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SILAS MARNER AND FELIX HOLT:

ANTITHESES AND AFFINITIES

(Edited version of a paper given by Ruth Harris on
the George Eliot Day in Nuneaton on 15 May 1999)

At first sight there seems little to link *Silas Marner* with *Felix Holt*. There are certainly contrasts, but it is harder to find similarities between a short pastoral idyll and a complex political work that looks forward to *Middlemarch* rather than backward to *Silas Marner*. Surely there can be few links between a fairy-tale and social analysis, between a novel rich with 'Rainbow' humour and transformed 'gold' and a much darker novel laced with irony but short on both magic and jokes. Only five years separate *Silas Marner* (published in April 1861) from *Felix Holt* (published in June 1866) but the second novel suggests an older author. Yet there are enough likenesses to link the two novels more firmly than we might at first realize.

Both novels return to the Midlands, to the heart of England which always aroused some of George Eliot's deepest feelings. It was the landscape of memory, the landscape of the heart. Admittedly, in spite of similar settings the openings of the two novels suggest greater differences. *Felix Holt* puts an immediate emphasis on public life with its brilliant description of a panoramic landscape, both rural and industrial, that is being crossed by a coach travelling through a vast 'central plain, watered at one extremity by the Avon, at the other by the Trent'.¹ George Eliot paints a crowded canvas, crowded with people and incidents, preparing the reader for what Jennifer Uglow has called 'a very public novel with a constant cross-reference between individual and social histories, where the climactic events take place literally before a host of witnesses and are constantly assessed by a commenting audience'.² The climate of comment is already present in the Introduction when the coachman remarks on the violence of the new Railways, the problems and voting preferences of the various landowners, and the rumours that have arisen. Felix Holt is bent on public reform and regards public opinion as 'the greatest power under heaven' (274). But the solitary figure of Silas Marner, although also the target of rumours, appears in a remote, rural landscape, 'never reached by the vibrations of the coach-horn, or of public opinion'.³ Marner is one of a number of alienated figures who never seem to meet one another and who look 'like the remnants of a disinherited race':

The shepherd's dog barked fiercely when one of these alien-looking men appeared on the upland, dark against the early winter sunset; for what dog likes a figure bent under a heavy bag? (3)

The lonely figure of a man, seen in anonymous silhouette against the last gleams of a winter sunset, looks even more lonely when George Eliot contrasts him with places where people congregate, farmsteads and great houses. Shut out from the golden windows, the glow of candles and firelight, the cheerful hum of conversation, he stands out in the cold in a dark silence where the only sound is the hostile barking of a dog on its guard against the intruder. Who knows where such an alien figure has come from, who is his father or mother, whence he gets his knowledge and skill if not from the Evil One?

To the peasants of old times, the world outside their own direct experience was a region of vagueness and mystery. (3)

The isolated figure of the weaver emerges from the darkness of fairy-tale and myth: George Eliot saw the novel in this light when she told Blackwood, 'It came to me quite suddenly, as a sort of legendary tale suggested by my recollection of having once, in early childhood, seen a linen weaver with his bag on his back.'⁴ Strangely enough, it is one of my earliest memories too: a bowed figure shouldering a mysterious bag haunted my childhood, eliciting archetypal fears of the unknown. The universal nature of this kind of response and the universal nature of myth are very different from the sharp particularity of the Introduction to *Felix Holt*, a particularity firmly rooted in the historic, the specific, what we like to call the real world.

There is of course a sense of the historic in both novels. *Silas Marner* begins: 'In the days when spinning-wheels hummed busily in the farmhouses', and *Felix Holt* opens: 'Five and thirty years ago the glory had not yet departed from the old coach-roads...'. Both start with nostalgia for the past and then qualify the nostalgia. *Silas Marner* qualifies it by the subtle hint of irony in 'great ladies, clothed in silk and thread-lace', who 'had their toy spinning-wheels of polished oak', rather like Marie Antoinette and her ladies who played at being shepherdesses while real shepherdesses shivered outside in the cold. The irony prepares us for the unsympathetic portrayal of the squirearchy in *Silas Marner*. Squire Cass, for example, tosses to his deer-hound a piece of beef that would have made 'a poor man's holiday dinner' (69). Similarly, the 'glory' of the past is questioned in *Felix Holt*, and consciousness of class divisions sharpens the perspective of each novel. Both the Red House in *Silas Marner* and Transome Court in *Felix Holt* are great houses living in the past. Both are decaying, both doomed, both riven by hatreds and insensitivities. There is a typical insensitivity when Godfrey Cass of the Red House cannot believe that poor weavers like Silas Marner have feelings like his own. Mrs Transome can scarcely see a poor Nonconformist minister like the Rev. Rufus Lyon any more than if he were 'an animated weed' (335). Nevertheless, a sharp perception of class divisions does not wholly obliterate George Eliot's nostalgia for a traditional way of life. Characteristically she moves between alternatives: on the one hand she can empathize with those who enjoy their good memories and on the other hand she is alert to the privations of the less privileged: 'unrepealed corn laws, three-and-sixpenny letters, a brawny and many-breeding pauperism, and other departed evils...' (3). There is, however, a real difference in tone between the 'brawny and many-breeding pauperism' of *Felix Holt* and those pale 'remnants of a disinherited race' in *Silas Marner*. The first prepares us for that fear of the mob, that terror of collective ignorance and brutality, that marks *Felix Holt*. The second prepares us for the compassionate portrayal of a poor weaver, Silas Marner.

