SISTERS AND THE ENGLISH HOUSEHOLD

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for Todd and Marc
and for Diane, who could not stay
"Like scents from varying roses that remain
One sweetness, nor can evermore be singled"

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constant exemplars of what is best in our profession; his unflagging work in reading and editing this book in many parts and versions; his inspiring intellectual companionship, and his sometimes almost stern urgings to carry on; and, more than all, his love. There is nothing to be done but to return it.

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade or so, literary scholars have increasingly explored the sig-
nificant historical distance between the ways we currently name, plot, and
characterize sibling relations, and the quite different ways that pre-twentieth-
century writers and readers might have done so. Yet, as Mary Jean Corbett
and Naomi Tadmor have separately argued, efforts to historicize our under-
standing of English families over the crucial transitional period of the eigh-
teenth and nineteenth centuries have been weakened by scholars' reliance on
terms and ideas that assume stable, universally human familial structures and
relations. When we focus on the sibling relation, this reliance proves particu-
larly limiting: even Corbett and Tadmor, who are consciously working against
such assumptions, demonstrate continuing tendencies to define "brother" and
"sister" in terms of sexual, specifically conjugal, relations that reinscribe these
stabilizing, universalizing terms, or to subsume the sibling relation into other
categories, eliding its potential primacy in "family."

Sisters and the English Household works to escape these lingering critical limita-
tions through two innovations: a reframing of efforts to historicize "family" as a
further historicizing of "domesticity" that renders it multiple and fluid, rather
than monolithic; and a turn toward the unmarried adult sister as a figure of
legal and economic autonomy representing productive labor in the domestic
space. I argue for the recognition of at least two distinct ideals of domesticity,
both functional throughout the nineteenth century, one of which understood
sibling fortunes as fruitfully intertwined through the full extent of the siblings'
lives (corporate domesticity), and one of which expected the domestic, mate-
rial, and to some extent emotional separation of adult siblings from their birth
homes and from each other (industrial domesticity). The second configuration,
though long counterbalanced by persistent idealizations of the first, sibling-
anchored model, was gradually and unevenly ascendant through the period.
As households came to be primarily defined by the relations between spouses,
and between parents and children, the mutual householding and devotion
of siblings, once generally expected features of family life, began to seem
extraordinary. More specifically, as a domestic space defined by the apparent

exclusion of productive labor was increasingly idealized, the adult unmarried sister in the house became an object of intense cultural scrutiny, her troubling autonomy rendering her the crucial figure in the English nineteenth century's protracted cultural negotiation of familial, household, and domestic ideals. The sister's autonomy also drove a gradually increasing imperative to exclude adult unmarried siblings from the households of their married siblings, an imperative often figured as expatriation from the homely, or the national "domestic" space, or both.

By means of these interventions, *Sisters and the English Household* resets the conditions for literary critical discussions of sibling relations in nineteenth-century England, recognizing adult sibling relationships, and the figure of the adult unmarried sibling in the household, as primary and generative, rather than contingent and dependent; and recognizing material economy and law as fundamental sources of sibling identity, rather than finding the foundation of that identity in some revised or reconstituted version of individuated subjectivity. With the sibling, especially the adult unmarried sister, revalued as a figure of primary significance—economic and legal, as well as emotional, significance—this figure also becomes an index of complex, shifting attitudes toward labor, industrialization, gender roles, and individual and national identities.

I began work on this study because I was perplexed by the rhetorical conflation of sibling love and married love that I saw in many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British literary works. For instance, in Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778), Lord Orville describes himself as Evelina's "friend" and "brother" for some hundred pages before he becomes her husband: "'My *dear* Miss Anville,' cried [Orville], warmly, 'allow *me* to be your friend; think of me as if I were indeed your brother, and let me entreat you to accept my best services if there is anything in which I can be so happy as to shew my regard,—my respect for you!'" (315, emphasis original). The significance of this passage through metaphorical "brother" (Orville reiterates the term more than once) to husband is reinforced by the appearance of a blood half brother who eventually marries an imposter, a girl who was passed off as the true Evelina to her aristocratic father and fostered by him. At one point the half brother believes that his beloved, the spurious (but innocent) "Evelina," is his blood sister, whom of course he could never marry. The gradual discovery of Evelina's and Macartney's blood identities enables Evelina's recovery of her inheritance, and leads to two suitable, prosperous marriages in both of which the spouses have at one time or another thought of each other as siblings. At the end of the novel it is clear that these two couples—the metaphorical brother Orville and the true heiress Evelina, Evelina's blood half brother, Macartney, and her "sister" by fosterage—are now united in a stable, desirable family configuration that includes Evelina's erring but forgiven father. Evelina closes her first and last letter as "Evelina Belmont" (her now restored birth name) to her foster father

Mr. Villars with this postscript: "Lady Louisa [Orville's blood sister], at her own particular desire, will be present at the ceremony [Orville and Evelina's wedding] […] Mr. Macartney will, the same morning, unite himself with my foster-sister; and my father himself will give us both away" (404).

Evelina is by no means unusual in its conflation of sibling and marital affections: in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English literature, blood, affinal, and metaphorical sibling relations are commonly represented as positive models for or preludes to marriage, or both. The rhetorical vehicle of this representation, a representation usually carried through in plot and character as well, is the repeated use of the terms naming each of the two sorts of relationships to describe and define the other, as when the sister-speaker of George Eliot's "Brother and Sister" sonnets (1874) names her adult estrangement from her beloved brother as "divorce," or when, in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), Fanny Price's attachment to her brother William is described as above "the conjugal tie," so deeply seated that it could be ended only "by a long and unnatural estrangement, by a divorce which no subsequent connection can justify" (273). The apparent congruence of sibling and marital relational terms in so many literary texts of the period, and the implicitly positive connotations of their reciprocal definitions, perplexed me because, in my cultural lexicon, sibling and marital relations are sharply distinguished from each other. For most Americans in the early twenty-first century, assimilated to modern European theories of the psyche and the family, the marriage relation is defined by sexual affinity (often, but not necessarily, including the production of children) and the emotions allied to sexual love, while we define the adult brother-sister relation by its asexual nature, its distinct difference from the marriage relation. If a man in whom I am interested says to me, "but I love you like a sister," I know there is little hope of a romance.

Scholars, and readers generally, have often noticed the frequent conjunctions of sibling and conjugal relations in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British and American literature. But until rather recently, most assumed (as I had) the universal validity of our present-day sharp distinction between those relations, attributing the literary conflation of sibling and spousal relations, and representations of intimate emotional attachments among siblings, to some unusual, abnormal, or deplorable condition: the arrested psychosexual or culturally limited psycholinguistic development of the writer, or the cultural restriction of sexual expressions or representations. Modern biographers, scholarly and popular, have written about deeply attached sibling authors— for instance, the Wordsworths, the Lambs, the Brontës—in much the same way, focusing on the presumably extraordinary character of their intimate domestic and emotional relations.

As I considered these studies and the texts they examine, it seemed clear to me that while incestuous desire, envious sisters-in-law, and other manifestations

of a sibling relationship in conflict with the spousal relationship can certainly be found in the literature of the period, there is also a considerable body of work that seems to promote siblinghood as a valuable precursor or continuing support to marriage, a positive material and emotional addition to the household. If nineteenth-century English people did not necessarily question or deplore intimate domestic and emotional relations among siblings, if a household like the Wordsworths'—with two unmarried sisters living with their married siblings for the full term of their adult lives—might not be strange but well within the range of common and approved arrangements in that period, then why would scholars so routinely set aside that possibility? What barriers stood in the way of a more thoroughgoing historicization of nineteenth-century English sibling relations and of an articulation of this possibility of siblings' positive value in literary representations of family and household?

Mary Jean Corbett's *Family Likeness: Sex, Marriage, and Incest from Jane Austen to Virginia Woolf* (2008) begins to answer these questions, taking on the more comprehensive issue of scholarly efforts to historicize the umbrella category of "family." Arguing that familial terms and structures we now assume as stable were contested and multivalent through the end of the nineteenth century, Corbett posits that these assumptions of stability erect ideological and rhetorical boundaries that have limited critical exploration of nineteenth-century literary representations of "family":

> [T]he stories that readers, writers, and intellectuals tell about "the Victorian family," for instance—not just a major object of analysis for "the discourses of the human sciences in the nineteenth century" [Pollak 3] but among that century's most enduring products—frequently fail to interrogate their dependence on assumptions or beliefs naturalized or invented by readers, writers, and intellectuals of that era […] it is time to change the theoretical and historical lens through which we look at scholarly artifacts like "the Victorian family" or "the marriage plot" by defamiliarizing both the objects of analysis and the theoretical tools we have used to construct them. (21)

For Corbett this change involves recognizing a variety of "sexual and reproductive arrangements of the nineteenth century [that are] frequently crowded out of the dominant narrative now normatively referred to as 'normative'" (21), including a much closer positive conjunction of sibling and marital relationships, less distinction between consanguinous and affinal bonds, and an implicitly higher valuation of sibling relations as ongoing, though not universal, features of the period's notions of "family." Also essential to this defamiliarization, as Corbett's argument demonstrates in its own rhetorical

stance, is a consistent awareness, explication, or replacement of the common terms that tend in our own time to reinscribe the naturalized concepts they carry—most fundamentally, "nuclear family," a term that Corbett uses only with explicit caveats, and more frequently avoids altogether by replacing it with "first family" or "second family," as appropriate. Corbett carefully maintains this stance, allowing her to keep the historical, contingent, fluctuating condition of "family" and its related terms clearly in view.

Corbett's analysis and proposed remedies accord closely with those of Naomi Tadmor, who opens her 2001 study *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship and Patronage* with a review of histories of the family over the previous half-century. Noting the "very considerable body of knowledge" developed during these decades of study of the English family, she observes the early debates about whether that family could be best described "mainly by processes of change, or by enduring patterns of continuity," and the eventual subsidence of this debate in the early 1980s when "the importance of nuclear family life in early modern England seemed firmly established" (1, 3, 4). From that point on, Tadmor says, the field has been in a "stalemate" (6) maintained in large part by the settled use of social science terms by historians of the family. Despite "critical reservations" about the proper definitions and uses of key terms, Tadmor notes, "'the nuclear family' and 'the extended family' and 'extended' kinship ties remained among the most used terms within debates on the history of the family" (7). Scholars' recurrence to these terms has kept them from asking what Tadmor calls "simple historical questions […] what concepts of the family did people in the past have? What did the family mean for them? In what terms did they understand family relations, household residence, kinship relationships, friendship, and patronage?" (9–10) Instead the stable terminology of histories of the family continually reinscribes the same areas of prime significance: marriage, parent-child relations, lineal inheritance. For Tadmor, the necessary change must be to "branch from relationships of blood and marriage to other social ties"—"friend," and "connexion," to name two of the alternative ties she foregrounds (10).

Through Corbett's sustained rhetorical turn from the naturalizing terminology of family studies, a turn both she and Tadmor find essential, Corbett also withdraws to a greater distance from the framework of modern psychological theory to which many scholars revert when studying family. Stepping back from Michel Foucault's identification of psychoanalysis as a "'rediscovery'" (Foucault 113) of the true origins of individual sexuality, Corbett explains that she is

less interested in reproducing the psychoanalytic Oedipal norm "that one would find the *parents-child* relationship at the root of everyone's

sexuality'" and more intent on considering the residual impact of alliance […] Rereading middle-class incests with an eye to how they were shaped by shifting constructions of family relations, in siblingship and cousinhood, enables us to articulate different perspectives on both the hegemonic construction of incest as intergenerational and heterosexual and the somewhat static and circumscribed image of "the bourgeois family" that Foucault creates. (18, quotation from Foucault 113)

This passage demonstrates both the care with which Corbett articulates "family" as a fluid cultural construction and the deliberate effort she makes to differentiate her argument from the usual emphases of literary studies of "family."

Yet this same passage also demonstrates how the most skeptical and determined scholars are drawn back to the same familiar categories: incest, desire, sexuality and espousal, parent-child relations. In Corbett's formulation, "siblingship and cousinhood" appear as the "*residual* impact of alliance" (emphasis added), where "alliance" must primarily (though not exclusively) mean "marriage." Despite the differences with which Corbett engages these categories (incest, etc.), their primary, originating position in much of her analysis reinstates the essential framing structures of the "family" she seeks to reexamine. The subtitle of her study prominently reinstalls the "center" she still circles: *Sex, Marriage, and Incest.* Similarly, Tadmor's study subsumes her commentary on "brother" and "sister" under the term "related friends," a usage that included various kin. Tadmor's interest lies in recovering this familial usage of "friends," and she elsewhere briefly notes the plurality of uses of "sister," "sister in law," "my wife's sister" and so forth. But in Tadmor's alternative rubric "sister" and "brother" disappear as first-level terms and relationships, their potential significance as primary or contested elements of "family" slipping out of sight.

In fact, it is here, at the specific nexus of sibling relationships, that even vigorous challenges to ahistorical accounts of "family" seem to falter, as they circle back to the same stable analytical categories, the same established areas of prime significance. Here too one may still find undisturbed the initial assumption of universalizing theories about self and family that have been so strongly challenged in other contexts. From 2001 to 2004 three book-length studies on eighteenth- or nineteenth-century literary siblings appeared (one encompassing American literature as well as British), and another more broadly on literary kinship, each of the four citing the sibling relation or the figure of the sister as a neglected critical site, and proposing the remedy of recontextualizing these relations in various material and cultural histories.[1] Two of these studies, Valerie Sanders's *The Brother-Sister Culture in Nineteenth-Century Literature: From Austen to*

Woolf (2002) and Sarah Annes Brown's *Devoted Sisters: Representations of the Sister Relationship in Nineteenth-Century British and American Literature* (2003), begin by assuming a universal psychology of siblinghood, supported by psychological and sociological theory, and articulate what they regard as belonging specifically to the nineteenth century in terms of these universal human emotions. Although both recognize that a different valuation of sibling relations is, as Sanders puts it, "by no means […] confined to a few eccentric families, but […] endemic to [nineteenth-century] culture" (10), they persist in characterizing it as "obsessive" (Sanders 10) or as otherwise departing from the assumed universal psychological template of "family."

Ruth Perry's *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture 1748–1818* (2004) undertakes a much more specific and nuanced program of historicization and, as in Corbett's and Tadmor's studies, works to recover the significance of sibling and other collateral relations. Perry identifies a shift in the eighteenth-century English family not unlike the one I track in the nineteenth century, though her formulation of the alternative to the "nuclear" model is different from mine. But Perry frames her study's purpose as the recovery of the "psychological meanings of kin relations" (3) as these changed through the eighteenth century: "literary texts provide the insights about how the conception of 'family' changed in eighteenth-century England and the strain that put on existing relationships. History provides the causal or correlative explanations for the social and psychological phenomena that literature reveals" (1). The word "psychological" and its cognates appear four times in the first four pages of her book, and frame every significant shift in the discussion that follows. For instance (and this is of course an important instance for me), the chapter on "Sister-Right" opens in this way:

> The relationships among siblings, older and younger siblings of the same sex as well as brothers and sisters, is a fascinating flashpoint for understanding the deeper psychological meanings of the kinship shift from an axis of consanguinity to an axis of conjugality […] as some psychologists now recognize, siblings are one's "first real partners in life," the peers from whom one first learns about identity and social relationships. (107–8)[2]

The rest of this paragraph then speaks to how eighteenth-century siblings' expectations of each other were "repositioned" by the shift in family models (108). But the structure of the paragraph, like its language, tells us where the primary importance lies: in "deeper psychological meanings," in the universalized "first real partner" relation among siblings and their lifelong relationships. I understand that Perry means to say that both early partnership and later influence

convey and are shaped by these changing social parameters, including shifting valuations of kin relations. But by persistently foregrounding the recovery of the psyche, whether collective, textual, or fictional, Perry continues to imply a universalized human psychic structure, modifiable by history to be sure, but always "there," and the repository of the most fundamental, most important meanings.

