

social products. Verena Tarrant personifies this new market and is actively sought by various other characters for the cultural agendas they represent. James appears to question each of these agendas and uses literary discourse not nostalgically to reclaim an older male-dominated cultural tradition (this being Basil Ransom's position). Rather James conceives of literature as "a contestant in the volatile, highly theatrical, public sphere of modern America—a contestant for the power to create, shape, and redirect fictions of country, community, and self" (154). Other essays also draw out James's interests in contemplating the fate of America's relations to the world in the new century, notably Margery Sabin's revision of the psychological complexities of *The Golden Bowl* in terms of international and industrial power, "The question that haunts the psychological, moral, and cultural situation . . . is whether America's new wealth would sponsor a new and superior civilisation or whether America was doomed merely to replicate the worst patterns of its earlier masters and rivals" (206-07); and Ross Posnock's interpretation of *The American Scene*, where James interrogates nationally and racially based invocations of personal and social identity. The terms in which James's work represents these issues are shown to be highly relevant to contemporary debates over ethnicity, identity, and world order.

Other essays in the volume discuss the textual and editorial questions that circulate around James's published writings, his role in the development of modern narrative theory, the ethical and epistemological issues inscribed through his nuanced literary discourse, and the textual indeterminacy and hybridity realised through generic experimentation. Finally an essay by Frances Wilson on the complex ties shared by Henry, William and Alice James illuminates the family's profound preoccupation with questions of identity and consciousness. These varied approaches to James and his work—ranging from traditional, close thematic readings to speculations on contemporary cultural politics—repeatedly return to such key issues. In so doing the volume acts as a survey of critical discourses and their impact on our understandings of authorship and literary discourse. It reveals the interplay among social, literary and personal history which produced and is reproduced by James's writings.

Lloyd Davis

***Dickens and the Politics of the Family*, by Catherine Waters. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.**

In this compact and closely argued book Catherine Waters examines the place of domestic ideology in Dickens's writings, focusing on issues of class and gender as they affect representations of the family in selected novels from *Oliver Twist* to *Our Mutual Friend*. Although readers have long recognised the centrality of the family in Dickens's work, they have often been puzzled by the contradiction between his reputation as the promoter of cozy Victorian domesticity and the prevalence of fractured, disharmonious families in his fiction. One goal of Waters's fine study is to analyse the social and political grounds of this apparent contradiction. Where previous critics have offered

biographical or psychoanalytic explanations for the many fragmented families that appear in the novels, Waters sees the representation of deviance as a strategy for reinforcing middle-class norms with respect to family structure, gender roles, and the separation of private from public life. According to Waters, the cultural work performed by Dickens's representations of the family is ultimately disciplinary and hegemonic in its effects. Aristocratic and paternalist depictions of family life are shown to be deficient, and in their place Dickens repeatedly presents middle-class family groups held together by affective ties rather than lineage and often centered on the figure of the idealised domestic woman.

To some extent Waters's arguments about the policing function of the family are anticipated by D.A. Miller's *The Novel and the Police*. Like Miller, Waters draws on Foucault as well as on the distinction between "contract" and "tutelage" in Jacques Donzelot's *The Policing of Families*. Waters goes beyond Miller and Donzelot, however, in her attention to questions of gender, and it is the blending of feminist and historicist concerns that is perhaps the greatest strength of her work. Drawing on the cultural criticism of Nancy Armstrong and Mary Poovey, as well as on the historical studies of domestic ideology by Davidoff and Hall, Waters deftly sketches the problematic public/private binary that structures Victorian separate spheres ideology, illustrating its complex operations with reference not only to Victorian periodical literature (the family magazines of which Dickens's own *Household Words* is an important example) but also, and more unexpectedly, with reference to the controversy surrounding Dickens's separation from his wife Catherine. Focusing on the "PERSONAL" statement of 1858 that Dickens published in *Household Words* in an effort to explain the break-up of his marriage, Waters persuasively shows the way in which Dickens simultaneously invokes and transgresses the boundary between public and private life, much as the "sensation" novels of Collins and Braddon would do only a few years later.

Waters establishes her premises clearly at the outset and develops them consistently through a series of carefully argued readings of Dickensian texts. Some of these readings are at times a little flat and predictable. The *Tale of Two Cities* chapter in particular is disappointing in this respect. Focusing so predominantly on the Lucie-Mme Defarge opposition and on the novel's reliance on the domestic to resolve its larger historical and political issues is certainly one way to read Dickens's text, and it fits snugly within Waters's larger argument. But it pays insufficient attention to the figure of Carton, who in many ways stands outside the domestic and calls it into question. Similarly, Waters tends to underestimate the extent to which Dickens's "dark women," notably Edith Dombey and Miss Wade, not only serve as figures of deviance, but also explicitly challenge the ideological assumptions on which narrative closure in their respective novels is based.

The chapters on *Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend*, on the other hand, are much more richly nuanced and show Waters's ability to trace fissures in the text that complicate and at times contradict the dominant ideology to which Dickens is presumably committed. Her chapter on *Our Mutual Friend* is one of the best discussions of that novel in the critical literature. Here, in addition to tracing the operations of domestic ideology as it functions in relation to the Wilfers, Waters skillfully develops a

counter-reading of the text that stresses the equivocal role of the lodger as insider/outsider with respect to the middle-class family. She then goes on to suggest a provocative and convincing parallel between Harmon/Rokesmith's destabilising position within the Wilfer household and the male narrator's invasive stance with respect to female subjectivity in the novel.

Another strong chapter in the book is devoted to the ideological role of Christmas in Dickens's fiction. In this chapter Waters provides a short social history of Christmas celebrations during the nineteenth century, noting the shift in Dickens from the manorial feast at Dingley Dell in *Pickwick* to the middle-class celebration represented by the Cratchits' dinner in *A Christmas Carol*. The chapter is especially effective in analysing the reciprocal influence of texts and social structures. Waters points convincingly to ways in which the narratorial mode of address in the Christmas books functions to shape the very institution that provided the occasion for their writing. She also notes significant changes that occur in the ideological valence of Christmas in later Dickens novels such as *Great Expectations* and *Drood*.

Dickens and the Politics of the Family is an important book, one that Dickens critics and scholars will want to own and read carefully, even if they do not always agree with its conclusions. Written in the tradition of new historicist, neo-Foucauldian cultural critique, it occasionally adopts the tone of knowing superiority that characterises some criticism written from this perspective. But it also goes on, in ways that compel respect, to show how the Dickensian text subverts or opposes the familial ideology on which it presumably depends. It is when it teases out these contradictions and shows the presence of counter-discourses within the dominant ideology that I find the argument most persuasive. In any event it is a valuable book, one that critics of Dickens will need to come to terms with and that Victorianists interested in questions of class and gender will recognise as a significant contribution to the study of these issues.

John O. Jordan

***Professional Victorian Domesticity: Women, Work and Home*, by Monica F. Cohen. Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture 14. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.**

Every study of Victorian domesticity must begin, Monica Cohen suggests, with John Ruskin's paean to the home ("Of Queens' Gardens") as a place of peace and shelter from the anxieties of the outer life. The political and economic implications of the two spheres argument have made a productive focus for recent criticism, most notably that of Nancy Armstrong (*Desire and Domestic Fiction*) and Mary Poovey (*Uneven Developments*). Cohen's thesis is that in the novels on which her study focuses—*Persuasion*, *Villette*, *Great Expectations*, *Little Dorrit*, *Felix Holt* and *Daniel Deronda*—the home becomes a trope "for expressing hostility towards, and indeed a