It is the individual who calls forth her deepest interest. Significantly, she emphasizes the loneliness of Mrs Transome by drawing her out of the crowded canvas at the end of the Introduction and isolating her, as she has more immediately isolated Silas Marner. Unlike the poor weaver who appeared in silhouette against a winter sunset, Mrs Transome appears in the full light of an autumn day, leaves and petals falling slowly as she stands there in black, 'rare jewels' flashing 'on her hands, which lay on her folded black-clad arms like finely cut onyx cameos' (12). Two black figures, both in different ways frozen. Silas Marner is frozen by the

shock of winter and the shock of despair. Even his speech seems frozen in his throat: he is almost silent until he is robbed of his gold. The other black figure, Mrs Transome, is surrounded by falling leaves, by early signs of autumn and decay. Although she is less silent than Marner, the real feelings she needs to express are so often frozen in her throat. 'A woman's love', she tells Denner, 'is always freezing into fear' (344). Just before Mrs Transome appears in person, the narrator signifies a change as the style at the end of the Introduction moves from the language of prose to the language of poetry. As we come closer to the dark presence of Mrs Transome, there is a transition from the factual and particular to the mythical and universal. Poetic images from Virgil and Dante transfigure the writing:

The poets have told us of a dolorous enchanted forest in the under world. The thorn-bushes there, and the thick-stemmed barks have human histories hidden in them; the power of unuttered cries dwells in the passionless-seeming branches, and the red warm blood is darkly feeding the quivering nerves of a sleepless memory that watches through all dreams. These things are a parable.
(10)

In its language, this is closer to the opening of *Silas Marner* and the symbol of an alien figure appearing darkly on a hill against a frosty sunset, a mysterious burden on its back. We are arrested by an image of elemental, universal power, as we are by Willa Cather's image of a ploughshare silhouetted against the setting sun.

Elements in both *Silas Marner* and *Mrs Transome* spring from depths of pain in George Eliot herself. It is not accidental that so many characters in her novels experience the bitterness of abandonment and misinterpretation. She also knew the pain of rejection: she felt ostracized and misunderstood by her brother, by her father during her Holy War, and by society because of her liaison with Lewes. The plain face she saw in her mirror made her feel unlovable, able to understand Mrs Transome's horrified cry at *her* reflection: 'I am a hag' (21). Mrs Transome feels rejected and relegated to useless old age by her son. After a lifetime of vigorous independence she is told to relax and be 'a grandmamma on satin cushions' (20). Like her author, her sense of isolation has been created by her past and in particular by an irregular sexual relationship. *Silas Marner* is rejected by his best friend, his fiancée, his chapel, the villagers of Raveloe. As critics have pointed out, he has much in common with his creator: loss of religious faith, unjust accusation, exile from home, rejection by the community, an obsession with work, a sense of failure, an increase in money, the adoption of a child. *Silas* is seen as an outsider, like herself. The characters who most kindle George Eliot's interest are marginalized, alienated, condemned to suffer pain they must hide.