Leila Silvana May's *Disorderly Sisters: Sibling Relations and Sororal Resistance in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (2001) more successfully copes with the ideological collapse toward the universalized psyche, primarily through the invocation of a (modified) Hegelian notion of "desire [as] itself a historical product, provoked by the social order's power to prohibit and to permit, to bestow personal identity" (36–37). This enables May's position that "sister" is primarily an ideological construction, its parameters traceable in fiction and social treatise (Sarah Ellis's famous instructions for sisters, for instance), and attributable to social histories. Her analysis of the sister as a figure portending resistance and disruption, though designed as a figure of harmony and coherence, accords well with my own sense of the unmarried adult sister's signification of a disturbing legal and material autonomy, masked as it is beneath her cultural subjection. But having asserted the sister's significance as pivotal ideological respondent to "an ever more tightly knit and strongly hierarchical nuclear family" (15), a figure designed to carry the weight of domestic ideologies in place of the mother and wife, May turns from the explicitly constructed sister to "the unarticulated aspects of the sororal ideal" (22): repressed incestuous desire. Despite the historical specifics with which May fences this notion—the androgynous atmosphere of the nursery, the British (nuclear) family anchored by the sister figure as a "sociopolitical construct[s] under siege" (21)—it is good old (Freudian) sexual desire, naturalized desire, that has popped up here. Quoting Nancy F. Anderson on the "'dammed up libidinous feelings within the [Victorian] home,'" May identifies the sister as "produced by the desire of the other" within "this torrid zone of hyperemotionality, which must deny itself as such" (23). May offers an original reading of the sister figure as a social construction of primary significance, but once the "unarticulated" significance of the sister figure is located in sexual desire structured by the nuclear family, that reading is diluted by traditional interests in emotion and sexuality, with their insistent gestures toward an individuated deep self.

If the mechanism by which universalizing theories of "family" have been reinscribed has been scholars' reversion to the established terminologies of those theories, then a parallel mechanism evident in the work of scholars seeking to historicize sibling relations has been what Nancy Armstrong calls "histories of subjectivity," descriptions of the individuated but universally structured "deep self" that displace material histories of politics, law, economy, and so forth,

locating the driving force of culture in individuals' personal identities (*Desire and Domestic Fiction*, 1987). Read back into the same fictions from which they are derived, Armstrong argues, modern ideologies of the self effectively screen out historical and cultural difference by giving primary significance to the paired psychic qualities, universal humanness and idiosyncratic development. Whether appearing as broad expressions of psychological theory, as in Perry's and May's critical work, or as accounts of fictional or historical individual psychic development, as in George Eliot's novels or Elizabeth Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, "histories of subjectivity" function not just as a parallel but also as a cooperative mechanism with the established terminologies of histories of family to regenerate ahistorical accounts of "family" and its various relational terms.

Corbett's *Family Likeness* provides a proximate example of this cooperative regeneration. Working to escape monolithic constructions like "the Victorian family," and to destabilize the relational terms assumed to define "family," Corbett nonetheless remains firmly on the grounds demanded by our belief in a "deep self": sexuality and desire, as they are instantiated in the cultural forms of marriage, remain drivers of familial relationships, even as crucial relational terms are reframed as fluid and contested. So although cousins, and siblings, and "friends" in Tadmor's sense of a wider metaphorical kinship, reenter the picture with increased importance in Corbett's account, they do so as "residual" effects of the sexual and marital relations that remain the primary, generative source of the (now various) meanings of "family." For instance, analyzing the often-read passage about Fanny and William's powerful sibling attachment in Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Corbett frames the significance of the passage in this way: "Idealizing first affections and critiquing their disruption, the narrative voice […] implies that marriage should support rather than nullify sibling ties; indeed, the ideological framework even for so-called companionate marriage encouraged the creation of new affinal bonds of comparable strength to consanguineal ones" (40). Corbett specifically contrasts the "affectionate nuclear model" that "now constitutes the heterosexual norm" with the model *Mansfield Park* seems to offer, noting that this heterosexual, intergenerational norm has made "the practice of making marriages with an eye to maintaining and reinforcing horizontal, intragenerational bonds" historically invisible (40), and expresses her intention to "take up issues of economics and status" as a critique of such ahistoricity (41).

Yet in Corbett's formulation, marriage "supports" sibling ties; marriage generates "new affinal bonds" with the strength of blood bonds (as if the new affinal bonds were children born of the "second family" marriage), and "maintain[s] and reinforce[s]" the horizontal bonds of siblings and cousins, including metaphorical (what Corbett calls "fictive") siblings and cousins. Although the horizontal, intragenerational bonds have much greater value in

her formulation than in those she critiques, marriage retains its primary and generative function in constituting "family." As Corbett makes her turn to "economics and status," she describes this as a turn from "the marriage plot and the fiction of romantic love between strangers" to "the family plot, in which marriage figures as agent and instrument of breaking or making family bonds" (41). Siblinghood remains adjunct, secondary, "residual"—now visible, and significant, but still a by-blow. The primary, generative function of marriage and sexuality remains, leaving the very structures Corbett means to contest, "the reproductive heterosexual norm" and the consequent privileging of "vertical, intergenerational relation[s]" (40), at the foundation of "family."

Throughout her study, Corbett's effort to unsettle that norm is periodically undermined by partial reappearances of the underlying normative ground. In her third chapter, in which Corbett examines the Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister (MDWS) controversy as an embodiment of the ongoing cultural negotiation of "family" and its component terms, "desire" reemerges as a crucial explanation of the complex currents of that controversy. Corbett finds neither the naturalized assumption that the wife and her unmarried sister necessarily stand as rivals for the husband's affection, nor the "male fantasy of the 'second choice'" enabled by the sisters' familial likeness (variously formulated by scholars including, as Corbett notes, Karen Chase and Michael Levenson), adequate to fully explain the "husband-wife-sister triangle" that she understands as the structuring principle of the debate (69, 74). Instead she posits "the wife's desire to retain the sister for herself even as she also gains a husband of her own" as the mirror image of the husband's desire for "plenitude," "two desires that traverse the second family": "Recognizing the wife's wish to possess sister and husband as comparable, indeed structurally parallel, to the husband's wish for 'two sisters' enables us to inquire into the conjoined fate of male and female desire" (in her focus texts, but obviously in general as well) (74–75). Corbett's "desire" is not wholly sexual desire, encompassing unsexualized affection that derives from the material proximities and needs of the "first family" as well, and her analysis on this point is compelling in its own terms. But once the mirrored relationships are cast as "desire"—and that is their conclusive description—we are again within the rhetorical and ideological bounds of subjectivity, the individuated deep self, embedded though it is in historical situation. This constraint is particularly visible in the declared advantage of the new perspective afforded by her analysis, which is not (for the moment) a better understanding of "family," but a better understanding of "desire," now located in both husband and wife, which is presumed to lead to that improved understanding of "family." Once again the naturalized priorities of modern theories of the psyche take precedence.

Corbett's work is not unique either in its historicizing intention or in its withdrawal (partial, in her case) toward some version of modern psychological theory. The common trajectories of these critical studies demonstrate my reasons for withdrawing further from the naturalized assumptions that conjugal relations generate "family," and that the "deep self," fostered in the conjugal family and the cognate nation-state, generates identity. Because it has proven exceptionally difficult to avoid the rhetorical reinscription of these assumptions, I introduce new terms naming two alternative models of domesticity that I read as being simultaneous functional ideals, in conversation with each other, and continuously contested, in nineteenth-century English discourse. I posit a family structure in which sibling and spousal relations were mutually constitutive, a model I call "corporate domesticity," that existed side by side with the gradually solidifying spouses-and-children model that was eventually dubbed the "nuclear family," and that I call "industrial domesticity." My first chapter offers further reasons for introducing new terminology but, in brief, I developed these terms to lay emphasis on the ideological content of "family" models, and on the specific material conditions in which these different idealizations were embedded. "Domesticity" calls attention to the ideological dimensions, and also to the physical space of, or surrounding, household and "family" and their relational structures. The modifiers "corporate" and "industrial" make explicit reference to material economic contexts, as well as to the time frame in which these notions of family developed, and can be attached to "household" and "family" in such a way as to mute some of these terms' tendencies to restabilize our current assumptions about their meanings.

We are, of course, well aware of the outlines of industrial domesticity, its household and familial structures and values: a domestic space occupied by a married man and woman, and their minor children, ideally excluding other kin, the industrial household also ideally excludes public, material economies (notably paid labor), and public discourse (political debate, for instance) so that children's and spouses' individuated identities and affective capacities can be fully developed in the privacy of the home (or, on the large scale, the homeland). Corporate domesticity, as I define it, is structured by a mixture of sibling and spousal ties intended to mutually reinforce the family's material economic prosperity, ensure the continuity of its collective inheritance, and maintain the emotional ties that were understood as essential anchors of its material economic projects. For instance, two brothers might marry two sisters, or a woman and her cousin; first cousins might marry, perhaps in multiple sets; and these marriages might lead to, or be materially ratified by, joint business partnerships, the schooling or apprenticing of young nephews, and so forth. Within this larger family, or alternatively as a freestanding family,

an unmarried sibling might household with another unmarried adult sibling, or with a married sibling, providing additional income, or domestic labor, or childcare, or all of the above. Collective material production, and the salutary fusion of emotional and material economic concerns, were hallmarks of corporate domestic enterprises, just as the separation of the home space from the labor that supports it is an essential value of industrial domesticity.[3] These two versions of domesticity persisted in English discourse throughout the nineteenth century as functional ideals, the value assigned to each fluctuating unevenly in various literary and political contexts.[4] But during this period we can also observe the gradual ascendance of industrial over corporate domesticity, reaching its rhetorical culmination at a much later date—during the 1940s, if I have my history of sociology correct—in the decisive emergence of that still much-used term "nuclear family."

The introduction of this new terminology and of the divergent ideals of domesticity it names allows us, I believe, to better resist the tendency to lapse back toward our familiar categories of inquiry, not only because of the rhetorical distance it affords us, but also because the formulation of "corporate domesticity" opens the possibility of adult unmarried siblings as primary, generative figures in the corporate family, and of siblings' material economic agency as an originating source of their identity. As one of the primary contributors to the collective good of the corporate family, the adult unmarried sibling signifies productive labor, inside and outside the domestic space, to the end of ensuring the corporate family's economic and emotional stability and prosperity. The marital relation (and so sexuality, the parents-child relation) cannot assume sole generative power in this configuration of domesticity, depending as this domesticity does on the enriching, stabilizing sibling relation: neither can be excluded without damage to the prosperity of the corporate family and household. Nor can an adult unmarried sibling's value be measured solely in terms of positive emotional capacity: corporate domesticity's imbrication of material and affective economies locates the capacity for material productivity as an essential, not adjunct, element of a sibling's identity. While the maintenance and nurturing of emotional ties obviously retains great significance, this aspect of corporate family life is inseparable from the family's material labor, production, and prosperity. So recognizing the alternative idealizations of corporate domesticity makes visible the sibling as economic agent, not only in the corporate household but in the industrial household as well—where, because industrial domesticity requires the separation of economic productivity from family feeling, it ideally renders this potential agency invisible or dysfunctional.

Given the eventual cultural dominance of industrial domesticity, it is little wonder that the unmarried adult sister's economic agency—which derives, of course from her legal autonomy—should be so seldom noticed in discussions of nineteenth-century literary representations of siblings and of families. Elided not only by modern psychological theories that privilege subjective interiority as the originating source of personal agency, but also by industrial domesticity's culturally successful idealizations of a home space free from the "taint" of paid or unpaid labor, the unmarried adult sister's de jure legal and economic autonomy nearly vanishes under the cultural pressure of various contrary expectations. Focusing on the common cultural subjection of women in nineteenth-century Britain, we have retrospectively flattened out the profound legal differences between married women, whose status as *feme covert* rendered them legal nonentities "covered" by their husbands' identities, and unmarried women who, as *feme sole*, retained every legal right that adult men did except to vote and hold office. While I do not discount the absence of these public political powers, I also do not think that their absence eradicates the economic and personal autonomy that unmarried women held, not merely theoretically but in legal fact.[5] In literature, characters like George Eliot's Priscilla, Nancy's unmarried sister in *Silas Marner*, remind us that "outdoor management" (147) of farms and businesses remained a viable option for an unmarried adult woman, though of course preferably under cultural cover—in Priscilla's case, cover provided by an elderly father.[6] Unmarried women could earn and retain wealth, inherit without potentially forfeiting their inheritance to a husband's family, enter into partnerships and contracts, own and manage businesses, and bequeath their accumulated wealth to heirs of their choice.

Obviously the de jure autonomy of unmarried adult women usually disappeared into a de facto subjection to father, or brother, or uncle, a disappearance that, together with the eventual exclusion of unmarried siblings from the industrial family, has made the unmarried sister's autonomy virtually invisible to us. But that autonomy was a fact, a legal anomaly in the general cultural subjection of women in nineteenth-century Britain; and so the most desirable situation (culturally speaking) was always to convert the unmarried woman into a wife. Just such a figurative conversion was the lynchpin of corporate domesticity's ideality: the economically valuable yet culturally disturbing unmarried sister could be fruitfully reimagined as a "wife," a woman committed to another sibling's family, a contributing participant in another sibling's married life and caregiver to another sibling's children. Because she could earn, and own, and bequeath, she could acquire and contribute additional material resources for the family, including the nieces and nephews

who embodied the continuation of the family line. In an atmosphere of collective labor toward family goals, even if she did not earn money directly, the unmarried sister's domestic labor and management might contribute value, and here too her legal autonomy might be of use in the management of a household or jointly owned business. With the value of her autonomy firmly harnessed to the ideal of adult siblings' continuing mutual devotion and support, the dissonances among the adult unmarried sister's de jure and de facto conditions are quieted.

The other possible conversion, the actual legal conversion of unmarried woman to married woman, was sometimes also a feature of a corporate family, as when a pair of brothers married a pair of sisters. And there was of course yet another solution: if a married sister died, an unmarried sister, often living in the household already, might become the widowed husband's new wife. Here, then, is the engine that drove the long debate over Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister through more than 70 years of ideological trench warfare: the legal distinction (and its economic consequences) between married women and their unmarried sisters, together with a widespread (though not universal) belief that unmarried sisters were potentially desirable household members, and of course the cultural imperative that all adult women should be legally "covered" through marriage. The explicit question of the MDWS debate, whether the deceased wife's sister could marry her widowed brother-in-law, may be understood as being about how the conversion should be accomplished: could the unmarried sister be converted to wife within the affinal sibling cohort, or could the sister be married only outside that cohort?

As we shall see in Chapter 3, one possibly surprising feature of the MDWS controversy is the two sides' agreement on the high material and emotional value of an unmarried sister in her married sister's household, an agreement that tends to reinforce the ideals of corporate domesticity. At the same time, also rather surprisingly (given this agreement), their different arguments both tend to dissolve the crucial continuities between sibling and spousal relations that structure corporate domesticity. Despite the two sides' explicit celebrations of the role of the sister in the house, then, we can also trace in their arguments the functional presence of an emerging industrial domesticity: a sharpening distinction between "sister" and "wife" as familial roles, the increasing tendency to exclude all but the spousal pair and their children from the household, and the specific need to exclude the adult unmarried sister, who embodies an uncomfortable conflation of family feeling and material productivity.

The issue for me is not whether historical unmarried sisters who exercised their legal and material economic powers were common (though I believe they

were probably far more common and their lives more complexly nuanced than we can yet perceive), but whether such cases were possible. I would not expect many unmarried women to be able to exercise their autonomy in the face of massive cultural strictures. But what we have consistently undervalued is the unmarried woman's potential for such exercise, the legal existence of her autonomy despite those cultural strictures. Recognizing the existence of this potential allows the possibility of a sister figure as a deliberate contributor of positive value to her family and household—and the possibility of an ideal of family and household encompassing her value as part of the continuation of mutually supportive sibling ties on into adulthood. In the pages that follow I hope to bring this missing sister and the domestic ideal that relied on her implicit powers back into scholarly view.

Chapter 1, "Alternative Domesticities: Revaluing the Sibling in the House," and Chapter 2, "'Out into the Orchard': The Departure of the Sibling in the House" take as their primary focus works by three English writers, two of them from the same blood family, written within a single generation, that demonstrate the simultaneity of the two competing domestic ideals, and the range of varied mixtures of their elements, across multiple genres. Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journals* (composed 1800–3), William Wordsworth's *Home at Grasmere* (composed 1800–6) and "Michael" (1800), and Mary Lamb's "On Needle-Work" (1816) also share a concern with the ideal location and character of literary work, through which we can readily observe the ideological linkage of adult unmarried siblings in the house with visible, productive labor in the domestic space, and the extent to which these linked elements were valued in varied constructions of ideal domesticity.

