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## Review of Silas Marner, The Lifted Veil, Brother Jacob

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**Ruth Harris**

George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, *The Lifted Veil*, *Brother Jacob*  
edited by Peter Mudford (Everyman Paperbacks, 1996), pp. xxxii + 299

*Silas Marner*, *The Lifted Veil* and *Brother Jacob* have formed a triple alliance ever since they were first published together at George Eliot's request in the Cabinet Edition of 1878. That the fellowship is far from uneasy is proved by Peter Mudford in his intelligent introduction to the Everyman Paperback edition where he shows that the three narratives are united by the common theme of alienation and exile. Mudford then examines each story in turn, discussing *Brother Jacob* after *Silas Marner* because of features common to both, and then turning to *The Lifted Veil* which he calls 'the odd-ball of the three, lacking that affirmative power of sympathy which was the hallmark of George Eliot's humanist vision'. Signs of discomfiture with *The Lifted Veil* do not prevent him from making valid comments in an introduction which, though brief, is thoughtful and incisive.

The critical apparatus is also helpful. Peter Mudford's annotations are useful although one wonders at the need to explain 'pedlar' and 'peasant' while one or two French phrases are left untranslated. It is particularly valuable when he follows the explanation of a word or phrase with more detailed comments as he does, for example, in his clarifying of 'orts' and 'Inkle and Yarico'. It is good to see the inclusion of a chronology of George Eliot's life and times as well as suggestions for further reading, a text summary which turns out to be a surprisingly helpful index, and critical selections ranging from her own to more recent comments – although I would have welcomed more assessments of the two less familiar tales. In addition to its critical aids, my copy has all the sound features of an Everyman Paperback: strong, legible print, firm paper, an engaging picture on the front and handsome blue cover. In its pristine condition, my copy looks as sturdy and satisfying as its pilgrim logo.

So which edition should one choose? Virago's *Brother Jacob* and *The Lifted Veil*, published in separate paperbacks and provided with stimulating Afterwords by Beryl Gray are Everyman's only serious competitors, but Everyman Paperback is the first to publish the three narratives in one volume with detailed critical apparatus. Because of this and the lower price, readers will probably choose Everyman. The choice is understandable but perhaps a pity in view of the greater detail of the Virago commentaries. Nevertheless, Peter Mudford's single volume is sound. In an ideal world, both editions should be read and enjoyed.