George Eliot's imagination is haunted by the hidden: her own identity as author had initially to be concealed because of her illicit relationship with Lewes. *Silas Marner* comes to Raveloe with a hidden past which he feels no one will understand and buries his gold as a secret comfort and companionship. Godfrey Cass has made a secret marriage he feels bound to hide, and one secret leads to another as he conceals his fatherhood of Eppie. In *Felix Holt*, the Rev. Rufus Lyon loves Annette with a passion he cannot reveal; it is a long time before he can even tell Esther about her own mother. Mrs Transome suffers from a secret adulterous past she cannot reveal. How often for George Eliot are hidden secrets sexual! Secret pain, a hidden past,

may open one to blackmail. Alexander Welsh has observed that each novel after *The Mill on the Floss* 'explores some life history that is discontinuous yet surreptitiously connected with a past' that exposes one to blackmail or emotional pressure akin to blackmail.⁵ In *Silas Marner*, Godfrey Cass is being blackmailed by his brother Dunstan, who sees in the degradation of Godfrey's marriage a way of satisfying his jealousy and greed. In *Felix Holt*, there are at least three blackmailers, Jermy, Christian and Johnson, who are exploiting the hidden past of Harold Transome and Esther Lyon.

In both novels, George Eliot shows her keen psychological insight. For example, she notices how a human life that is lived without deep affection shrinks, hardens, grows narrow and obsessive. She observes that people who fail to find the larger, more fulfilled life of love retreat into little rigidities. Before Eppie comes into his life, Silas Marner is obsessed with his gold and seems to shrink to 'a spinning insect' and ultimately to little more than an object, rigid and inhuman, like 'a handle or a crooked tube, which has no meaning standing apart' (19). He is reduced to a soulless kind of arithmetic, condemned to the obsessive, repetitive counting of squares of gold and silver. Similarly, Mrs Transome, deprived of love, is reduced to 'small immediate cares and occupations, and, like all eager-minded women who advance in life without any activity of tenderness or any large sympathy, she had contracted small rigid habits of thinking and acting' (23). Her commands are petty and inhuman: 'She liked to insist that work done without her orders should be undone from beginning to end... She liked to change a labourer's medicine fetched from the doctor, and substitute a prescription of her own' (29). Her unwanted husband, old Mr Transome, is pitifully shrunken, obsessed with his collection of dried insects and mineralogical species which he keeps rearranging. He is likened by his wife to 'a distracted insect' (19) and we have the appalling image of one species of insect obsessed with another species of insect.

In less serious ways, we can see the early signs of small rigidities, little obsessions in other characters. In *Silas Marner*, the gentle but quietly rigid Nancy Lammeter has her private code about clothes and colours and the perils of adoption, a code George Eliot calls 'unalterable'. It reminds us of the more frivolous and finicky preoccupations of Esther Lyon with fine cambric handkerchiefs, immaculate gloves, wax candles and a dislike of squinting preachers: in a way that seems fairly harmless, she is obsessed with appearance and taste, but the little word 'code' alerts us to a danger:

She had a little code of her own about scents and colours, textures and behaviour, by which she secretly condemned or sanctioned all things and persons. And she was well satisfied with herself for her fastidious taste. (73)

The shallow code by which she lives is a reminder of Rosamond Vincy although Esther is a more attractive character with engaging powers of repartee. Her small vanities seem understandable when she is so young, and we are likely to sympathize with her when she is stung by Felix Holt's scorn; yet we can see the dangers of her growing into a Mrs Transome and extending her preoccupation with surface. In her foster-father's shabby little house in Malthouse Yard, she dislikes the smells of past dinners and tallow candles, but when she is transplanted to Transome Court and told she is its true heiress, she learns to look below the surface and beyond the fragrant glow of wax candles. Significantly, there is a moment when

George Eliot makes her look at the glossy portrait of a young Mrs Transome and then extinguish the candles she admires:

...she put out the wax lights that she might get rid of the oppressive urgency of walls and upholstery and that portrait smiling with deluded brightness, unwitting of the future. (73)

The truth about Mrs Transome is to be found in darkness and is finally visible to Esther in that ghostly figure leaning her cheek on her hand and wandering sleeplessly, pacing repetitively, obsessively, along those corridors of Transome Court that Esther had once imagined might be fragrant with rose-leaves. Although Esther's change of heart is too quick to be wholly credible, her capacity for change makes her far more interesting than the adult Eppie who has no temptations to resist, no Harold Transome to tantalize, no private codes to transcend or love of comfort and refinement to contrast with her workaday life. Eppie's affection for her foster-father is more simple and instinctive, less equivocal than Esther's feelings for Rufus Lyon. So although there is great beauty and poignancy in Eppie's choice of Silas, there is no real sense of challenge. It is not difficult for her to resist the claims of the biological father who has refused to acknowledge her.

