitive critics may study without the least danger of a shock to their artistic sensibilities by anything of the kind.

Leslie Stephen, obituary article on George Eliot, *Cornhill Magazine*, vol. 153 (February 1881).

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Texts and Acknowledgements

For *Utopia* I have used the major Yale edition by Edward Surtz and J. H. Hexter (1965, revised 1974) and the translation printed with it. For *Rasselas* I have used J. P. Hardy's Oxford edition (1968), and for *The Mill on the Floss* the Clarendon edition by Gordon S. Haight (1980). Quotations from *Women in Love* are taken from the Penguin edition.

Two chapters have previously been published, with minor differences, in periodicals: Chapter 9 in *English* (Oxford, 1978) and Chapter 2 in *Organon* (Warsaw, 1983). I am grateful to the editor of *English*, Martin Dodsworth, and to the Polish Academy of Sciences for permission to reproduce the material. My debts to previous critics of the four fictions discussed here are extensive, and only the most specific can be acknowledged without ostentatious pedantry: references will be found in the notes. I should also like to thank the inter-library loan department of Exeter University Library for their prompt and efficient help.

My greater debts are, in order of increasing magnitude, to Myrddin Jones for intelligent tact, to my students for obstinate honesty, to my family for more than diversion, and to those I most wished to please, who from my beginning showed me the end.