In Chapter 1, the anchoring reading of the *Grasmere Journals* is supported by an opening reading of Jane Austen's *Emma* (1815); historical and critical accounts of Charles and Mary Lamb's household and writings; and a discussion of how histories of the family and literary critical studies participate in the "disappearance" of the adult sibling as a potentially primary, generative figure in nineteenth-century English texts.

Chapter 2 explores William Wordsworth's poems and Mary Lamb's epistolary essay as chronologically simultaneous examples in which we can see industrial domesticity emergent or even dominant, but in which the values and tropes of corporate domesticity retain significant value. A discussion of adult unmarried sisters and their labor in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) opens toward the continued simultaneity of these alternative domesticities throughout the nineteenth century, their textual variations tending unevenly through this same gradual trajectory as the sibling in the house changes from a valued source of productive labor to an anomaly in an ideally work-free domestic space.

The linked tropes of the individual's departure, and the grown sibling's exclusion, from birth-family households are the main subject of the two following chapters. Chapter 3, "The Problem of the Sister in the House," foregrounds the crucial figure of the adult unmarried sister living in a (married) sibling's household, describing how her culturally threatening economic and legal autonomy necessitates her conversion into a metaphorical or literal wife. This chapter's framing readings of Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814) and Dinah Mulock Craik's *Hannah* (1871) explore literary dramatizations of the unmarried sibling's necessary departure as expatriation, bringing into view the entanglement of homely and national domestic spaces as cradles of individuated identity. Within this frame, "The Problem of the Sister in the House" provides an extensive discussion of the 70-year-long Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister controversy, examining the parliamentary debates and commission reports, periodical essays, and pamphlets that engage the controversy's central question: what do the terms "brother" and "sister" mean, legally and morally? These texts display the conjunction of open disagreements about what constitutes incest with equally vehement debates on "the social question" of how changes in the status of the unmarried sister would affect the moral, emotional, and financial stability of families. But arguments on both sides maintain sharp, though differently framed, distinctions between sister and wife, distinctions inimical to corporate domesticity's close linkage between these roles and favorable to the gradual expulsion of the sister from the house.

Chapter 4, "George Eliot's Natural History of the English Family," traces the expansion of the sister's fate to all adult unmarried siblings as the ascendency of industrial domesticity becomes increasingly marked. Opening readings of Charles Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843) and Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1856) exemplify the replacement of the sister with a feminized "brother in the house" who is represented as incapable of labor, a dependent in a married sibling's house, and, in more than one plot, sickly to the point of death. Eliot's novelistic history of family unfolds from the sibling-based artisan household at the end of *Adam Bede* (set in 1799–1801), through the uncertain and fatal efforts of Maggie to leave her brother Tom and his semiagrarian ambitions behind in *The Mill on the Floss* (set in the 1820s–1830s), to the decisive transfer of cultural value from the dying Mordecai to his sister's husband in *Daniel Deronda* (set in the mid-1860s). Increasingly through the course of Eliot's history these brother figures coincide with a figuration of sibling as expatriate, the entanglement of the homely domestic with the national domestic becoming more visible as the brother who has replaced the sister comes closer to cultural death. The chapter's extensive readings of these three novels, and a supporting discussion of Eliot's "Brother

and Sister" sonnets, display the naturalization of the industrial household's historical ascendency: the characterization of sibling love as simultaneously childish and dead, the alienation of adult siblings from homely and national domesticities, and the eventual transfer of artistic power from brother to husband. Yet Eliot's strategies raise the very ghosts they seek to lay, confirming the alternative domesticities that I explore in this study as living aspects of the English family deep into the nineteenth century.

Chapter 1

ALTERNATIVE DOMESTICITIES: REVALUING THE SIBLING IN THE HOUSE

In October 1796, just ten days after Mary Lamb killed their mother in a violent episode of derangement, her brother Charles wrote to Samuel Taylor Coleridge about his family's troubles. Faced with the support of Mary, for whom he intended to care at home, and his remaining family on the slender means of his post at the East India Company, Charles wrote out the motto and dedication—to Mary—of his one book of poetry, and then renounced poetry in favor of more profitable journalistic writing:

> I take leave of a passion which has reigned so royally (so long) within me; thus, with its trappings of laureatship, I fling it off, pleased and satisfied with myself that the weakness troubles me no longer. I am wedded, Coleridge, to the fortunes of my sister and my poor old father. (*Letters* I.64)

Charles's rhetorical equation of marriage and sibling love has claimed the full attention of scholarly readers, who stop short at the words "my sister": the last words of Charles's phrase, "and my poor old father," are not quoted in critical accounts of Charles and Mary's relationship. Even Jane Aaron, whose thoughtful examination of gender in the Lambs' writings places them in important historical contexts, quotes only that troublesome verb "wedded" at the beginning of her study, implicitly (and unintentionally) attributing it to Mary: "'wedded' in an intense sibling bond, they lived together, wrote together, 'writing on one table,' according to Mary, 'like an old literary Darby and Joan,' and were rarely seen apart" (1–2). Aaron even more pointedly excludes the passage's final words in her concluding chapter: "Charles made the crucial decision to 'wed' himself, in his own phrase, 'to the fortunes of my sister'" (170).

Charles certainly did figure the sibling bond as marriage, not only here but also in his 1797 poem "I am a widowed thing, now art thou gone." His recasting of his sister Mary as "cousin Bridget" in his "Elia" essays implies a similar figuration, since cousins were not forbidden to marry by canon or civil law, and were not infrequently seen as quite appropriate marriage choices. But when Aaron, like other critics reading the Lambs' lives, shifts the object of the verb from "fortunes" to "sister" ("'wedded' in an intense sibling bond" etc.), she obscures important potential meanings of that figuration: the integration of emotional and material economies accomplished by the "wedding" of "fortunes," an integration possibly encompassing all household members and certainly including "my poor father"; Charles's construction of the household as properly including parents and grown siblings; and Mary's construction, in that short quotation, of their collective literary production as a central feature of their relationship. That Aaron recognizes part of these meanings ("they lived together, wrote together") without following them into a different analysis is a common choice of critics and biographers engaging representations of domestic sibling relationships.

The accounts we have of the Lambs suggest a family structure much like that of their friends the Wordsworths, but translated to a working-class family rising toward, and then falling from, the middle classes.[1] When Mary and Charles were young, their father's unmarried sister, Sarah, helped raise the children and maintain the house until she grew too infirm to do much physical labor. Mary, who gradually acquired the same responsibilities as Aunt Hetty (as they called Sarah) and her mother aged, briefly attended a dame school but was then apprenticed to a mantua maker. After the death of her father's employer, Samuel Salt, whose patronage had supported the Lambs' collective rise toward middle-class status in education and material comfort, Mary worked both as a principal wage earner and as the principal housekeeper and caregiver. At the time of her homicidal break in September 1796—she had been working her "double shift" for more than a decade at this point—the Lamb household encompassed Mary's retired father, her invalid mother, the elderly Aunt Hetty, Mary's young apprentice, and Charles. After the murder, Charles took over as primary wage earner for a family that eventually shrank to himself and his sister Mary. In the intervals of Mary's recurring illness, the two lived and worked together, adding to Charles's income at East India House with their individual and collective publications, until Charles's death in 1834.

Charles's devotion to his sister became the stuff of legend for some literary Victorians, who worshiped an angelic, childlike Charles whose simple love bore the fruit of natural virtue.[2] Yet the very fervor of Victorian approval in this case may signal fluctuations in the definition of "family," divergent

expectations about a household's proper residents and their roles. Young Mary and Charles grew up in a household collectively anchored by their parents and an aunt, the spousal couple and unmarried adult sibling sharing domestic space and cares, and supported by their combined paid and unpaid labors. In their young adulthood, the siblings continued to live in the spousal-sibling household of the older generation, with both younger siblings contributing labor and income, now further embodied in Mary's live-in apprentice. It is not hard to imagine that in time, if Mary's mental health had remained unimpaired (and Charles's, since he too had suffered a psychic break),[3] one of them might have married, perhaps extending the family into a second spousal-sibling household. Charles's decision to care for Mary at home, and to support both her and their father, is certainly admirable, but in this context it is also clearly an expected and proper configuration of their now sadly truncated domestic world. When Aaron points to a "secular canonization" (8) of Charles following the publication of Thomas Talfourd's *Final Memorials of Charles Lamb* (1848), marked by "a proliferation of personal testimonies" celebrating Charles as "an exemplary individual whose personality was assuming mythic proportions" (7), she is describing a reaction underwritten by different expectations of sibling relations, and of family and household, than the Lambs' historical family seems to have embodied.[4]

Aaron attributes this divergence to Charles's individual views—"Charles himself took his allegiance to his sister for granted"—and points to gender as the source of others' different perceptions: "had the sexes been reversed and the sister rather than the brother been afforded the opportunity to manifest such devotion, no doubt others also would have accepted the relationship as a 'natural,' if commendable, example of feminine self-sacrifice" (8). There is little question that "self-sacrifice" was more readily identified with women, or that unmarried sisters housekeeping for their brothers, married or unmarried, was the more commonly expected case. But I argue for an additional explanation extending beyond Charles's gender: the ongoing cultural negotiation of at least two distinct ideals of familial life, both functional throughout the nineteenth century, one of which understood sibling fortunes as fruitfully intertwined through the full extent of the siblings' lives, and one of which expected the domestic, material, and to some extent emotional separation of adult siblings from their birth homes and from each other. The second configuration, familiar to us as the "nuclear" family or household, though long counterbalanced by persistent idealizations of the first, sibling-anchored model, was gradually and unevenly ascendant through the period. As households came to be primarily defined by the relations between spouses, and between parents and children, the mutual householding and devotion of siblings, once expected features of family life, begin to seem extraordinary.

More specifically, as a domestic space defined by the apparent exclusion of productive labor is increasingly idealized, the adult unmarried sister in the house—as Aaron notes, the expected signifier of such labor—becomes an object of intense cultural scrutiny, recommended for celebration, exile, or both. It is not only that Charles seems to have reversed gendered expectations, but also that he understands theirs as a sibling-anchored household, in which sibling affections and sibling labors play as great a role in defining "family" as marriage and parenthood—in some such households, a greater role.

When we read nineteenth-century English literature with this possibility in mind—the possibility of an alternative family model that idealizes the congruence rather than the conflict of sibling and marital intimacies, that allies rather than separates productive labor and domestic affections—the figure of the adult unmarried sibling in the house may then be read as having primary, rather than secondary or compensatory, significance in a family's domestic affections and in its material prosperity. If we recognize (for instance) that it may have been expected, rather than surprising or claustrophobically oppressive, that Emma Woodhouse and her sister would marry brothers, or that George Knightley's pledge to move into Hartfield with Emma and her father, though generous, could also be understood as expected and appropriate, then we may read not just "family" but also "class," "labor," and, yes, "love" in Austen's novel rather differently. With this alternative in play, "brother" and "sister" become terms with multiple potential meanings that may function as nuanced, shifting indices of a character's meanings or a text's ideological positions.

Consider the scene in which Emma is called to join the dancers at the long-awaited ball at the Crown:

> "Whom are you going to dance with?" asked Mr. Knightley.
>
> She hesitated a moment, and then replied, "With you, if you will ask me."
>
> "Will you?" said he, offering his hand.
>
> "Indeed I will. You have shown that you can dance, and you know we are not really so much brother and sister as to make it at all improper."
> "Brother and sister! no, indeed." (*Emma* 358)

Clearly Emma is joking with Mr. Knightley, both about his dancing and about their relationship. But the terms of this joke are telling. Emma's playful wording renders "brother" and "sister" as fluid, incremental terms, and links this relationship to an equally uncertain condition of "impropriety": what degree of being "*really so much* brother and sister" would "make it *at all* improper" to dance together (*Emma* 358; emphasis mine)? In part Emma's jest depends on the notion that some judgment may have to be exercised before one can know whether, or to what extent, one might be termed a "brother" or "sister." Of

course Emma and Mr. Knightley have no blood or affinal ties: Emma would be considered John Knightley's sister (we would say, "sister-in-law") through her own sister Isabella's marriage to John, but she would not have any legal relation to George Knightley. For Emma to introduce these terms, then, suggests that she might think of Mr. Knightley as her metaphorical brother, or that she thinks Mr. Knightley might regard her in that way. George Knightley's continuous stream of advice and judgments of Emma's behavior, and his frequent presence at Hartfield, might signal just such a figurative relation, emotionally and domestically intimate despite the absence of blood or legal ties.

But dancing between brothers and sisters could not be "at all improper" whether they were blood or affinal or metaphorical siblings. The humor of Emma's arch remark further depends on our understanding that she is not talking about literal dancing only—an understanding that is no stretch for most readers, given the immediate context of Mr. Knightley's mercy dance with Harriet Smith, whom Emma regards as a good marriage partner for him. Emma's remark conjoins two uncertainties, one about what it means to be "brother" and "sister," and the other about the propriety of romance and marriage between "brothers" and "sisters" of varying degrees.[5] Rather than assuming a shared understanding of a clear distance between sibling and conjugal affections, Emma's sally proposes that the relationship between siblinghood (in its various degrees) and marriage is debatable—and that sibling relationships may play a crucial role in the selection of "dance partners."

Mr. Knightley's response repeats the terms of Emma's remark and, in its own ambiguities, the uncertainties upon which her joke depends: "Brother and sister! no, indeed." Whether one reads his tone as serious—"no, I do not think of you as a sister at all"—or as ironic, implying that Emma fails to recognize that indeed they are figuratively brother and sister, he has accepted her premise that they must sort out whether and to what extent they are siblings before they can "dance." It is the second reading that may be opaque to the twenty-first-century reader. We can readily understand that the absence of sibling feeling may point toward dancing, and toward romance and marriage. But if he speaks ironically, matching Emma's tone as well as her terms, then some degree of being brother and sister potentially authorizes, rather than forbids, their "dancing"—and, as we know, in the end the "brother" and "sister" in question do marry. The point is not which interpretation of George Knightley's response is correct—I think that both are, to some extent—, but that we cannot readily identify the range of alternative readings unless we recognize the possibility of an alternative ideal of "family," perhaps lampooned, perhaps celebrated, at work in Austen's *Emma*.

If "brother" and "sister" are also specific economic signs, indices of the different material economic structures instantiated in different family configurations, then it is not only nuances of affect that are at stake in the

ambiguities of Emma's and George Knightley's conversation. It has become a truism that Austen's representations of class, for all their overt conservatism, draw attention also to the instability of the traditional class system. In *Emma*, the good marriages consolidate wealth and appear to affirm class placement in the face of such potential threats as Emma's disruptive matchmaking and Mrs. Elton's social climbing. But I read the novel as saying something more unexpected (from our perspective) than "stick to your own kind": it repeatedly represents sibling relations as an essential stabilizing force that enables appropriate marriage and the gradual advancement, as well as consolidation, of wealth, particularly for women. Harriet Smith meets Robert Martin as the friend of one of his sisters, and they begin their relationship while Harriet is living in Robert's birth home, in the figurative place of an additional sister. While their marriage is usually cited as another triumph of class consolidation, Harriet's illegitimacy, and her eventually discovered birth identity as the natural child of a well-to-do tradesman, places her below the respectable farmer. As Emma admits to Mr. Knightley when she learns that Harriet and Robert are engaged, "I think Harriet is doing extremely well. *Her* connexions may be worse than *his*. In respectability of character, there can be no doubt that they are" (516, emphasis original). In the last chapter the narrative voice, indirectly articulating Emma's thoughts about the discovery of Harriet's blood parentage, reinforces this: "The stain of illegitimacy, unbleached by nobility or wealth, would have been a stain indeed […] in the home [Robert] offered, there would be the hope of more [than happiness], of security, stability, and improvement" (526). Although Emma's judgment can rarely be taken as definitive, the novel's plot tells us clearly that the path to Harriet's rising fortune depends as much on the sibling relation—the initial friendship, the brief period when Harriet enjoys the figurative place of another sibling in the household, and the sister's later persistence in seeking Harriet out (with which Emma interferes)—as on the romantic attraction between Harriet and Robert.