In both novels, the bonds between parents and children are fragile. Perhaps Mary Ann's banishment to boarding-school when she was five made her doubt her mother's love and her Holy War to doubt her father's. Certainly unaccepting parents trouble her imagination. In *Silas Marner*, Godfrey refuses to acknowledge Eppie as his child and only after sixteen years of silence have passed does he finally accept her: 'I've a claim on you, Eppie, the strongest of all claims', he tells her, too late (167). In *Felix Holt*, Mrs Transome not only fails to love her first child who is ugly and an imbecile, but even wishes he would die so that her second son, Harold, could inherit Transome Court. Harold himself seems to have little feeling for his only son, seeing him as an object which his man Dominic will bring 'with the rest of the luggage' (17). For obvious reasons, Jermyn cannot acknowledge Harold as his son and he maintains his silence until Harold's contempt stings him into his terrible disclosure: 'I am your father' (421). Children also disappoint their parents. In *Silas Marner*, neither Godfrey Cass nor his brother Dunstan can please their father. In *Felix Holt*, Harold Transome dissatisfies his mother: the pretty baby has developed into an alien creature: 'The lizard's egg, that white rounded passive prettiness, had become a brown, darting, determined lizard' (22); he no longer loves or understands her, and she strongly disapproves of his decision to stand for Parliament as a Radical. Esther Lyon disappoints her foster-father by her unwillingness to be a member of his church. Felix Holt disappoints his mother by his refusal to sell his father's quack medicines, by his abandonment of a middle-class career for watch-making, and by his working-class clothes and radical opinions.

It is safest in a George Eliot novel to be a foster-parent. Silas Marner is both father and mother to Eppie, as though George Eliot wants to emphasize that good parenting goes beyond gender and far beyond legal bonds. When Godfrey says to Eppie, '...there's a duty you owe to your lawful father', Eppie replies impetuously while the tears gather in her eyes:

'I can't feel as if I've got any father but one.... I've always thought of a little

home where he'd sit i' the comer, and I should fend and do everything for him:
I can't think o' no other home' (171).

Rufus Lyon too is a kindly foster-father to Esther who, like Eppie, renounces her inheritance and clings to the background he has provided. In both novels, renunciation of wealth and inheritance to which one is legally entitled goes hand-in-hand with attachment to foster-fathers and working-class lovers. The claims of affection are stronger and more 'true' than the assertions of law.

Both novels are concerned with the nature of truth. False allegations attribute Marner's fits to the Devil, accuse him of theft, suggest that a pedlar (with or without ear-rings) is responsible for stealing his gold. It is rightly alleged that certain medicines are worthless and that the true owners do not inhabit Transome Court. Questions about the authenticity of names, titles and relationships suggest that George Eliot's unorthodox claim to the status of wife made her peculiarly sensitive. Although time and again she proved that her devotion to Lewes was as true as the love of any lawful wife, the lack of legal acknowledgement intensified her preoccupation with claims right and wrong, accusations just and unjust, which bring into question the nature of reality and the determination of truth. She claims that it is Silas Marner's love for Eppie and Rufus Lyon's love for Esther that make them authentic fathers. Perhaps there were times when George Eliot felt that she, and not Agnes, was the true mother of Lewes's sons. On 20 January 1861 while she was writing *Silas Marner*, she showed how seriously she took her role as 'mother': 'I begin, you know, to consider myself an experienced matron, knowing a great deal about parental joys and anxieties.'⁶ While she was writing *Felix Holt*, she noted in her Journal on New Year's Eve 1865 her pleasure in Charles's happiness and her pity for a sad Thornie. It was in her arms, and not the arms of Agnes, that Thornie was to die only a few years later.

Other elements apart from the nature of truth link the two novels. Characters such as Eppie and Esther are drawn together by similar life-changing events and divided by contrasting personalities. Silas Marner and Rufus Lyon are also temperamentally different but linked by similar experiences. Both are Dissenters: Silas is a member of the Nonconformist chapel in Lantern Yard, and Rufus is the minister of the Independent chapel in Malthouse Yard. (Both worship in 'Yards' which to an English ear sound drab, seedy, back-street.) Initially admired by their Dissenting communities, both men are ultimately rejected by congregations that remain unforgiving: Marner is excommunicated on the grounds of an alleged theft, and Lyon is rejected twice, first because he has befriended a young Frenchwoman and secondly because his theology is too liberal, extending 'the limits of salvation' to embrace even 'unconscious recipients of mercy'. Moreover, both men are odd in appearance, short-sighted, apt to inspire fear or derision. Village boys who peer into Silas Marner's cottage flee in terror, and Rufus Lyon's strange appearance makes him a butt for ridicule. Shared myopia is interesting: as Jennifer Uglow has pointed out, George Eliot's favourite metaphor of sight makes her contrast short-sightedness with inner vision.⁷ The man who will regain his full moral vision and see more clearly than anyone else is the short-sighted weaver, Silas. The man with moral vision in *Felix Holt* is the short-sighted minister, Rufus, whose kindly rescue of Annette and her baby echoes Marner's kindly rescue of a stranded baby, Eppie.

