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"The Woman at the Window"

Barbara Hardy

Birkbeck, University of London

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‘The Woman at the Window’

Dear Editors

May I write a postscript to Terence R. Wright’s review of *Perspectives on Self and Community in George Eliot: Dorothea’s Window* in your last number? He says I ‘come down strongly on lesser critics who make the mistake of locating Dorothea’s vision ... in Chapter 80 ... in the boudoir rather than the marital bedroom’, but I meant to include myself amongst misinterpreters, in writing ‘When I first read the novel I made this mistake’.

My essay was not a taxonomy of the novel’s windows. I think George Eliot’s mutations of symbol and surface technically subtle, and the biographical origin of the image interesting, but the drift of my analysis was political not rhetorical. My look through windows in *Middlemarch* takes in the unauthoritarian irregularities and uncertainties of the window-pattern, which contribute to the – relatively – open ending and modify the sense of upbeat climax in Dorothea’s easterly vision. I suggest, sketchily, with scattered examples from Vermeer to Woolf, contexts of George Eliot’s feminist topos. But woods get obscured by trees.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Hardy

Birkbeck College, London and University of Swansea