Similarly, when Emma marries her metaphorical brother, her sister's husband's blood brother, the marriage not only consolidates the land and fortunes of Hartfield and Donwell Abbey but also doubly ensures the succession in both Emma and Isabella's, John and George Knightley's, spousal families. Emma thinks with some amusement that, after she and Mr. Knightley are engaged, she "was never struck with any sense of injury to her nephew Henry, whose rights as heir expectant had formerly been so tenaciously regarded," implying that it was her undiscovered feelings for her future husband, rather than "the amiable solicitude of the sister and the aunt" alone, that that made her oppose Mr. Knightley's marriage to another woman (490). But her discovery is not that this "amiable solicitude" is not operative, but only that

her distaste for such a marriage could not be "wholly imputed" to this con-
cern (490). In her earlier discourse to Harriet on remaining unmarried her-
self, Emma displays both the common prejudice against the unmarried older
woman and what I believe was the countering, and equally common, model
of the financially self-sufficient unmarried sister whose emotional life is vested
in "the children of a sister I love so much": "My nephews and nieces!—I shall
often have a niece with me" (92). The keys to contentment and social accep-
tance as a spinster, Emma argues, are that the unmarried woman not be poor
(though her lone example, Miss Bates, seems to disprove this point), and that
she be a sister of a married sibling, actively engaged in the emotional life of
her sibling's children, and able to foster or host them in her own establish-
ment ("I shall often have a niece with me"). Although her marriage may inter-
vene between Henry and direct inheritance, Emma's relation as his aunt, his
mother's sister, will still have force, now doubly secured by marital ties through
a pair of brothers, and enhanced by the considerable rise in the landed prop-
erty and general wealth which might descend to Emma's son or daughter—or
to Henry, should there be no child of this new marriage.[6]

In fact the novel shows us difficulties arising when aunts and uncles cannot
provide well, either in the material or the emotional sense, for their nephews
and nieces. Jane Fairfax, fostered by her dead father's commander rather
than by her impoverished grandmother and aunt, gains a lady's education
and manner but not a lady's station. Once the Campbells' daughter marries,
Jane must think of looking for work to support herself; and the way out which
should be there for her, the marriage to Frank Churchill, must be postponed
because of his own aunt's disapproval. In their story we see multiple failures
of the sibling relation's potential stabilizing force where affective and mate-
rial economies are not simultaneously maintained: the material dearth of the
Bates household, and the emotional dearth (plus the material wealth, Frank's
inheritance) of the Churchill household, impede what will eventually be yet
another marriage in which the woman rises in fortune. Emma's notion of the
unmarried woman (or man, in Frank's case) whose good fortunes must be
both material and affective for her to be content and accepted appears again
in another guise, as the two lovers strain against their different constraints.
There is another difference, too, between the relatively problematic romance
of Jane and Frank, and those of Harriet and Robert, or Emma and George
Knightley: Jane and Frank have never experienced a figurative siblinghood, a
residence together or a metaphorical relation as brother and sister.

So in Emma and George Knightley's exchange about dancing, the terms
"brother" and "sister" do not refer solely to the possible condition of their
feelings toward each other but also to the material economic conditions of
their current and potential families. Given the plot of the novel, it appears

to be crucial that they are able to recognize one another as metaphorical siblings, and to understand the heightened benefits, simultaneously emotional and material, to be enjoyed by all concerned, should they decide to marry. Recognizing the concurrent references to feeling and wealth in this discursive moment allows a fuller, more nuanced understanding of how *Emma* represents family, marriage, and class (in)stability. It is not, after all, that individual men and women must choose between romantic love and wealth, or that they should always temper romance with a practical concern for wealth (or vice versa), but rather that they may hope to find a felicitous simultaneity of the two where spousal relations are like, rather than unlike, siblinghood, and where married and unmarried siblings work together to maintain their linked fortunes.

I offer this extended example to demonstrate in brief what I hope to demonstrate at length throughout this study: the functional existence, throughout the nineteenth century, of a positive model of family anchored by mutually constitutive sibling and spousal ties, in which affective and material economies are interdependent. While scholars have for quite some time recognized and described portions of this sibling-anchored family, it has remained, if not wholly invisible, still difficult to observe as a coherent, continuing configuration throughout the nineteenth century in English culture. Part of my task will also be to further illuminate and counter the scholarly sources of this continuing disappearance, and the accompanying invisibility of the adult unmarried sibling as a primary, positive figure in nineteenth-century English discourses on "family."

As I discuss at some length in my introduction, Mary Jean Corbett and Naomi Tadmor argue that our efforts to historicize "family" in the English eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have been weakened by scholars' reliance on stable terminology that inadvertently reasserts universally human familial structures and relations. Yet Corbett and Tadmor themselves exemplify the additional difficulties that emerge at the specific nexus of the sibling relation, defining "brother" and "sister" in terms of sexual, specifically conjugal, relations that reinscribe these normative terms (Corbett), or subsuming the sibling relation into other categories, eliding its potential primacy in "family" (Tadmor). In the case of sibling relations, it seems that even the apparently neutral unmodified terms "family" and "household" may present problems, pushing scholars back toward the limiting anachronisms they seek to escape. In an effort to slip this double bind, I want to situate these two simultaneously functional ideals of family/household as cognate with two divergent versions of "domesticity," a term that embeds familial and household structures in more capacious ideological fields with broader cultural functions.[7]

To this end I introduce two new descriptive terms. The first is "corporate domesticity," an ideal embodied in the sibling-anchored family I have sketched above. In this version of domesticity, "brother" and "sister" might refer to blood relations, to affinal relations, or to figurative conditions of siblinghood. The value of these relations lay not in their sharp difference from, but in their close imbrication with, spousal relations. Unmarried siblings—particularly sisters, as we shall see—were accorded high value in the intertwined affective and material household economies of corporate domesticity, and the presence of an unmarried sibling in a spousal household was considered a positive good. The second term, "industrial domesticity," refers to that version of domesticity embodied in what has been called, since the mid-twentieth century, the "nuclear" family, a close blood cohort of a spousal pair and their children from which adult unmarried siblings are ideally excluded, and within which affective and material economies are sharply separated, with the affective carrying overriding value and the material moved out of sight, or out of house.[8]

Although it might seem unnecessary to introduce new terminology into a discussion well stocked with accepted nomenclature, I believe that these new terms may prove helpful in further historicizing our studies of sibling relations, of families and households generally, and of notions of domesticity itself. For some time now we have explored "the domestic ideology" in the English nineteenth century as a singular and generally intractable cultural configuration. In most literary analyses, the domestic sphere, defined by its sheltering enclosure of private affections and moral purity, and its disengagement from the public sphere's laborious, politicized, ethically problematic activity, is identified as a place of confinement and restraint, maintained for and by women through various strategies of coercion, co-option, and intimidation. These analyses also generally argue that women, and women writers, may appropriate or resist elements of the domestic ideology, but that their interventions are partial and modify, rather than upset, its cultural dominance. These are often complex, revealing analyses, and I am not suggesting that they are mistaken, so far as they go. But if there is more than one domestic ideology in circulation in nineteenth-century England, and if one operative model places a high value on unmarried siblings in a household characterized by a thorough interpolation of affective and material economies, then we cannot read the figures of spinster and married woman, or descriptions of domestic spaces, as deriving from a single "domesticity" that inherently devalues and constrains women's labor and autonomy. (As I write this I am thinking about Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market," with its vividly idealized images of domestic labor and sororal love, in which the sisters, though apparently married by the poem's end, locate their family's security in their own powerful redemptive capacities.) Rather we must reread with the possibility of variable, conflicting, multiplying

valuations in mind, valuations that may index a text's ideological position in unexpected ways.

My choices of "corporate" and "industrial" as modifiers of "domesticity" are derived to some degree from historical and sociological studies of the family, but are also meant (when paired with "domesticity") to distance my conclusions somewhat from those studies. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's classic 1987 study, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850*, documents the prevalence of what they term the "family enterprise," a predominantly middle-class practice of anchoring business concerns in sets of sibling and cousin marriages, leading me toward "corporate" as an indication of how such families "incorporated" emotional and material productivity, and of how they functioned as business "corporations" embodied within specific domestic and affective structures. "Industrial" gestures toward the usage "postindustrial family," which, together with other terms like "simple family," is offered as an alternative to the long-problematic "nuclear family" in some sociological studies. For my purposes "industrial domesticity" refers to a domesticity structured by the industrial era's increasing separation of unpaid domestic labor from paid labor performed outside the home. These new terms, though coined from the materials of scholarly sources, are meant to encourage readers to think outside of the usual rhetorical configurations of scholarly discourse about the nineteenth-century family.

In nineteenth-century English literature, I argue, these different domesticities were in complex conversation with each other, appearing in proliferating variations marked by shifting mixtures of elements of each. Within a given text, or across the span of a single author's works, the uneven fluctuations of these ideals produce multiple effects, only very gradually tending toward the dominance of industrial domesticity. For instance, as we have seen, Austen's *Emma* represents corporate domesticity in a predominantly positive light. Yet there are also signs of difficulty: Jane and Frank's troubled courtship and the breaches of their childhood security; Emma's obsessive desire to match the functionally orphaned Harriet with someone outside the figurative family who seems to have taken her in; Emma's concurrent inability to perceive Mr. Knightley as a suitable husband for herself; and Mrs. Elton's odious references to "my brother, Mr. Suckling," with his flashy carriage and purchased gentility. This may be why some readers judge Emma's pairing with George Knightley as a deeply, and problematically, conservative move: it may feel like a collapse, a retreat into the bowels of the country estate, rather than like an effective response to the difficulties posed by the external forces of war (Lt. Fairfax's military connections superseding his sister-in-law's fostering of his daughter) and the increasing dominance of a mercantile wealth are often disjunct from family inheritance (Harriet's father, Mr. Suckling, etc.).

If corporate domesticity is here primarily celebrated, these signs of disturbance and occasional failure suggest the encroachment of forces inimical to the corporate household's values and structures—specifically, of the values and practices of industrial domesticity, here barely implied in the replacement of an aunt by a representative of the father, and in the daughter without a legitimate birth home, her future secured only by metaphorical (though happily transformed into affinal) sibling ties.

Because we know the historical end of the story, as it were, and also because the boundaries of a single work tend to have a stabilizing effect on such complications, holding them still for our examination in a single frame, it may be difficult to perceive the flow of cultural currents that are, in some sense, simply passing through the work, taking a particular shape that will not necessarily repeat itself. So the first two chapters of my study take as their primary focus works by three closely linked writers, two of them from the same blood family, written within a single generation, that demonstrate the simultaneity of the two competing domestic ideals, and the range of varied mixtures of their elements, across multiple genres. These particular texts also share a concern with the ideal location and character of literary work: should this type of labor take place inside a household as part of the shared domestic labors of the residents, or should writing be an individual endeavor, figuratively or literally outside the household? Through the useful lens of this shared concern with a specific type of labor, we can readily observe the ideological linkage of adult unmarried siblings in the house with visible, productive labor in the domestic space, and the extent to which these linked elements were valued in varied constructions of ideal domesticity.

Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journals* (written 1800–1803) provide a representation of family that thoroughly interpolates spousal and sibling relations, emotional and material economies, and multiple categories of labor—paid and unpaid, public and private, indoor and outdoor, household and literary. William Wordsworth's *Home at Grasmere* (composed 1800–1806) and "Michael" (1800), while seeming to proceed from many of the same expectations, resolves toward the figurative departure of the brother-poet from his domestic collective, and the failure of the sibling-anchored family under external material economic pressures.[9] Mary Lamb's "On Needle-work" (1816) opens a wide gulf between married wives and unmarried workers, making a convoluted but coherent argument both for a domestic space free of (visible) labor and for the full professionalization of unmarried women workers—signal features of the ascendant industrial domesticity. Notably missing from Lamb's construction of ideal domesticity are adult unmarried siblings, figures now merely gestured toward in the implication that adult unmarried sisters must earn their living elsewhere, rather than remain in their married siblings' homes.

Simultaneously, the narrator's literary work becomes curiously invisible, unrepresented as writing except by the essay's text, and requiring an implicit double authorization as neither domestic nor paid work. The only art now noticed inside the household is embroidery, and this too Lamb's narrator disapproves for domestic production. As the sibling goes, it seems, so goes the labor, artistic or otherwise.

Reading these texts as exemplary of an ongoing cultural negotiation of alternative domesticities, I mean to forestall the unintended regeneration of anachronistic assumptions about universal human familial structure by evading the rhetorical and theoretical limitations that Corbett and Tadmor have described and themselves worked to evade. But evident in many studies that seek to historicize familial structures, including those by Corbett and Tadmor, is a second, linked set of rhetorical and theoretical limitations, limitations imposed by equally persistent assumptions about stable, universal human psychic structures. These assumptions, and the language that carries them, derive from modern theories of subjective identity and their variously inflected versions of the "deep self," a self that may be crucially shaped by linguistic or cultural conditions, but that by implication also seems to exist in itself, prior and posterior to those conditions, individuated, private, belonging to the (implicitly) interior realm of consciousness and desire.

If scholarly studies of siblings have shown a particularly strong tendency to turn back from their historicizing projects toward ahistorical constructs of "family" and "household," that turn often depends on a continuing assumption of some version of individuated subjectivity. For instance, Aaron's decision to mingle "a psychoanalytically informed deconstruction" with her otherwise historicized approach seems to underwrite the textual inaccuracies of her readings: the disappearance of "my poor old father" from Charles's pledge, the transference of "wedded" to "sister" rather than "fortunes," and the unintended transient attribution of the "wedded" phrase to Mary, small truncations that collectively reinstate heterosexual marriage and individual affect as the seemingly exclusive referents of the siblings' domestic intimacy. Focused on the siblings' subjectivities (rhetorical as well as emotional), Aaron misses (or dismisses) explicit references to a household in which "wedded" fortunes may be expected to encompass grown siblings and spousal couples (or, here, their remnants) as an ordinary and desirable situation.[10]

To evade this second set of rhetorical and theoretical limitations, I depart altogether from what Nancy Armstrong calls "histories of subjectivity," setting aside any attempt to rename or redefine the origins and constituent elements of an assumed "deep self."[11] Rather I look toward the possibility that nineteenth-century English writing also, or instead, locates primary familial identities in "external" cultural formations: the residential and material structures of

households as these appear in their textual forms, historical and literary; the long, heated debates over the very meaning of "brother" and "sister"; and the legal distinctions between married and unmarried women that persisted for most of the century. When we not only "change the theoretical and historical lens through which we look at scholarly artifacts like 'the Victorian family' or 'the marriage plot'" (Corbett 21), but also change those lenses through which we look at those other scholarly artifacts, "identity" and "the self," then we more thoroughly disrupt the cooperative regeneration of this ideological cohort. Introducing the possibility of alternative domesticities that differently define and value familial relations—"brother" and "sister" in particular—and turning toward the legal and material economic dimensions of these familial relations, we can keep adult unmarried siblings in view as potentially primary, potentially economic figures in nineteenth-century English ideals of "family."

In this first chapter, I turn to Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journals*, particularly the long entry that includes the William and Mary Wordsworth's wedding day, as an exemplary positive representation of corporate domesticity. In Dorothy's Grasmere journals (and in William's *Home at Grasmere* to some extent, as we will see in the next chapter), we will find representations of materially productive and emotionally passionate domesticities structured by the coresidence of siblings, and of siblings and spouses. We will also find in these journals an account of literary production embedded in collective domestic labor undertaken by sibling cohorts. Dorothy's rhetorical tactics in her journals—her repetitive construction of the household as sustained by sibling relations, her doubling and tripling of spousal and sibling connections, her embedded tales of other siblings, and her syntactical production of equivalencies between domestic and literary labors—seat her work and identity as a writer in this corporate household.

The rest of the chapter addresses the question why, if such family and household structures are not uncommonly represented in literature of this period and in the documents studied by historians of the family, these structures should still be characterized as unusual, or treated as secondary, or not treated at all, in the work of scholars in both fields. Dorothy (and to a lesser extent William) Wordsworth's idealizations of a family structure predicated on the expectation of mutually sustaining sibling and spousal relations, and on the assumption of necessarily imbricated affective and material economies, were not idiosyncratic or, I believe, even rare. It is well established that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European literature regularly portrayed emotionally intense, sometimes domestically intimate brother-sister relationships that are rhetorically conflated with marriage.[12] Histories of the family written over the last 50 or so years also clearly recognize the textual proliferation of different "families," retrieving from various documents—census figures, parish records,

private diaries and letters, and so forth—abundant records of variable family and household structures, which even in one time and place may show considerable diversity in their membership and economic arrangements. Specifically, histories of the family often note the records of adult siblings, or of other sibling-derived relations (niece, nephew, etc.) living in spousal households or constituting households of their own, and note also the apparently beneficial aspects of such household arrangements.