Both men are troubled by problems of the past. In a thoughtful Introduction to *Felix Holt*, Peter

Coveney describes two kinds of past, the destructive and the creative, and the kinds of memory associated with them.⁸ A great house with a long history should be a place of honour, and yet Mrs Transome lives 'in the midst of desecrated sanctities, and of honours that looked tarnished in the light of monotonous and weary suns' (349). This is a place where the past has become a bitter and destructive power that can sour the present and spoil the future. But Coveney points out that the past can also be creative, nourishing the present with good memories and ensuring a 'morally chosen future'. Although neither Silas nor Rufus can wholly annihilate the problems of yesterday, both learn to find what is creative in their past as well. Silas learns to look beyond the bitter recollections of Lantern Yard to the gentler memories of his early home; he sees in the child Eppie the little sister he once carried in his arms when he was a small boy without shoes and stockings, and he recovers with the memory the good he has forgotten. For Eppie the future opens, and for Silas the past: 'As the child's mind was growing into knowledge, his mind was growing into memory' (126). The mind of Rufus Lyon also grows into memory: he discards shame and realizes the value of his love for Annette since through that love he has learned about the wider mercies of God.

George Eliot is haunted by alternatives, not only by the different forms, creative and destructive, that the past can take, but also by the moral dilemmas that face people and compel them to choose. The little community in Lantern Yard tries to avoid decision when its members draw lots, but their trust in a supernatural power to reveal the wrongdoer is not without an element of choice. Godfrey has to choose between fatherhood and freedom. Eppie has to choose between two fathers, Silas and Godfrey, between the sanctities of the past and the supposed advantages of the future. Esther Lyon has to choose between two husbands, whether to be Esther Transome or Esther Holt, and thus to weigh one kind of life against another. The choice is made difficult for her because Felix is in prison, and she cannot be absolutely sure of his love for her, but his larger vision has changed the lights for her: 'that higher vision/Poisons all meaner choice for evermore' (424). Finally, it is significant that *Felix Holt* is set in a time of election, and an election is all about choice.

The structure of each novel is tightened by a double plot which emphasizes choice and alternatives, parallels and contrasts. In the first novel, the Silas plot and the Godfrey plot interlock briefly but crucially, first when Dunstan, Godfrey's brother, selects the evil alternative when he steals Silas Marner's gold, secondly when Silas enters the Red House with the child in his arms and Godfrey chooses to reject her, and thirdly when Eppie decides between two fathers at the end. Jennifer Uglow has noticed curious parallels between Silas and Godfrey that further tighten the plot: both lose mothers in childhood; both suffer from despotic father-figures and fall prey to 'brothers' they trust; both are accused of misappropriating money; and both are obsessed by a need for gold.⁹ Different outcomes suggest that George Eliot is emphasizing the triumph of character over circumstance. In *Felix Holt*, the double plot also contributes to the sense of unity since the Transome narrative has its parallels and contrasts with the Felix Holt story, and there are interlocking points. Florence Sadler has argued for 'the centrality of Esther' and shown how unity is given to the narrative when Esther is courted by suitors from both plots.¹⁰ Harold and Felix are sharply contrasted, rich and poor, opportunist and idealist, and yet like Silas and Godfrey, they share curious similarities: both have recently returned home; both take charge and disappoint their mothers; both are overconfident and critical of

women; both for different reasons are Radicals; both improve as the story develops; and both come to love Esther. But only one has the character to succeed!

