

Title:**Unravelling****Author(s):**

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Elizabeth Graver. Hyperion, 1997. 346 pp. \$22.95.

"Nothing leaves you; things just shake and tumble and return," realizes Aimee Slater, the narrator of Elizabeth **Graver's** first novel, **Unravelling**. Set in nineteenth-century New England, *Unravelling* chronicles Aimee's journey from her family's small but stifling New Hampshire farm to the City of Spindles--the mill factory town of Lowell, Massachusetts--where the pretty, smart, and willful Aimee succeeds at working the looms, but cannot resist the charms of William Tanning, the factory's mechanic. Aimee's romance with William leaves her pregnant and alone. When her mother forces Aimee to give up the twins to whom she gives birth, Aimee cannot forgive her mother's action nor her mother's shame for her. Aimee nearly starves herself to death before she changes course and begins a life of self-imposed exile. Now thirty-eight, Aimee lives on the edge of a bog in a tiny hunting shack where she raises chickens and rabbits and finds comfort in the arms of Amos, another exile of sorts.

Shifting between Aimee's present and her past, Graver deftly and sensitively outlines the continual clash between what Aimee feels and thinks and does and what Aimee's repressive nineteenth-century New England world tells her she should feel and think and do. Aimee narrates the intricately woven story of her life: "When I look back, I picture the journey marked by a long trail of white thread. It is not fancy thread, but the thinnest, cheapest, factory kind, the sort that breaks if you pull on it too hard." Lucid, unsettling, loving Graver masterly conjures up a beautifully realized tale of one woman's story of loss, love, and redemption.

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