Yet even where scholars' analysis aims at the recognition of diverse, historically contingent family structures, and diverse values instantiated in those structures, their reliance on long-accepted terminology implicitly revives that terminology's ideological dimensions, reinstating a rhetorically stable concept of a fundamental human "family." This pattern takes a particular and interesting turn, I believe, when family historians and literary critics attempt to historicize the familial role of adult siblings. Such studies may focus on the affective or psychic primacy of sibling relations, or on siblings' material economic contributions to households, each of these critical turns offering resistance to one part of the ahistoricity of "nuclear family" and cognate theories. But having accomplished one such resistant turn, the same studies drop or never engage the other turn: adult siblings in the household may be discussed as primary members of the household's affective economy, or as playing an important, sometimes primary role in the household's material economy, but not both. The effect is to decouple primary affective significance from primary economic value—that is, to "disappear" the very conjunction that I believe defines what I have termed "corporate domesticity." At times, as we shall see, even the simple referential term "sibling" nearly disappears. The figure of the adult sibling in the household remains, in either the affective or economic register, secondary or compensatory, if not absolutely invisible, and the possibility of an alternative domesticity vanishes from view.

Dorothy Wordsworth's Dove Cottage

Dorothy's account of William and Mary's wedding day has drawn much critical attention, especially since Mary Moorman restored the siblings' exchange of the wedding ring to the text:

> On Monday 4th October 1802, my Brother William was married to Mary Hutchinson. I slept a good deal of the night & rose fresh & well in the morning—at a little after 8 o clock I saw them go down the avenue towards the Church. William had parted from me up stairs. I gave him the wedding ring—with how deep a blessing! I took it from my forefinger where I had worn it the whole of the night before—he slipped it again

onto my finger and blessed me fervently. When they were absent my dear little Sara prepared the breakfast. I kept myself as quiet as I could, but when I saw the two men running up the walk, coming to tell us it was over, I could stand it no longer & threw myself on the bed where I lay in stillness, neither hearing or seeing any thing, till Sara came upstairs to me & said "They are coming." This forced me from the bed where I lay & I moved I knew not how straight forward, faster than my strength could carry me till I met my beloved William & fell upon his bosom. He & John Hutchinson led me to the house & there I stayed to welcome my dear Mary. As soon as we had breakfasted we departed. It rained when we set off. Poor Mary was much agitated when she parted from her Brothers & Sisters & her home. (126)[13]

Moorman's restoration of what she terms the "erased" passage, which runs from "I gave him the wedding ring" to "blessed me fervently," provided fresh fuel for both sides in the traditional debate about whether Dorothy and William loved each other intensely but innocently, or with incestuous if probably unconsummated passion.[14] The vivid affective dimensions of this journal entry are indeed compelling, and the first-person narration infuses the description of the textual "Dorothy's" sensations with particular immediacy. But the entry embeds these sensations in a web of sibling affections, and of domestic action inseparable from that web. Even as the wedding takes place, Dorothy foregrounds the mutual support of the Hutchinson and Wordsworth siblings: Sara Hutchinson ("my dear little Sara") is making breakfast; Mary's brother John accompanies William back to the house; Dorothy meets them and is supported back to the house by William and John, where she waits "to welcome my dear Mary." Mary's departure is figured first as an "agitated" parting from her brothers and sisters, and then as a parting from "home."[15] However compellingly the entry describes its narrator's feelings, it also explicitly plots those feelings and the marriage itself as part of a sibling enterprise, insistently naming the Hutchinson and Wordsworth siblings, and displaying their interlocking domestic and emotional interactions.

The full textual setting of the wedding day passage, a long entry beginning July 27 (when William and Dorothy set out for Calais to visit Annette and Caroline Vallon before William's marriage), and ending October 8 with the return to Grasmere, reveals even more clearly Dorothy's representation of sibling households supporting the coming marriage. After William and Dorothy return from France, they go to Gallow Hill, a farm purchased by Mary Hutchinson's brothers Tom and George in 1800 and variously inhabited by Tom, George, Mary, Sara, and Joanna Hutchinson, as the siblings' housekeeping needs dictated. As Dorothy describes it, Mary

comes first to meet them, "then came Sara, & last of all Joanna. Tom was forking corn standing upon the corn cart" (126). John and George arrive on October 1, and all but Mary ride out together to Hackness on October 2, "William Jack George & Sara single, I behind Tom" (126). The next day, "Mary & Sara were busy packing" (126); the day after this is the wedding. Dorothy's repeated display of mutually supportive material relations among the Hutchinson and Wordsworth siblings, within and across their birth families, implies that the marriage both depends upon, and will further stabilize, this configuration.

This implication becomes more nearly explicit after the marriage, as Dorothy loads her account of the trip back to Grasmere with similar references. Both the coherent argument about memory and feeling that structures this part of the entry, and the sheer density of scattered variations on that theme, construct the household at which they will arrive in the same mold as those they have left—Dove Cottage before the wedding and Gallow Hill after. Dorothy's repeated comparison of the journeys she and William have already made over this ground (primarily the journey to the marriage) with the journey the three are now making provide the skeleton of her account. Within 10 sentences of their departure from Gallow Hill, Dorothy foregrounds this structure, proposing her (and William's) shared memories as the source of an inevitable intrinsic interest, now shared by Mary too. After a brief recital of some local topography and history, Dorothy remarks that "every foot of the Road was, of itself interesting to us, for we had travelled along it on foot Wm & I when we went to fetch our dear Mary, & had sate upon the Turf by the roadside more than once" (127). The potentially shifting meaning of the third-person plural, which seems at first to mean all three and then only the two, carries through in the "our dear Mary," in which both of the two seem "paired," in their obviously different ways, with the bride, and yet the sense of three "siblings" is also strong. This passage also claims—in familiar Romantic and specifically Wordsworthian, terms—that Mary can join in William and Dorothy's past feelings by retracing paths and recollecting memories with them, and (implicitly) that a future community of feeling will grow from these present efforts.

Dorothy's structural foregrounding (begun by her ambiguous pronouns) of shifting sibling and spousal pairings that also form a stable whole continues, the following "plot" sequence enforcing causal relationships among the movements of coupling and rejoining, and of recollection. The first afternoon, just short of Helmsley, the three stop at "that same Inn where we [William and Dorothy] had slept before," but are not "shewn into the same parlour where Wm & I were" (127). Dorothy "prevail[s] upon William to go up with me to the ruins" while Mary stays "by the kitchen fire," apparently drawing

the older sibling pair away from the new spousal bond (127). Mary seems to be domesticated here, left as a fixture in the working part of the house, not participating in that very emotional and very literary activity of walking out to take a view. On the other hand, Mary is resting in the same inn where Dorothy and William had slept, and a short time later, as they drive over the same ground, Mary is "very much delighted with the view of the Castle from the point where we had seen it before," rejoining Dorothy and William in mobility and aesthetic activity (127). That the terms of the mobility, like those of the rest at the inn, have altered is, no doubt, significant: these are not absolute identities in which the character of the pairings and their private histories are without meaning. Yet, marking these differences, Dorothy also emphasizes Mary's pleasure and the congruity of the views the two, and now the three, have enjoyed. Implicitly, the three of them, or any two, or any others whom they might wish to include in this community of feeling, could enjoy all this in the future by retracing or recalling this moment.[16]

Although Dorothy does not always carry the recollective scheme so directly into this construction of communal feeling, she holds to her comparative structure through the rest of the entry, and maintains a rotating pairing and rejoining of twos into three. The full catalog of these instances would be unwieldy, but a sample page from Pamela Woof's edition may serve to suggest the density and variety of the changes Dorothy rings on this process. On page 131 of Woof's edition, we read the following: Dorothy recognizes another path along which she had walked with William (and gotten lost); Mary and Dorothy share fright at a cow; Mary expresses her liking for "a dear place to William & me"; Mary and Dorothy go to look at "the house where dear Sara [Hutchinson] had lived" in Kendal; the three pass through "the first mountain village that I came to with Wm when we first began our pilgrimage together."

Dorothy also embeds some stories about siblings that resonate with her construction of Wordsworthian family feeling. While the horses rest on the first morning of their journey, after they "write a few lines to Sara [Hutchinson]," the three walk in a nearby churchyard reading gravestones (126). Dorothy picks out "one to the memory of 5 children, who had all died within 5 years, & the longest lived had only lived 4 years" (126). The only other stone Dorothy describes commemorates a woman who "had been neglected by her Relations & [the stone] counselled the Readers of those words to look within & recollect their own frailties" (127). The passages on local history and the recollective scheme directly follow these monumental reminders of siblings' common destinies and the necessity of familial support.[17]

The sheer accumulation of such instances combines with Dorothy's more explicit recollective structure to prepare us for the reestablishment of Dove

Cottage as a household anchored by sibling feeling and shared labor. The long entry ends with their return to Grasmere:

> For my part I cannot describe what I felt, & our dear Mary's feelings would I dare say not be easy to speak of. We went by candle light into the garden & were astonished at the growth of the Brooms, Portugal Laurels, &c &c &—The next day, Thursday, we unpacked the Boxes. On Friday 8th we baked Bread, & Mary & I walked, first upon the Hill side, & then in John's Grove, then in view of Rydale, the first walk that I had taken with my Sister. (132)

Dorothy's assertion that "our" Mary's feelings must resemble hers in their inexpressibility moves right into a "we," that may be three, who go look at the garden William and Dorothy have tended. The "we" that unpacks boxes may be three, the "we" baking bread less probably so (though it may include their servant Molly). But however these are numbered, the shared domestic labors of gardening and unpacking and bread making lead to Dorothy and Mary walking (an agent of poetic composition for the Wordsworths) in the yew grove named for John Wordsworth by William in a poem, the sequence sketching in brief the encompassing of domestic and poetic labors in a single corporate household effort.[18]

Although I have chosen to focus on Dorothy's Grasmere journals, we might follow the idealization of the corporate household into still larger contextual frames, opening into the whole of Dorothy's journals, and still further into the writings of others connected to Dove Cottage. Coleridge, for instance, mourned John Wordsworth's death as a loss to "*the Concern*," the name Dorothy, William and Coleridge had adopted for themselves in 1798, now transferred to the Grasmere household to which John had intended to retire with the profits from his considerable investment in his last fatal voyage ("Texts" II.2537, emphasis original).[19] Coleridge's notebooks construct the corporate domesticity of Dove Cottage in various ways, from descriptions of communally composed garden seats and poems about them, to speculations on John's or William's future marriage to Sara Hutchinson, to the framing of notebook pages with the names of the Wordsworth household and his own (a practice similar to Dorothy's occasional listing of household names in the journals). His passionate language projects equally intense conviction that he was, and worry that he was not, part of the Grasmere household.[20] But even within the relatively limited context of this single long journal entry, it seems to me, it becomes clear that the power of William and Dorothy's ring exchange must flow both ways: their enactment of sibling commitment in marital terms demonstrates a linkage of the sibling and spousal bonds,

validating the approaching marriage as much as the brother's and sister's continuing importance to each other.

Besides a construction of sibling and spousal bonds as mutually constitutive, this long entry continues the rhetorical equations of varieties of labor—paid and unpaid, public and private, indoor and outdoor, household and literary—that pervade these journals. These equations are a crucial part of the journals' implicit argument for the value of the sibling in the house, since they do not allow any sorting of types of labor into more or less valuable contributions to the household's collective well-being: all appear necessary, none appears more essential than any other, and so no category of householder seems more valuable than another either. In particular, Dorothy's equation of indoor domestic labor with literary production marks the extremity of the journals' celebration of corporate domesticity: in her Dove Cottage, sibling writers are foundational, not incidental; their resident, domesticated status is essential to their work as writers, embedded as that work is in the domestic collective.

Kurt Heinzelman, emphasizing the congruence of Dorothy's and William's versions of Dove Cottage, argues that a "radical Wordsworthian mythos" (53) originally founded the domestic in a shared labor of writing that William and Dorothy sought to extend into "a larger idea of economy that included not only their own household but also the households of their neighbors and friends" (52). In these extended economies, according to Heinzelman, William and Dorothy both resist the increasingly harsh sexual division of labor evident in contemporary economic theories, but with characteristically different turns. Where William represents "domestic activity as an infrastructure of support for creativity" (55), Dorothy's Grasmere journal "articulates and sustains the idea that the equating of creativity and work is necessary to the success of the household […] the coefficient of happiness is the coherent management of all the labors of a household, including the production of texts" (56).

But Heinzelman's examples of household labor are all out-of-doors—gardening, orchard tending, enclosing land, and so forth—examples apt to his argument for these discourses as georgic, but that do not fully demonstrate the difference between Dorothy's domesticity and William's. In industrial domesticity, bright lines mark off indoors from outdoors, women from men, the private from the potentially public; literary authority comes into being as the individual leaves the indoor, private space (in which his individuality was fostered) for the "outdoor" world of public discourse and monetary production. As Heinzelman's formulation suggests, and as we will see in the next chapter, William's version of Dove Cottage places a high value on domestic labor and yet distinguishes it from the literary labors that must eventually emerge from the domestic collective. What makes Dorothy's journals so formidable, as my students' reactions always remind me, is her uncategorical juxtaposition

of indoor domestic labor, quotidian housework, with such obviously literary work as reading, writing, and describing nature. Dorothy portrays herself as cooking, baking, ironing, bleaching linen, making clothes, preparing medicines, copying poems, writing letters, walking, and, implicitly, always, writing these journals, which she has framed as sources of that defining poetic product, "pleasure."[21] Her run-on grammar, her list-like itineraries of events, her selection and sequencing do not encourage us to sort these activities into public and private, literary and domestic, outside and inside. Rather these categories are so mixed that writing seems of one piece with domestic labor, both in and out of the house.[22]

I want to emphasize the difference between my specific claim and generalized descriptions of this strain in Dorothy's aesthetics as "particularization" (Susan Levin), "ordinariness" (Pamela Woof), "literalization" (Margaret Homans), or "making the commonplace aesthetic" (Elizabeth Bohls). Nor do I distinguish Dorothy's use of these well-known Romantic strategies by means of the general differences ascribed to gender—her building of community, as Levin suggests, or her ability (and need) to replicate the mother, as Homans has it. In my view, Dorothy's different location of literary identity turns on a very specific point: in the Grasmere journals, Dorothy's juxtapositional rhetoric draws indoor domestic labor into the valorized categories of the "everyday" and "commonplace" so that housework appears as one piece with her literary production.

Consider, for instance, the August 2, 1800, entry:

> Wm & Coleridge went to Keswick. John went with them to Wytheburn & staid all day fishing & brought home 2 small pikes at night. I accompanied them to Lewthwaite's cottage & on my return papered Wm's room—I afterwards lay down till tea time & after tea worked at my shifts in the orchard. A grey evening—about 8 o'clock it gathered for rain & I had the scatterings of a shower, but afterwards the lake became of a glassy calmness & all was still. I sate till I could see no longer & then continued my work in the house. (15)

The triple inscription of the journey, in ever smaller circuits, connects William and Coleridge's Lakeland wandering, through brother John's nearer provisioning, through Dorothy's still nearer excursion, to Dorothy's room papering, a simple "&" performing the last conjunction. Dorothy's sewing, taken outdoors, seems to produce the brief natural description along with the shifts, and though she only mentions the continued sewing, the writing of the description implicitly occurs inside, when she "could see no longer" out of doors.[23] So thoroughly mixed, set out in an ambiguously back-and-forth chronology that permits a back-and-forth causality, the explicit and implicit works of

the entry—poetry, walking, food gathering, house maintenance, sewing, and journal writing—appear to be on strikingly egalitarian terms. Our difficulty with such a passage, I would argue, is the specific expectation that shift sewing and written description have different intrinsic values, and that this expected valuation (not just ours, but that of some of Dorothy's contemporaries) is contradicted by Dorothy's rhetoric.[24]

Dorothy's valuation of indoor labor includes foregrounding its potential public monetary value, which permits an implicit connection to the business of publishing. This move is particularly noticeable in the entry for Friday, October 10, 1800, an entry built around one of Dorothy's tramping women, the Cockermouth Traveller:

> In the morning when I arose the mists were hanging over the opposite hills & the tops of the highest hills were covered with snow. There was a most lovely combination at the head of the vale—of the yellow autumnal hills wrapped in sunshine, & overhung with partial mists, the green & yellow trees & the distant snow-topped mountains. It was a most heavenly morning. The Cockermouth Traveller came with thread hardware mustard, &c. She is very healthy has travelled over the mountains these thirty years. She does not mind the storms if she can keep her goods dry. Her husband will not travel with an ass, because it is the tramper's badge—she would have one to relieve her from the weary load. She was going to Ulverston & was to return to Ambleside Fair. After I had finished baking I went out with Wm Mrs Jameson & Miss Simpson towards Rydale—the fern among the Rocks exquisitely beautiful—we turned home & walked to Mr Gells. (25)

Here Dorothy displays domesticity as things that may be bought and sold out of doors, drawing attention to the mobile mercantile value of domesticity itself. She selects household goods—"thread hardware mustard &c"—to represent the Traveller's wares, and focuses on the Traveller's good practical conduct of her business. But this commercial purveyor of domestic goods, whose travels can be described in an itinerary of everyday place names, also appears to issue from pure landscape description. The "yellow autumnal hills," the "distant snow-topped mountains" among which the Traveller conducts her business are an aesthetic product of Dorothy's writings. Dorothy's next sequence of images connects her work to the Traveller's, completing the multiple linkage: herself baking and then walking, the cook stepping through the "exquisite" beauty of the lakeside ferns, the journal writer silently implied in the production of these images. Indoors and outdoors productivity, commercial sufficiency and literary composition, appear as entangled equivalencies.

