

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

wish to repudiate, the psychological subjectivity that Poovey and Armstrong identify as characteristic of domestic ideology." Her own project is "to place alongside Armstrong's psychological discourse" a professional one that represents the home "as a profession, as vocational work." The hostility towards "psychological subjectivity" seems often to be more Cohen's than that of the novelists with whom she deals. Her account of what she had expected to find—"a narrative convention that used psychological interiority as a means of broadening the scope of privileges associated with individualism"—is a repressed that returns from time to time to challenge the thesis she finds herself articulating.

Cohen's argument is intricately wrought, sometimes unconvincing, but always subtle and ingenious. Drawing on recent historical studies of professionalism and the professions, she demonstrates by a textual analysis alert to syntactical nuance the surprising degree to which the vocabulary and assumptions of professionalism infiltrate the domestic discourse of the novel. The notion of professionalism assembling itself progressively might usefully have been more fully elaborated at the outset. It can come to seem too simply and instantly a valorising term and one which entails some oddly deferential gender politics. A model of professionalism as communitarian obliges Cohen to argue for a dynamic of sociability that runs the risk of undervaluing the cultural work performed by the Victorian novel's foregrounding of the female writer's domestic space and solitary interiority (often wrested, as was Jane Austen's, from an encroaching domestic community). The *Persuasion* chapter usefully illumines its complex series of home-navy tropes (in the course of the discussion recuperating Emily Eden's 1859 bestseller *The Semi-Detached House*), but Anne Elliot's inner life and domestic habituations are seen to look to the navy's conferring of a kind of professional status for their validation. The musician Klesmer in *Daniel Deronda* is accorded a similar role in terms not only of Mirah but of the Meyrick household as well. Too much is left out of the process neatly formulated in Cohen's idea of home as profession "turning into" the idea that a profession can be a home. The famous Offendene passage, with its Wordsworthian reflections on what "home" might mean in terms of individual psychological development, is dismissed as essentialist "intoning." The omission of the Cohen household is surprising in view of this chapter's claims that "the English novel of 1876 is not about class but about nation" ("class" here makes a late entry and receives little attention) and that "Jewish nationalism" in this novel is a replication of "English nationalism."

More interesting negotiations might have been available had not the psychological and the domestic been so resolutely read as "irreconcilable discourses." The otherwise stimulating reading of Wemmick's home-office dichotomy as a key to *Great Expectations* loses credibility when the novel is found to be drained "of anything having to do with a psychologically individuated self." It follows from this way of reading that *Little Dorrit*'s concern with "home" as nurturing and distorting individual growth should be similarly discounted: "as the novel progresses, characters like Arthur and Little Dorrit . . . seem less like individuals and more like collections of symptoms in need of institutionalisation." In the *Villette* chapter Lucy's "erasing of the lover from the home scene" then becomes a step in the argument for Lucy's domesticity as communal, as well as professionalised. We are surely on shaky ground when the various translations

and transliterating readings of conversations between M. Paul and Lucy are offered as “a kind of aural pastiche composed of a series of finally nonpersonal interactions,” and when the novel’s notoriously ambiguous ending is invoked as implicating the reader in the game of “reading home” as an emplotting of “nonpersonal sociability.”

The *Felix Holt* chapter brings suggestively into play the idea of renunciation as essential to vocational commitment, neatly aligning the Rev. Lyon’s homekeeping-as-vocation with the renunciations made by both Felix and Esther in pursuit of relocated vocational paths and positioning the argument for its final destination, via *Daniel Deronda*, in which literary professional domesticity “subsumes” another equally powerful story about English national identity. This move rests on the view that the “true” homes of these novels are located in the experience of alienation that coincides with a sense of vocation, and that the home is depicted “not as a real place” but as a metaphoric space where leave-taking and vocation merge. Cohen’s book will challenge, though it might not in the end change, the ways in which we understand Victorian domestic ideology.

Jennifer Gribble

***Dear Reader: The Conscripted Audience in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, by
Garrett Stewart. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996.**

Dear Reader

This book looks sexy—very sexy . . . it has a hot cover and a titillating title. In fact, whenever I was reading it, or should I say wading through it, people would smile broadly and say to me: “Mmm, that looks interesting.” And I’d smile weakly and think: “You’ve got to be kidding,”—that is until I remembered what it looked like. The cover is great, a detail from an 1853 painting called *The Romance Reader* by Antoine Wiertz. Sounds pretty chaste doesn’t it? But in actual fact, it would get anyone’s gaze working overtime. The depicted romance reader is not exactly your typical, furtive, shady bower type but rather a voluptuous woman who lies naked on her single bed with her legs slightly apart while she reads an obviously engrossing book. Next to her on the bed is a line up of other books for her future reading pleasure and these books are being surreptitiously stacked up by the devil who crouches unseen alongside her bed. The painting has all the wonderful “in your face” attitude that Gustave Courbet’s 1866 painting of close-up female genitalia *L’origine du monde* has—a painting that literally transfixed me for a good half hour when I saw it at the Musee d’Orsay in Paris. But enough about the cover, what about the book? Well, at this point, one has to fall back upon the ever-so appropriate platitude—“you can’t judge a book by its cover,” and what a shame that is.

There are a few problems with this book. The first is its basic premise. According to Garrett Stewart whenever a writer directly addresses their readership (for example, W. Harrison Ainsworth’s 1834 narrative *Rookwood*: “we are going at the rate of twenty