

surprising about the novels themselves. Sara Thornton's *Advertising, Subjectivity, and the Nineteenth-Century Novel: Dickens, Balzac, and the Language of the Walls* also provides a fascinating, well-researched account of its topic, effectively evoking the sheer pervasiveness of "the language of the walls" in nineteenth-century urban life. Here the literary analysis is more subtle, with Thornton's discussion of the "Dickens Advertiser" casting part-issue serialization in a fresh light.

Critics are at last beginning to pay serious attention to periodicals, arguably the dominant format of nineteenth-century literary production, and this year saw several attempts to reckon with their role in shaping not just public opinion but the very conception of a public. Barton Swaim's *Scottish Men of Letters and the New Public Sphere, 1802–1834* looks at the Romantic-period ascendancy of the Edinburgh periodicals, which established the main nineteenth-century formats of quarterly review, monthly magazine, and cheap weekly journal. Swaim limits his analysis by grounding it in a loose conception of national character, rather than material conditions, and on the figure of the "man of letters," focusing on the high-profile cases of Francis Jeffrey, John Wilson, John Gibson Lockhart, and Carlyle. This emphasis tends to obscure the actual medium of the new public sphere, the periodicals themselves; Swaim back-projects Carlyle's own noisy apotheosis as "Man-of-Letters Hero" onto the earlier cases, overriding their practice of impersonal and corporate modes of authorship. Nevertheless, Swaim gains much by his choice, notably depth of field, yielding insightful discussions of (especially) Jeffrey and Wilson. Alex Benchimol also awards the Scottish periodicals a crucial role, in *Intellectual Politics and Cultural Conflict in the Romantic Period: Scottish Whigs, English Radicals, and the Making of the British Public Sphere*. Theoretically sharper honed in his approach than Swaim, Benchimol brings greater analytical pressure to the topic, even if his argument lacks Swaim's attention to nuance. Benchimol tracks the dialectical formation of the industrial-era public sphere through the formal as well as ideological opposition between English Radical journalism (by William Cobbett and Thomas Wooler) and the managerial discourse of the Scottish Post-Enlightenment reviews and magazines. Karen Fang offers a new-historicist account of the decade after Waterloo in her *Romantic Writing and the Empire of Signs: Periodical Culture and Post-Napoleonic Authorship*. Although drawing on Jon Klancher's pioneering *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790–1832* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), Fang's study

(like Swaim's) blurs its view of the periodicals themselves by a focus on individual authors, in this case contributors rather than editors: Keats, Lamb, Hogg, Landon, and Byron. Her argument, that the periodicals diffuse an imperialist ideology throughout the national domestic sphere, takes on some of that same diffuseness, over-reliant as it is on a method of synecdochic association, while yielding, nevertheless, a great many ingenious and striking insights.

The foregoing three studies open onto the general topic of the political formation of the nineteenth-century public, which remains an appropriately contentious field of inquiry. Anne Frey's *British State Romanticism: Authorship, Agency, and Bureaucratic Nationalism* covers the same period, the post-Waterloo era, as Fang's book, and mounts a similar thesis: that the period sees "a diffusion of governing functions" across civil society (p. 2), even though the institutional apparatus of the state underwent a retraction. Literature itself takes up this governing function, Frey argues, becoming "an accessory to state power" as various authors—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Austen, and De Quincey—"identify the state as the agency that determines how individuals think, feel, and perceive the world" (p. 4). She notes, interestingly, that the diffusion of government bears a utopian charge that it will lose in the Victorian era of an enhanced state bureaucracy (compare Dickens's Circumlocution Office). Frey makes a lively case, even if her argument too neatly trims the tangled bank of late Romantic writing. David Collings's *Monstrous Society: Reciprocity, Discipline, and the Political Uncanny at the End of Early Modern England* approaches the topic with a more concerted mix of post-Marxian, post-psychoanalytic, and post-Foucauldian discourse studies. Collings articulates his argument along a line of major thinkers—Edmund Burke, Thomas Malthus, Jeremy Bentham—all of whom, despite their political differences, construct a disciplinary model of state power "immune from popular response," thus bringing to an end an early-modern moral economy of "reciprocity" between government and people. The repressed returns, inevitably, as "society" and "the people" assume the ominous guise of "mobs, ghosts and monsters" (p. 13). Collings's argument is stimulating, if by definition schematic, overriding literary nuance to bring home its larger point.

Very much against these kinds of argument, Kathleen Blake makes a bid to recover the distinctive qualities of Bentham's contribution to nineteenth-century culture in her *Pleasures of Benthamism: Victorian Literature, Utility, and Political Economy*.