I want to turn back now to Dorothy's account of the wedding journey, with its simultaneous constructions of a sibling household and domestic literary labors. In that account, Dorothy sets herself the task of recollecting and refashioning feeling, and the specific feeling she claims to recall/create is that of sibling community, in which she thoroughly embeds the new spousal union. She has already figured the couple's espousing as an occasion of her recommitment to her brother. Now she produces Mary as "my Sister," a relationship legally created by William and Mary's marriage, but in this text ratified by Dorothy's joining Mary, first in housework and then in a walk—and then, silently, in completing the writing of the journal entry. From the beginning of the Grasmere journals, when she mixes her own needs with the desire to give her brother William (gone off with their brother John) pleasure, Dorothy claims literary work as the corporate domestic production of a sibling household. In the journal's penultimate entry, she vows again, in those familiarly mixed terms, to continue writing: "William has been working beside me, and here ends this imperfect summary. I will take a nice Calais Book and *will* for the future write regularly and, if I can legibly so much for this my resolution on Tuesday night, January 11th 1803. Now I am going to take Tapioca for my supper; and Mary an Egg. William some cold mutton—his poor chest is tired" (137, emphasis original). As Kurt Heinzelman points out, "Dorothy's *Journal* does not conclude with its overt little gesture toward closure like a public utterance, like a poem" (75). Rather, Dorothy then tells us that last well-known gingerbread story in which, as Heinzelman puts it, "Dorothy cheerfully gives her twopence to an enterprising family, which had the good sense to leave a special place for 'the sister' to read to them beside the fire" (76). But this story does not have for me the plaintive quality I think it may have for Heinzelman (he calls it a "good-natured anecdote" (76)). Instead it seems to me to confirm Dorothy's ongoing construction of the domestic literary enterprise of the Wordsworth family, in which making gingerbread is as meaningful as making vows—and in which the sister writes, as well as reads, at home by the fire.[25]

Historians of Family, Literary Critics and Siblings in the House

Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journals* is not an obscure text in nineteenth-century studies. If her work has often been approached through her brother's more influential work, it has nonetheless generated abundant commentary, often being praised as a valuable record or transcription of a "real" literary life. How is it, then, that the *Journals'* construction of Dove Cottage family values—founded in intertwined sibling and spousal affections, interleaving those affections and mutual productivity—has been so consistently overread

in different terms? If the *Journals* may be read, as I have done above, as modeling a domesticity in which siblings and productive labors have positive value within the family and household, how has this alternative domesticity gone unnoticed—or, perhaps more accurately, been set aside as a compensatory version of that other, presumably dominant "domestic ideology"?

For decades historians of the family have steadily resisted what most regard as the simplistic thesis, still well accepted in some popular and academic circles, that the so-called "nuclear" family is the natural, universal form of the human family, and that variations from that form are transient or anomalous (and usually, by implication, disadvantageous). Yet, as Tadmor, and Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse have differently argued, historical and sociological accounts of "family" seem to have worked themselves into a "stalemate" (Tadmor 6) created by family historians' continuing reliance on the terminology and assumptions of the very theory they mean to reject.

Specifically, though they formulate the problem differently, Tadmor, and Armstrong and Tennenhouse conclude that our contemporary understanding of "family" remains constrained by the rhetorical maintenance of a theory that has long been contested—some would argue, thoroughly "discredited" (Perry, *Novel Relations* 14): the theory that the fundamental human family is the "nuclear" family, a small blood cohort consisting of a spousal pair and their children, and distinguished in modern times by its primarily affective bonds.[26] As Tadmor puts it in her 2001 study *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship and Patronage*, despite "critical reservations" among family historians about the proper definitions and uses of key terms, "'the nuclear family' and 'the extended family' and 'extended' kinship ties remained among the most used terms within debates on the history of the family" (7). Scholars' recurrence to these terms has kept them, Tadmor argues, from asking "simple historical questions […] such as what concepts of the family did people in the past have? What did the family mean for them? In what terms did they understand family relations, household residence, kinship relationships, friendship, and patronage?" (9–10)

The effort to reject or at least complicate the rhetorical and ideological dominance of "nuclear family" crosses generations of scholarship, and studies of many times and places.[27] For instance, Dorothy Crozier's "Kinship and Occupational Succession" (1965), Michael Anderson's *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire* (1971), and Barry Reay's "Kinship and the Neighborhood in Nineteenth-Century Rural England: The Myth of the Autonomous Nuclear Family" (1996) all reevaluate the continuing roles of a wider kinship during industrialization, explicitly resisting the imposition of a "nuclear family" structure on families and households otherwise constructed, and arguing for greater weight to be given to kin relations

among households. But the traditional descriptive language, and the particular structural elements that that language foregrounds, tend to undercut even such trenchant critiques. At one point, for instance, Anderson notes "that as many as 23% of households contained related persons other than members of the current nuclear family of the head in as fluid [a] society as this is obviously of very considerable importance," and that "in comparative perspective, kinship co-residence was frequent, for by comparison, in England and Wales in 1966 only 9% of all households contained kinsmen beyond the nuclear family" (44). Similarly, although Crozier substitutes "elementary family" for "nuclear family," the concept of such a basic family remains rhetorically stable, and she remains mesmerized by the "patronymic" lines that she understands as organizing the family corporations in her study. Reay succeeds more fully, substituting "simple family" for the older term, but in his tables of household structure by percentage, the old term and its allied concerns dominate: "Simple" breaks down into "Couples," "Couples and children (nuclear)," "Widowed and children," and "Unmarried and children" (89). "Coresident siblings" does appear as a separate category (and the smallest, which would not be surprising in the latter half of the century, though some manifestations of a sibling cohort might be masked in the categories "Solitary," "Extended" and "Multiple"), but this configuration provokes no direct commentary.

In studies like these, which are in fact asking Tadmor's "simple historical questions," we can readily see not only the tendency to reuse that term "nuclear family" to describe alternative family structures but also related difficulties: a continuing focus on conjugal or parent-child relations in the organizing terminology, and a consequent return to these organizing relationships, or to histories of subjectivity, as the point or proper destination of histories of the family. In these ways histories of family (and the literary critical studies that draw from them) circle back through the same points of analysis, reestablishing the same areas of significance: marriage, parent-child relations, lineal inheritance, psychological development. While what is said about these subjects changes, the choice of subjects does not, effectively closing off entire areas of potential study.[28]

Of particular interest for my argument, of course, are those cases where sibling relations are identified as important and then not addressed in the main argument. Here we can also readily observe the resubordination of "sibling" and related terms, and of siblings as subjects of primary significance, as the dominant terms regenerate the assumed universality and dominance of the "nuclear family" structure. For instance, in *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (1978), Randolph Trumbach comments on "sibling solidarity" as a

key consideration for aristocrats who regarded their "strongest tie" as that to "siblings by birth and to those [they acquire] by his own marriage and the marriages of [their] siblings," and attributes aristocratic resistance to the Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister Bill as a desire to preserve sibling solidarity: if such a marriage were possible, then that meant there was no sibling relation between a man and his sister-in-law, and the sibling relation was the very one aristocrats sought to stabilize (32). Yet having identified this retention of sibling solidarity as a prime objective of aristocratic families, Trumbach does not mention the notion again until his conclusion, turning his attention instead to those elements of family and household structure privileged by the "nuclear family" structure. His chapter titles tell the tale: "Kindred and Patrilineage," "Settlement and Marriage," "Patriarchy and Domesticity," Childbearing," "Mothers and Infants," and "Fathers and Children."

Miranda Chaytor, in "Household and Kinship: Ryton in the late 16th and Early 17th Centuries" (1980), provides a similarly striking case. Noting that both methodology and guiding theories have ensured that "households and families have, for the most part, been conceptualised as natural units and treated as though they existed in isolation from the social formation as a whole," she particularly criticizes methods that "[focus] on the reproductive unit, the 'historically observable' conjugal family" (27). Under these conditions, Chaytor complains, "we are told little about the composition of households in which step-children and foster children were reared, about their relationship—biological, social and economic—with the other inmates, or whether the experience of growing up in the same household created ties between siblings (who may have been only distantly related to one another) [sic] which were reflected in their social and economic relations in adult life" (29).[29] Yet despite describing several households in which adult siblings had important roles, and pointing to the ties among households that might include siblings, Chaytor's conclusion returns to the usual concerns. Calling for recognition of the complexity of families and households in order to "uncover the process by which women's subordination was maintained" (50), Chaytor draws the family and household back within the old bounds:

> We should focus not just on the family or the household unit but on the points of transition between them: between childhood and servanthood, servanthood and marriage, marriage, widowhood and remarriage. Sometimes the "biological" phases in a man or a woman's life cycle coincided smoothly with changes in residence and in their social role and status; sometimes they did not. We need to explore these transitions to unravel the relations, hierarchies and obligations within households and between them, within kin groups and outside them. (51)

Chaytor's is simultaneously a materially productive and an affective "family"; the doors of inquiry have been opened to servants, distant kin or unrelated persons, and interrelated kin and social groups. Once again, however, the sibling has disappeared from view, while children and marriage have returned to the forefront of concern. Of course I am not faulting Chaytor for pursuing her own research question. I merely observe, once again, in a scholar explicitly resistant to histories of the family turning on the axis of marriage and parenting, the continuing invisibility of siblings—even where their potential importance is acknowledged.

Let me now turn to an influential study specific to the cultural frame of my inquiry, and so directly pertinent to my inquiry. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's 1987 *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* presents abundant evidence that, during the early stages of industrialization in England, middle-class "family" was defined as much by lateral ties (brother and sister, aunt and uncle, niece and nephew) as by conjugal or parent-child bonds, and that these ties secured both material and affective economies. Davidoff and Hall describe at some length the importance of multiple-sibling marriages in solidifying partnerships, and of adult unmarried siblings' care giving and potential for monetary contribution. Yet as their analysis unfolds, the adult unmarried sibling *as such* regularly fades from scholarly view, reabsorbed into other relational groupings or displaced by the usual emphasis on marital and parental relations. In particular, the adult unmarried sister, together with her potential legal and economic power, is readily obscured by her married sister and the married woman's evidently powerless condition.[30]

Drawing from diaries, letters, contracts, wills, memoirs, census data, literary texts, and other scholars' studies of their focus locales of Birmingham and two agricultural counties (Essex and Suffolk), Davidoff and Hall develop a picture of English middle-class society between 1780 and 1850 in which

> the family […] mediated between public and private and connected the market with the domestic. Well into the nineteenth century the family remained the basis for most economic activity […] Most production for profit was through the *family enterprise* […] The forms of property organization and authority within the enterprise framed gender relationships through marriage, the division of labour and inheritance practices. (32, emphasis original)

This meditative function of course might be understood not only as mediation between public and private but also as the manifestation of a different conception of "family" and "household" that did not sharply distinguish these

categories. As Davidoff and Hall explain, in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, records of what we would call "domestic" and "business" expenses were kept in the same books, often mixed without apparent distinction. They note that "the slow disentangling of finances was associated with the equally uneven physical separation of a home from workplace" (202), the latter change occurring quite gradually over the first half (or more) of the nineteenth century as brew works, bank offices, shops, and so on, ceased to be adjacent to the home place and "home" came to mean a place where business was not conducted (357–69).[31]

Noting that "a business firm as such did not have a legal existence until well into the nineteenth century," Davidoff and Hall point out that the crucial form through which such firms eventually ensured their longevity "grew directly from the family household" (200). If a family enterprise grew beyond the joint capacities of a "single entrepreneur together with his wife, children, other kin and servants," then "this unit was reproduced by taking a partner," a relationship that in these early years did not involve a formal contract: "much like a family member, every partner could act as an agent for the other but was also liable for all debts" (200). Davidoff and Hall close this explanation, and the paragraph, with a quotation from Holdsworth's *A History of English Law*: "'Partnerships were in some senses *brothers* who represented each other'" (Holdsworth qtd. in Davidoff and Hall 200, emphasis original).

The next paragraph begins with this sentence: "This familial term [brothers] is significant" (200). The paragraph's second sentence launches an explanation of why "wives" were only "de facto 'partners'"—in brief, because "a married woman" is *feme covert* and cannot engage in the legal actions needed in business—an explanation that consumes the rest of the paragraph (200). Several rhetorical shifts happen very quickly here. First, the specific term "brother" (clearly a metaphor for Holdsworth, but nonetheless quite specific) has been generalized to "familial term." The immediate turn toward a different specific "familial term," "wives," and the sustained attention devoted to their legal incapacity, suggests that marriage is the most important (most obvious, nearest-at-hand) family relation. When "wives" is then restated in a following sentence as "a married woman," these terms doubly obscure "sister" (the actual term nearest at hand to "brother") and, particularly, "unmarried sister." Yet an adult unmarried sister could be a partner in legal fact, de jure, because she is *feme sole* and has not died the civil death of marriage.[32] In the short space of a few sentences, this analysis subordinates not just Holdsworth's specific metaphor but also sibling familial relations, returning our attention to what now appears the most crucial, central type of "partnership" and "familial" relation: marriage. With the exception of a "great-aunt" who raises her head at the end of the paragraph, no sibling-based relational term appears

in the rest of this chapter section titled "Enterprise organization"—that is, the organization of the "family enterprise."

The sequence I have just described is exemplary of a general tendency throughout *Family Fortunes*. Yet the foundational evidence for Davidoff and Hall's "family enterprise" substantially depends on their exploration of the contributions of siblings, and sibling-based relations (niece, uncle, etc.) to that enterprise, and so the sibling "familial terms" keep reappearing as the argument unfolds. Later in the chapter I have been quoting, for instance, Davidoff and Hall remark that "by far the most common form of partnership was father and son(s), brothers, uncle and nephew. Sisters married their brothers' partners and sisters' husbands often became partners after marriage thus binding two families into the fortunes of the enterprise" (217–18). In this description, and in related passages throughout *Family Fortunes*, sibling relations clearly provide opportunities to secure and enrich partnerships, and marriages.[33] But here again we observe those rhetorical shifts, often subtle but telling in their frequency, that work to elide the potentially primary role of the sibling in this materially productive "family": foregrounding marriage and parent-child relations, this description places "father and son(s)" first in its list of "most common" partnerships, and identifies marriage (the active verb, repeated in "after marriage") as the "binding" tie of family partnerships.