Finally, which is the better novel? Most readers have preferred *Silas Marner* where a more leisurely pace allows for the development of character. Marner, arriving in Raveloe, has fifteen years to grow into a miser, fifteen years to unravel into a painful knot the tangled threads of his life. Then, after he loses his gold and the gold seems to turn into a child, he has sixteen years to unravel and disentangle the threads. By contrast, the time scheme of *Felix Holt* is surprisingly short: influenced by her reading of Greek tragedy with its compact Unity of Time, its swift pace does not suit George Eliot's preference for the slow unfolding of character. Only nine months elapse between Harold's arrival at Transome Court on 1 September 1832, and the wedding of Felix and Esther the following May. Too little space is allowed for Esther's moral development. Moreover, most readers find the plot to restore her fortunes a strain on their credulity as well as their understanding as legal niceties proliferate and the long arm of coincidence is stretched to the point of dislocation. Many readers feel that the most interesting character is Mrs Transome, and yet she is absent for much of the novel. Several critics have disliked Felix, a hero who seems to them priggish and didactic. Admittedly, he is portrayed with a measure of irony, but signs of authorial idealization are still distrusted. Nevertheless, in spite of his tactless self-importance, he does possess a larger view of life, and Esther is right to recognize in the 'great Gothic head' and 'massive person' the 'outward stamp of a distinguished nature' (404).

As A. G. van den Broek has shown in his excellent Introduction to *Felix Holt*, this novel represents important new developments. For the first time each chapter is headed with an epigraph which is far from being merely ornamental: 'the epigraphs establish themes, identify the genesis of a character, root abstractions in particularities, create irony through discrepancies, ... or metaphorically sketch in an idea or character subsequently fleshed out in the chapter'. Secondly, George Eliot has far more threads in her hands in this novel than in *Silas Marner*. Dr van den Broek maintains that *Felix Holt* resembles *Middlemarch* in the way that 'seemingly disparate stories unfold, dovetail and weave themselves together into a single complex plot'. Thirdly, although we may prefer simplicity to complexity, complexity is inevitable when she has difficult things to say and values to redefine. For example, she redefines Radicalism as far more than a political label since for Felix, 'it goes beyond political labels to test the character of people and institutions'. She also redefines heroism. *Felix Holt* prepares us for *Middlemarch*, exploring 'the nature of and need for a new kind of heroism, characterized by personal integrity, fellow-feeling, and a sense of history.... A new kind of heroism requires an awareness of the social conditions that call it forth, and the complex growths of awareness and self-awareness in provincial England are what both novels explore and chart.'¹¹

Felix Holt looks towards the future, at times with a shudder, but recognizing that socially, politically and industrially, tomorrow must be taken into account. As Felix himself says, 'We are saved by making the future present to ourselves' (244). But in *Silas Marner*, as Sally Shuttleworth observes, 'Against the flow of history, the plot moves backward in time'.¹² Silas, who has lived and worked in a northern industrial town, moves south to a rural village in old England where he is ultimately absorbed into the small community. Raveloe may have its

faults, but the last word is with a traditional way of life and a country wedding in spring 'when the great lilacs and laburnums in the old-fashioned gardens showed their golden and purple above the lichen-tinted walls' (179). Silas and Eppie and Aaron are enclosed within their garden, a little Eden which the pain of change and the march of history cannot touch. In a novel dealing with characters who have experienced the anguish of discontinuity and dislocation, the happiest experience is coming home, and coming home to love.

In both novels, love has the last word, and wedding-bells ring out over Eppie and Aaron, Esther and Felix. Foster-fathers have the last word too since Eppie and Aaron are joined by Silas, and Esther and Felix are joined by Rufus. The living trinities of love are complete.

Notes:

1. George Eliot, *Felix Holt, the Radical*, ed. A. G. van den Broek (Everyman paperback, London: J. M. Dent, 1997), p. 3. Subsequent page references to the novel are to this edition, and will appear in the text.
2. Jennifer Uglow, *George Eliot*, (Virago Press, 1987), p. 182.
3. George Eliot, *Silas Marner, The Lifted Veil, Brother Jacob*, ed. Peter Mudford (Everyman paperback, London: Dent, 1996), p. 5. Subsequent page references to the novel are to this edition, and will appear in the text.
4. George Eliot, *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1954-78), III, 382 (hereafter cited as *GEL*).
5. Alexander Welsh, *George Eliot and Blackmail*, (Harvard, 1985), 153.
6. *GEL*, III, p. 373.
7. Uglow, 158 and 182-3.
8. Peter Coveney: Introduction to *Felix Holt* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), pp. 9-10.
9. Uglow, pp. 153-4.
10. Florence Sadler, 'The Unity of *Felix Holt*', in *George Eliot. A Centenary Tribute*, eds. Gordon S. Haight and Rosemary T. VanArsdel (London: 1985), pp. 137-52.
11. A. G. van den Broek, op. cit., pp. xix-xxxii.
12. Sally Shuttleworth, *George Eliot and Nineteenth Century Science* (Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 79-80.