

Unstable Bodies: Victorian Representations of Sexuality and Maternity by Jill L. Matus. Manchester and New York: Manchester UP, 1995. 250 pp. ISBN 0-7190-4347-6, \$69.95 (cloth); ISBN 0-7190-4348-4, \$19.95 (paper).

Tainted Souls and Painted Faces; The Rhetoric of Fallenness in Victorian Culture by Amanda Anderson. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1993. 233 pp. ISBN 0-8014-2781-9, \$35.00 (cloth); ISBN 0-8014-8148-1, \$14.95 (paper).

In different ways, each of these books is in dialogue with post-Foucauldian feminist discourses on the construction and representation of female sexuality in mid-Victorian literature, like Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987) and Mary Poovey's *Uneven Developments* (1989). Matus expands upon Armstrong's thesis that the history of women's writing is the history of the production of the gendered middle-class subject by situating literary texts within contemporary bio-medical, social scientific debates about prostitution, infanticide, working-class sexuality, female reproduction, and domesticity. She locates moments of ideological conflicts and unevenness within these texts, reflecting Poovey's contention that ideological formation is inconsistent and experienced differently by every individual and institution. Anderson also situates the works of selected authors within the extra-literary contexts of public debates over social policies, but with emphasis on representations of fallen women. However, rather than expanding upon approaches like Armstrong's and Poovey's, Anderson's analyses of specific texts are designed to support her proposition that the impasses in the Victorian rhetoric of fallenness are replicated in the impasses of post-structuralist criticism because both allow a Foucauldian perspective to dominate their accounts of the social world and underestimate the importance of interactive social participation in the construction of identity.

Matus focuses exclusively on female authors, observing that literary texts provide a unique perspective on larger scientific debates about sexual regulation because they allow Victorian women an opportunity for conceptualizing their own sexuality. Furthermore, by choosing to include both canonical and noncanonical texts, she hopes to reveal "closet" concerns about the instability of sexuality. In chapter one she notes that, although in discussions of Victorian theories of sexual differentiation, emphasis has usually been placed on the assumption of difference and complementarity between the sexes, Victorian biomedical literature reveals a great concern with the instability of that difference, and variously locates sexual definition in culture and nature. In the remainder of the book she explores the relationship between this contradictory biomedical discourse and specific social debates and literary representations.

Chapter two presents a feminist reading of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* that stresses the "problem" of working-class sexuality and morality. Matus cites social scientific discourses on poverty and immorality in the 1840s that blamed social problems on inadequate mothering and expressed fears that female