I have looked back to earlier studies to demonstrate the long-standing, consistent conflict between family historians' intentional efforts to contextualize family structures in historically and culturally contingent situations, and their seemingly involuntary recurrence to terms, tropes, organizing tactics, and ideas that devalue the adult sibling in the household. This conflict has not been resolved: even Tadmor, whose study of eighteenth-century English textual usage brings her to the claim that a primary meaning of "family" was "a household, including its diverse dependents, such as servants, apprentices, and co-resident relatives" (19), and one defined, in part, by "the exchange of work and material benefits" (28), does not arrive at a particular articulation of sibling relations in such a household (175–86). While I understand that for Tadmor the crucial move is to "branch from relationships of blood and marriage to other social ties"—"friend" and "connexion," to name two of her primary choices (10)—her study still subsumes "brother" and "sister" under other terms, leaving invisible a large swath of blood, affinal, and metaphorical relations that seem to have been considered essential by people of that era.[34]

The other face of this functional dilemma becomes apparent when scholars do focus on siblings as figures of primary material and emotional significance in "family." Davidoff, one of the few historians of the family to attempt such a focus, exemplifies the difficulty in her 2005 essay "Kinship as a Categorical Concept: A Case Study of Nineteenth Century English Siblings." Davidoff's

stated intention is to make some headway against "the puzzling question of why siblings have been ignored and downplayed across disciplines from demography to psychoanalysis" (411), in this article by taking a close look at the sibling group that included Prime Minister William Gladstone. To this end she frames her argument with the assumptions that universal psychological features are the fundamental materials from which historical situation generates variants, and that those psychological features are the primary source of the sibling relation's importance. As she closes her introductory section, Davidoff asserts the significance of her study in this way:

> Brothers and sisters can represent models for us. We strive to be like them but they can also represent rejected traits, values and behaviours; they can repel as well as attract. There are several reasons for the inherent tension between identification and repulsion among siblings. High on the list is the obvious rivalry for parental time, energy, emotion and material resources. In some cases, identification with a sibling takes the form of rebellion against parents and authority figures, one young rebel following another. Or in rejecting a sibling's rebellion, the sister or brother becomes a strong conformist. In the shadow of a sister or brother, decisions are made about the most significant life choices. The emotions generated by sibling relationships are undoubtedly intense, long lasting and work at a deep psychic level. However these general features are played out very differently depending on time and place. (413)

I quote this last paragraph of her introduction in its entirety so that we can clearly trace its trajectory. On the verge of a historical study of a specific sibling group, Davidoff carefully details what she appears to understand as universal features of siblings' psychological, especially emotional, development in a family defined by parents ("and authority figures," though not, for instance, aunts and uncles specifically) and their children. That she accords much greater significance to the sibling relation than is usual is clear, but in this formulation that greater significance is first, and fundamentally, referred to a "deep psychic level" where various apparently universal emotions inherent in the sibling's situation in a family are instantiated. It is upon that basis, "those general features," that variants are then worked by the transitory shapings of "time and place."

What this sequence of examples from histories of the family demonstrates, I believe, is how the long-pursued project of historicizing "family" stalls out at certain points of inquiry or analysis, so that over decades this historicizing project must be continually renewed. At the specific locus of "brother" and "sister," as they engage the figure of the adult sibling, we can observe how

scholars vigorously challenging one universalizing trope may at the same time fall back toward another universalizing trope. If, like Tadmor, the scholar posits "family" as simultaneously economic and affective, and "household" as historically contingent in its components, then sibling relational terms disappear into some other category (e.g., "friend," or "kin") and are analyzed only as a subset rather than as primary terms or objects of study in themselves. It is difficult to discern the logic of this shift, especially if "kin" takes a leading role—except that it reinstates a sort of shadow nuclear family, the primacy of vertical conjugal and parental ties now unmodified by any other specific relational terms. If, like Davidoff, the scholar insists on the primary importance of siblings in familial structures, then that importance is referred to universal psychological structures, so that even if there is considerable emphasis on the material economic and ideological relations of siblings (as there is in Davidoff), these still appear as secondary effects of primary affective relations validated by their emanation from the universal human psyche.[35]

Given the efforts of literary critics to work across disciplinary lines, engaging various social-scientific and historical studies as they examine representations of "family" in various periods and genres, it is not surprising that the limitations as well as the valuable insights of these other disciplinary perspectives transfer into literary studies. I will not repeat here my commentary in the introduction on various studies of siblings in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature, except to note that these limitations—the circling back toward universalizing theories of the human family and psyche—are apparent even in those critical works most resistant toward the regeneration of such theories. But given these contexts, I do want to turn back toward the specific case of Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere journals. When critics engage this account, which may be read as constructing a stable, fruitful household anchored as much by sibling relations as by conjugal or parental relations, a household in which affective and material economies, literary and household labors are deliberately entangled, to what extent do their readings also participate in this pattern of (often unintentional) regeneration? In particular, what happens to the adult unmarried sibling, the unmarried sister reading by the fire, the "Dorothy" who claims that her literary identity and her domestic identity are of a piece?

Whether commenting on the Grasmere journals or on Dorothy's writings generally, as freestanding or in combination with William's, literary critics' commentaries on these matters trace surprisingly uniform trajectories. Despite divergent methods and intentions, these commentaries return, to greater or lesser extent, toward the assumption of a foundational psychic ground, an individuated subjectivity grown from universal human psychological and familial structures in which the siblings' domestic and textual relations are

seated. The rhetorical return to this common ground is as persistent in literary criticism as it is in histories of the family and, as in the case of those histories, has deep roots. During the first half of the twentieth century, Wordsworth critics seemed to be locked in a vigorous and prolonged "debate" about the significance of Dorothy and William's domestic relationship to their literary works. Those we might call "traditionalists," who argued for innocent sibling affection grown from shared memory and enshrined in ingenuous recollective language, engaged the Freudian critics, who identified repressed (or fulfilled) incestuous longing as the source of the siblings' literary energy (or failure), in a running battle that reignited intermittently as late as the 1970s.[36] But for all of their sharply worded disagreements, advocates for both views based their interpretations on analysis of the siblings' affective relations, and on the concurrent presumption of a clear, stable difference between spousal and sibling relations as a natural condition of the human family.

Even after the theoretical sea changes of the 1970s, as critics move away from traditionalist and psychoanalytic readings of the Wordsworths' lives and works, traces of the same reliance on individuated subjectivity as the true ground of identity reassert themselves. Although types of subjectivity proliferate, now most often based in models of the self as culturally and discursively constructed, these subjectivities *as such* provide an ideological space in which complex cultural forces subtly shade toward the private attributes of an individuated psyche.[37] As long as the construction of identity is still referred to discourses that represent the realm of private feeling and the enclosure of private space, the psyche itself, textually constructed or not, can remain private, enclosed. Public discourses and the constitutive effects of "outside" cultural forces may be acknowledged, but they remain secondary—or invisible.

Consider this comment by Anne K. Mellor in her 1993 study *Romanticism and Gender*, near the end of a chapter in which she works to unsettle traditional ideas of "the Romantic self" by revaluing Dorothy's mode of subjectivity: "The life-writing of her Journals linguistically constructs a subjectivity that in its detail, physical embodiment, energetic activity, and *enacted consciousness*—Dorothy Wordsworth *is* what she sees and does and eats and feels and speaks and writes—is one of the most convincingly recorded subjectivities of the Romantic era" (166, emphasis original). Mellor's intent in this chapter, the recuperation of diaries and journals as full-fledged autobiography, makes excellent sense as part of her larger argument "that our current cultural and scholarly descriptions of that historical phenomenon we call Romanticism are unwittingly gender-biased" (1). Moreover, Mellor's notion of linguistically constructed subjectivity, in which she joins Homans, Levin, and other feminist critics who have used a revised Lacanianism to read Dorothy's work, differs significantly from the "authentic" subjectivity read out of expressive text by

both traditionalist and psychoanalytic critics. With that said, however, it is also clear that Mellor locates literary identity in a different version of individual subjectivity, and evaluates authority through the quality of the subjectivity from which it issues, without unsettling subjectivity's originary status. Dorothy's "linguistically construct[ed]" subjectivity is characterized as "*enacted consciousness*"; individual authority ("Dorothy Wordsworth") is identified with (represented) physical action, and the subjectivity from which it emanates is "recorded." In each of these phrases, despite Mellor's explicit moves toward constructed selfhood, some version of subjectivity/self implicitly precedes its recording or representation, or is validated by its (representational) materiality.

These claims restabilize what is otherwise a radical revaluation of Dorothy's writing and of literary identity in general. We can see the stabilizing mechanisms at work whenever Mellor's treatment of Dorothy touches the sibling relation: Mellor's readings of Dorothy's journals are preceded by readings of William's poetry; William's construction of self provides comparison with Dorothy's; the material and familial histories introduced by Dorothy's journals, histories Mellor herself clearly sees as significant, are subsumed into histories of individual subjectivity. It is *in this case*—William and Dorothy's specifically, that of brother-sister relations generally—that these patterns develop. The rest of Mellor's book attends to all kinds of histories, including the economic and political discourses of "Family Politics" (65–84). These restabilizing structures in Mellor's argument about the Wordsworths are strangely consistent with the structures used in the devaluing critiques Mellor so vigorously opposes, returning us again to the individuated psyche as the fundamental explanatory ground of the Dorothy-William literary/domestic relationship. Nothing has changed except the critic's celebratory revaluation of the feminine.

This is a common fate of revised Lacanian readings of Dorothy's work. But it is not only in cases where modern psychological theories are explicitly invoked that we continue to see the withdrawal into individuated subjectivity. In *Becoming Wordsworth: A Performative Aesthetic* (1995), Elizabeth A. Fay deliberately distances her argument from psychoanalytic criticism (despite her use of Julia Kristeva's semiotic theory), advancing the promising thesis that '"Wordsworth' [is] a consensual being composed of William and Dorothy," "doubly gendered, and collaboratively *engendered*," (6 and 9, emphasis original). The two writers, Fay argues, "enact interdependently mythic (rather than social or fashionable) roles or scripts because they felt them to be sincere, which is to say affecting" (6). Fay's turn toward literary genre and mode (sensibility, pastoral) as a source of this collaboratively produced "Wordsworth Life" seems to open the bell jar of individual identity, and her determined hold on their imaginative collaborations impedes any simple reversal of gendered value. But even in this case, where the critic presses away from the individuated psyche

as the origination of textual production, that psyche seems to reemerge in the analysis of consensuality and collaboration. Early in the introduction, when Fay explains that her approach through performativity "reconstructs the poetic moment of William and Dorothy's collaborative experience," she attaches the reconstruction "of their textual as well as their self-composition" to that collaborative experience (4). What self is this that is being composed along with textual composition? That Fay means "William Wordsworth," the Poet we read and study, to be reevaluated as a collaborative, literary, imaginative construct is clear. Yet there seem to be "selves" either beside, or prior to, that construct as well, and it is hard not to slip toward the notion that these are William and Dorothy as individual psyches, or are some collective "self," selves under composition to be sure, but selves not identical with their textually constructed selves or with the collaboratively produced "William Wordsworth."

Despite Fay's strong hand, her constant pointing toward collaborative construction and the textual origins of textual identity, this kind of slippage keeps appearing. Even as she points to literary sensibility as an "organizing schema" that allows us to "foreground the specifically masculine romantic act of composing the self *as if* originary within the nexus of the domestic and literary circle," she parenthetically refers to "the young Dorothy Wordsworth" as having "imagined herself into" the realm of sentiment (7, emphasis original). Again, as Fay takes a preliminary look at "the Poet who is completed by his sibling companion, the poet of pastoral lyric and vision," she notices that "W. Wordsworth's rhetorical ploys to express his recursive cognitive and writing processes […] are extremely self-conscious and call into doubt the moment of self-making," so that the companioned Poet is "always threatened by the specter of the solitary Poet who walks pastoral paths in spiritual crisis" (8). Clearly these are literary, textual Poets—but for a rhetorical ploy to be deemed "self-conscious," must there not be a conscious self producing the ploy? In the next paragraph, the individuated psyche again reappears in a position that seems outside, and perhaps productive of, literary text:

> Dorothy Wordsworth, too, knows this solitude, particularly as a weariness that descends when William has left her behind to keep house. In the crisis of these periods she, too, experiences deep self-doubt about her literary powers, the exercise of which nevertheless continually renews William's affection for her, and the stoppage of which threatens that mutual regard. I view this self-doubt and solitude as the process of endlessly becoming who one *is*: the subject in question. (8)

Perhaps it is because "subject in question" is derived from Kristeva's "subject-in-process," to which Fay refers two pages earlier, that Dorothy Wordsworth

here appears as knowing, weary, deep, self-doubting, lonely, an experiencing "self" in the process of "becoming," but also apparently existing beyond the texts through which we learn of her experience. Fay, like Mellor, emphasizes her point with that simple form of "to be," literally underscored: Fay's "endlessly becoming who one *is*" echoes Mellor's "Dorothy Wordsworth *is* what she sees and does" (etc.). In each case, the implicit force of the grammatical claim is ontological.

It may well be impossible to avoid such linguistic conversions, in which the long-established and highly valued language of the individual psyche reasserts itself. But that is in some ways the point: here we are again, among the "psychologizing tropes" that Armstrong traces to the Brontës (and that I would trace further back), producing histories of subjectivity—now of a different type, to be sure, but again reinstating discourses of the psyche as fundamental to the reading of these siblings-in-text. In Mellor, the corollary effect is that otherwise anomalous exclusion of "public" histories from her account of the Wordsworths' relationship; in Fay, it is the muting of sister as sister, Dorothy often appearing instead as "maiden" (William's figuration) or "not-maiden" (Dorothy's), or Dorothy inscribing herself as mother in the (textual) domestic space.[38] In such critical accounts of the Wordsworths' (textual) domestic and literary relations, Dorothy's emphasis on the Hutchinson siblings and their household contributions, her interleaving of sibling with conjugal affections, and her insistent rhetorical equations of domestic and literary identities, effectively vanish.

If my argument for alternative domesticities in nineteenth-century English literature is to be useful, providing more scope and nuance to our readings of "family" and its many cognate terms, and more thoroughly historicizing those readings, then that usefulness will depend to a great extent on our being able to recognize these domesticities in fluid, variable conversation, not just from text to text but also within texts. Just as we find elements of a nascent industrial domesticity in Austen's *Emma*, a text that I think predominantly celebrates corporate domesticity, so in Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere journals we can recognize countercurrents, movements away from the siblings' homemaking and toward something nearer to William Wordsworth's gradual detachment of the poet-brother from his *Home at Grasmere*. The long entry for "Tuesday 26th" ("actually 27th," Moorman's note says) of July 1802 that includes the wedding day description and ends with "the first walk I had taken with my Sister" begins with William and Dorothy's departure to Calais. This entry runs with only internal notations of dates—that is, without any new separate entries opened—until "Saturday 9th" October 1802. It is unclear whether Dorothy wrote the entry as events unfolded or in retrospect, or both. What is clear is that her journals treat all of these events—the sojourn in Calais, the

return to England and preparation for the wedding, the wedding day, and the reconstruction of Dove Cottage's household to include the new "sister," Mary—as a single "chapter," an undivided narrative fabric. At Calais, where they spend a full month, William and Dorothy visit with William's French beloved, Annette Vallon, and their daughter, Caroline. Their meetings appear almost entirely as evening seascapes, dominated by views of the distant English coast, the very type of an English person's separation from home. After a description of a particularly memorable evening sky, the journal's account of the Calais meetings concludes with the simple notation "Caroline was delighted" (125). Dorothy and William's departure from Dove Cottage and England, and their return, appears in this extended entry as (textually) necessary to new-fashioned identities, an enabling precursor of their residence in the new Dove Cottage and its collective literary productivity. Even in Dorothy's journals, where the birth home may be constantly renewed through the collective labors of in-dwelling siblings, there are signs of the simultaneity of a competing domesticity: Dorothy's sibling householders must leave to return, must depart from their birth home and return again to realize their domestic and literary identities.

Chapter 2

"OUT INTO THE ORCHARD": THE DEPARTURE OF THE SIBLING IN THE HOUSE

In the summer of 1992, I spent my break from teaching in the University of Southern Mississippi's British Studies program in Grasmere, reading in the Wordsworth Library and enjoying once again the evocative beauty of that village and its setting. I happened to be there during the annual Summer Conference, and the Wordsworth Trust (then directed by Robert Woof) extended the courtesy of including me in some of the tours. It was in the sponsored tour of Dove Cottage that I heard the story, told by one of their guides, that the door leading from the staircase directly into the orchard had been built so that William could go straight outside, avoiding the distractions of "domestic chaos" (this is the phrase I noted at the time) when he wanted to walk and compose.

