The fictional representation of the family has long been regarded as a Dickensian speciality. But while nineteenth-century reviewers praised Dickens as the pre-eminent novelist of the family, any close examination of his novels reveals a remarkable disjunction between his image as the quintessential celebrant of the hearth, and his interest in fractured families. Catherine Waters offers an explanation of this discrepancy through an examination of Dickens's representation of the family in relation to nineteenth-century constructions of class and gender. Drawing upon feminist and new historicist methodologies, and focussing upon the normalising function of middle-class domestic ideology, Waters concludes that Dickens's novels record a shift in notions of the family away from an earlier stress upon the importance of lineage and blood towards a new ideal of domesticity assumed to be the natural form of the family.
DICKENS AND THE POLITICS
OF THE FAMILY
For Mary and Ron
DICKENS AND THE POLITICS OF THE FAMILY

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