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## Review of Greatness Engendered: George Eliot and Virginia Woolf

Alison Booth  
*Cornell University*

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*Greatness Engendered: George Eliot and Virginia Woolf*  
by Alison Booth (Cornell University Press, 1992)

This detailed study is in the series *Reading Women Writing*, and it presupposes not only a familiarity with everything that George Eliot and Virginia Woolf wrote but also a comprehensive knowledge of scholarship and criticism about them. Miss Booth writes with verve and, at times, directness and wit. She tells us that 'In effect Eliot and Woolf are palace spies, consorting with patriarchal traditions to expose their flaws.' The ensuing examination is a searching one which moves from acknowledged subjectivity to informed (and consistent) perspectives. The weight of running scholarship and cross reference sometimes threatens to sink the narrative, but the determined flushing out of analogy and difference makes this an invigorating read for the initiated. By any standards it is a very difficult one for the general reader. This kind of criticism inevitably speaks largely to its own, the postgraduate and the emergent postgraduate, the scholar and critic in the field. And sometimes, as here, one gets the impression of strain. Certain particularities are convincing, others much less so and even peripheral, but for anyone who wants to enlarge his or her knowledge of George Eliot and Virginia Woolf within the context of feminist debate this is an important, challenging study.

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