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Review of The World's Classics Series: Felix Holt

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Adams, Kathleen, "Review of The World's Classics Series: Felix Holt" (1988). *The George Eliot Review*. 97.
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BOOK REVIEWS

by Kathleen Adams

The World's Classics Series:

Felix Holt by George Eliot

Oxford University Press 1988 Price £2.95

If one cannot afford the splendid Clarendon Editions of George Eliot's novels, the World's Classics editions are a very good second best. They are second-best, however, only in their format, since the text of the novels is the same. For the finer quality, hardback of the Clarendon is substituted a well produced and clear paperback with an attractive cover.

Fred C. Thomson's Introduction to Felix Holt, the Radical tells us that, despite its title, this is not a political novel as the genre is ordinarily understood. George Eliot is not telling us the story of a career politician, nor does she discuss political ideas with us. Indeed she is showing us how politically ignorant many of her characters are and that the political corruption in the book is more private than public. While her study of Treby Magna does not allow the reader to label it as is so clearly done with Milby in Scenes of Clerical Life where identification with her native Nuneaton is inescapable, it is describing a Midlands' town very much like the one in which she grew up and her own Introduction to the novel is a classic description of the Midlands countryside in which she had her roots.

George Eliot's story and characters are already clear and convincing but the reader's understanding of nineteenth century local politics will be much helped by Professor Thomson's introduction and comprehensive explanatory notes.