This drew chuckles from the listeners, including me. Later, though, I thought more seriously about what this might mean, and went looking for the story's textual traces. In a letter answering my inquiry, Jeff Cowton, Registrar of the Trust at that time, pointed me toward "correspondence with the Clarksons of 1804 discussing the benefits of the new door," but went on to suggest that "the issue of 'domestic chaos' has been described as 'oral tradition,' but that is perhaps giving too much support for what is an interpretative point." Indeed, the March 25, 1804, letter from Dorothy Wordsworth to Mrs. Thomas Clarkson—the only one I have found that refers to the door—seems to mix, rather than separate, the domestic and the artistic in its brief postscript reference: "We have got the door made at the staircase. It is quite delightful. We often thank you and your sister for the pleasure it gives John [William and Mary's son, less than a year old] and all of us. Whenever John gets a hurt we carry him to it and he is still in a moment, he sees himself in the glass or looks out into the orchard" (*Early Years* 462).[1] In Dorothy's account, the door affords "pleasure" not just to the baby but to "all," to the "we" who "have got the door made": the domestic improvement is clearly practical, and "pleasure"

is no doubt intended in its general sense here, but in this household "plea-sure" also potentially implies literary purpose, resonating with William's and Dorothy's uses of the word in earlier years. Interestingly, too, Dorothy notes that little John can see either "himself in the glass," or the view "out into the orchard" (where his father often walked the paths while composing), and that both views quiet him equally. Whether one reads Dorothy's characteristic mixing of domestic and literary in this brief account or not, there is nothing in her letter suggesting that the door was intended as a poetic escape hatch for William, a device separating his literary work from domesticity—though such a characterization would not have been off the subject of the body of the letter, which begins with descriptions of Dorothy and Mary copying out William's poetry for Coleridge and of what advances William has made in composing *The Prelude*.

My reason for telling this story is not to chide the Trust's guides—oral traditions have their own kind of legitimacy—but to illustrate how easily the idea of a writer's necessary detachment from domesticity rises to "explain" even, or perhaps especially, the domestic features of a writer's life. In such accounts, domesticity is defined by its difference from, its material and affective distance from, artistry, and of course the reversal of that definition is implied as well. Yet, as we have seen, Dorothy's representations of Dove Cottage life at this period—including the particular letter in which the door is mentioned—fold the "domestic," in the senses of material household labors and family affections, together with the "literary," so that far from being neces-sarily detached the artist and her intellectual/literary work appear thoroughly entangled with a collective domestic life. In *Home at Grasmere*, a poetic text par-allel to Dorothy's journals, William Wordsworth also constructs a collective household, comprised of siblings and sibling figures engaged in a common material and affective domesticity, from which the poet-narrator's artistry emerges.

But the traditional tale about the orchard door does find a warrant in William's poem: after hundreds of lines celebrating a corporate domesticity very like that represented in Dorothy's journals, *Home at Grasmere* ends with the narrator laying claim to his artistic capacity as "possessions [that are] wholly, solely, mine,/Something within, which yet is shared by none,/Not even the nearest to me and most dear" (897–99).[2] As readers of Romantic poetry know, such claims—critiqued in Jack Stillinger's classic study *The Myth of the Solitary Genius*—are common not only in William's texts but in Romantic texts gener-ally, and underwrite what becomes a dominant ideology of artistic identity. And yet, to turn again, in this single poem we can actually observe two models of artistic identity, the first emerging from a domestic sibling collective, and the second enacted as a deliberate individual detachment from that version of

domesticity. The second decisively closes the poem, but the first holds sway for nearly nine hundred lines, appearing in some senses to generate the second.

Because we have been accustomed to think in terms of a singular "domestic ideology" in which public and private, male and female, artistry and domesticity, appear to be strictly distinguished, we tend to overread those first 900 lines of *Home at Grasmere* with the familiar turn to freestanding, undomesticated male artistry at the end—and to read Dove Cottage's orchard door with similar assumptions. But if we recognize an alternative domesticity simultaneously operative through the English nineteenth century, the "corporate domesticity" described in my first chapter, then the orchard door cannot be so readily interpreted. If, as in Dorothy Wordsworth's version of Dove Cottage, writers and their literary labors were not necessarily excluded from domestic spaces or ideal notions of domesticity, and if those domestically situated writers might be male or female, brother or sister, or husband or wife, then a stricter distinction between (female) domestic work and (male) literary work also depends on the gradual eclipse of that other domesticity, the corporate household. My general formulation will imply too smooth a progression but, essentially, as the sibling in the house changes from a valued source of productive labor to an anomaly in an ideally work-free domestic space, representations of collaborative literary production give way to representations of freestanding artistic identity. Strange though it might seem, given our customary ways of thinking, it is not that the male married poet chooses to leave the domestic space to do his work, but rather that he cannot do anything else: once adult unmarried siblings and their labor cease to be part of the ideal household, his individual literary labors have no more place inside than the (now invisible) housework associated with domestic management. As grown siblings leave the house, labor goes with them—all labor, literary or domestic, housework or wage labor.

In this chapter I want to turn from what might be thought of as primarily "positive evidence" for an alternative domesticity in the English nineteenth century (Dorothy's celebratory representation of Dove Cottage as a corporate household, Austen's carefully plotted sequences from siblinghood to espousal, and family historians' interpretations of historical records) to texts in which we can see industrial domesticity clearly emergent or even dominant, but in which the values and tropes of corporate domesticity remain in play. William Wordsworth's *Home at Grasmere* (composed 1800–6) develops an extensive argument for the household anchored by sibling ties, the narrator's own literary ambitions seeming, for most of the poem, to originate in Grasmere Vale's corporate household. Unlike Dorothy's Grasmere journals, however, *Home at Grasmere* rarely represents indoor domestic labor, disconnecting housework from literary work. As a reading against "Michael" shows, this

partial separation of the domestic from the public, and of women from men, coincides with the separation of artistic identity from the working household, as literary labors move outside of the home place. In the last 150 lines of *Home at Grasmere*, William extracts the male poet from his domestic collective, replacing his speaker's role as brother-poet in a materially productive household with that of rhapsodist on an abstract marriage of world and mind, a role much closer to that of "Michael's" outdoor teller of tales.

Mary Lamb's 1815 epistolary essay "On Needle-work" presses the case for the removal of both unmarried siblings and visible labor from the home place even more strongly, arguing for an ideal (spousal) household in which the unpaid domestic labor of needlework has been professionalized, so that it would be performed outside of the home for pay. "On Needle-work" presages the Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister debates in its focus on the figure of an adult unmarried woman, here broadly conceived as any adult unmarried daughter/sister/aunt who must support herself outside a household clearly defined by a spousal pair and their children. Like those debates Lamb's essay pivots on the distinction between unmarried and married women, but here the necessary removal of (visible) labor from the ideal household appears as the organizing issue, so that unmarried sisters seem only incidentally excluded. In this context, Lamb's narrator establishes her credentials as a writer by implicit claims to a double detachment from both paid labor and unpaid housework: once a paid needlewoman, she now seems to be a middle-class wife whose proper role does not include even domestic arts, much less materially sustaining domestic labor.

Like Dorothy's Grasmere journals, William's poems and Lamb's essay are specially concerned with literary work and with their narrators' identities as writers, but this is indeed a special concern with a particular variety of labor and its status, or not, as an indoor domestic labor, part (or not) of a household's common endeavor. The final section of this chapter expands from this special consideration, and from Lamb's tightly focused consideration of needlework's proper place in idealized domesticity, into the broader scope of Gaskell's *Mary Barton; A Tale of Manchester Life* (1848). In this novel needlework appears as one of many types of work, performed in many conditions, from formal employment, to wage labor performed in the home place, to unpaid domestic and charitable labor. Needlework itself is shown in all these guises, including Mary Barton's employment as a dressmaker's apprentice and Margaret Legh's home-based sewing to order; and women workers, both married and unmarried, undertake an array of other labors in factories, shops, and their own and others' homes. The relation of these varieties of women's work to domesticity fluctuates inconclusively through the currents of *Mary Barton*'s intricately structured plots. Entwined in the novel's primary plotline are complementary

stories of two adult unmarried sisters, one leaving her married sister's house to seek her fortune in the shape of a wealthier husband, the other faithfully caring for her brothers' families, each story differently implying the declining value of the unmarried adult sister's labor in a sibling-anchored household. Yet the "remedy" of marriage, the legal transformation of unmarried adult sisters (and women generally) into wives managing a spousal household, proves surprisingly difficult to effect inside Gaskell's England: Mary and Jem Wilson emigrate to Canada to establish their family, as will Margaret Legh and Jem's cousin Will after their marriage. Gaskell's "Tale of Manchester Life" departs from Lamb's positive vision of industrial domesticity ascendant, seeming to look back with longing on an idyllic corporate domesticity now giving way to the pressures of industrial life, but with limited faith in industrial domesticity's alternatives.

William Wordsworth's Dove Cottage

As we have seen, Dorothy's rhetorical tactics in her Grasmere journals—her repetitive construction of the household as sustained by sibling relations, her doubling and tripling of spousal and sibling connections, her embedded tales of other siblings, and her syntactical production of equivalencies between domestic and literary labors—seat her literary identity in the corporate household. The speaker of William's *Home at Grasmere* begins in what seems almost the same domestic situation, and yet the containment of indoor labor to interpolated stories, and the speaker's closing extraction of himself as poet from the corporate household, relocate literary labor outside the house, shifting "possession" of literary identity to the unhoused individual artist. "Michael," also written in the earliest years of the Dove Cottage residence, seems to chart a historical change parallel to the speaker's in *Home at Grasmere*, from what seems to be an earlier corporate domesticity to an enforced isolation of the spousal pair, their grown child literally exiled by the end of the poem, and the old sibling ties proven inadequate. Not surprisingly, the narrator of "Michael" may also be read as a freestanding teller of tales, not sustained by any community, sibling or otherwise.

Like Dorothy's Grasmere journals, William's *Home at Grasmere* represents sibling and spousal relationships as mutually constitutive, and as equally, or perhaps complementarily, definitive of "being at home." For instance, William uses two bird images to illustrate the relationship between the speaker and Emma (Dorothy's alter ego in this representation of early Dove Cottage days).[3] In the first, rejoicing in their renewed companionship in the Grasmere household, the speaker likens himself and Emma to "birds/Which by the intruding Fowler had been scared,/Two of a scattered brood that could not bear/To live

in loneliness" (173–76). Once the two have "found means/To walk abreast
[…]/With undivided steps," then their "home was sweet; /Could it be less?"
(177–79 and 179–80). This image of sibling homemaking is supported by a
later passage in which the speaker notices the disappearance of "a lonely pair/
Of milk-white Swans" that "came, like Emma and myself, to live/Together
here in peace and solitude" (322–23 and 326–27). The speaker and Emma
have watched these swans, not only for "their still/And placid way of life and
faithful love/Inseparable" (335–37), but also because

> their state so much resembled ours
> They also having chosen this abode;
> They strangers, and we strangers; they a pair,
> And we a solitary pair like them. (338–41)

The speaker enforces the comparison, repeating parallel constructions and
simple statements, "like them." But the differences are also striking. Swans
mate for life, and this is a mated pair, not "two of a scattered brood." Also,
the swans are not there, and by the end of the passage the speaker imagines
that they may well be dead.[4] Yet the speaker calls no explicit attention to the
mating of the two swans, describing them rather as "companions, brethren,
consecrated friends," and continuing, "Shall we behold them yet another
year/Surviving, they for us, and we for them,/And neither pair be broken?"
(347 and 348–50). The solemn intensity of the speaker's wondering makes the
swan pair and the spousal union they represent seem essential to the siblings'
sense of home, and vice versa. Together the mated and the sibling pairs form
a "household" in the vale, a household that apparently would be at its best if
it accommodated both siblings and mates.

   Indeed, the controlling metaphor of the poem is that of Grasmere Vale
as "One Household […] One family and one mansion," accommodating
everything from birds and dogs to poets (822 and 823). And although this
household is ordered hierarchically under the "paternal sway" of God (the
metaphorical mother is Grasmere Church), it also opens out laterally into a
"brood of Cottages" (821 and 527). The speaker tells three "cottage stories"
purportedly to demonstrate the "old/Substantial virtues" fostered in the vale's
household (466–67). In the first, a married man seduces a girl serving them,
"an Inmate of the house," and dies of remorse (503). The second describes
the happy, fruitful home of a shepherd whose six daughters supply not only
the place of their dead mother but also of the sons he never had, and the third
praises a widow who remembers her husband by means of the grove they
planted together. These disparate stories lead to the speaker's emphatic asser-
tion that "No, We are not alone, we do not stand/My Emma, here misplaced

and desolate,/Loving what no one cares for but ourselves" (646–48). The construction permits no dissonance among these tales of households that seem to us so variously constituted, or between the tales of married couples broken by infidelity or death, and the poem's "reality" of a faithful, abiding sibling pair.

Similarly, despite the many references to the speaker and Emma as a pair, their own household is "enriched/Already with a Stranger whom we love/Deeply, a Stranger of our Father's house,/A never-resting Pilgrim of the Sea" (863–66). "And others whom we love/Will seek us also," the speaker goes on, "Sisters of our hearts,/And one, like them, a Brother of our hearts,/Philosopher and Poet" (867–71). The reciprocal figurations of John Wordsworth, the blood brother, as roving outsider, and of the Hutchinson sisters and Coleridge as siblings, underscores the fundamental importance of sibling ties in constituting "household" and "family." Even absent siblings remain a part of the household, while friends as yet unrelated by marriage may be rhetorically drawn into the domestic economies of feeling and poetic production by naming them "sister" and "brother." The speaker of *Home at Grasmere* concludes the "pilgrims and brothers" passage by touching back to the economic metaphor of enrichment that pervades the poem's opening: "Such is our wealth […] we are/And must be, with God's will, a happy band" (873–74).

Yet this celebration of a corporate household apparently so like Dorothy's in these respects—the reciprocal support of spousal and sibling relations; the inclusion of a variety of blood, affinal, and metaphorical siblings; and the rhetorical folding together of material and emotional prosperity—resolves toward very different claims about the origins of artistry and the sustaining of literary labors. In William's *Home at Grasmere*, indoor domestic labor is suppressed and contained, loosening the potential connection between the domestic and the literary. The most obvious evidence of this is that the narrator never represents himself or Emma doing any kind of indoor labor, despite a continuing emphasis on domestic economies of other kinds. For instance, the first hundred lines of the poem rely more heavily on economic allusions than any other passage in the poem—fortune, business, cost, dower, unappropriated, wealth, gain—and these allusions are descriptive of the speaker's "possession" of Grasmere as a home. For "proof" of his possession, his gain, the speaker points to "yon cottage, where with me my Emma dwells" (97 and 98). The siblings come into "a home/Within a home, what was to be, and soon,/Our love within a love," recommending themselves to the personified Vale's domestic affections by their faithfulness through winter and by "the Poet['s] prelusive songs" (261–63 and 273). The economic language, the sibling-based home, and the connection of domestic affections and poetry form a familiar cluster of ideas. But notably missing is the direct connection of housework and writing evident in Dorothy's formulations.

Their "homemaking," foregrounded by the title of the poem and by its later claims about the great household of Grasmere Vale, takes place entirely out-doors, in their walking, and in the analogous labors of the dalesmen.

In those labors, too, although there is more of the domestic, the little indoor work is subtly gendered, and literary work seems undomesticated. In the second cottage story, for instance, six sisters and their father seem to work across gender lines, mixing domestic, pastoral, and artistic (but not lit-erary) labors. Their cottage is distinguished by its appearance as "a studious work/Of many fancies and of many hands," metaphorically, at least a work of art (560–62). The narrator attributes most of this artistry to "a hardy Girl, who mounts the rocks […] [and] fears not the bleak wind," rendering her father "the service of a Boy" as shepherd's apprentice (574–75 and 578). This same daughter "also helped to frame that tiny Plot" further from the house, a mini-orchard where gooseberries grow, but completes her outdoors cultivation by decorating the orchard with a metaphorical sign of domesti-city, "a mimic Bird's-nest" (583 and 588). The speaker then turns back to the domestic space, finding that "most/This Dwelling charms me" at night when, in the lighted room beyond the window, he sees "the eldest Daughter at her wheel,/Spinning amain" (598–99). Yet, as Kurt Heinzelman points out, this spinning daughter learned her "skill in this or other household work/[…] from her Father's honored hands" (*Home at Grasmere* 602–3).

William elaborates domestic containments around the boyish training of the "hardy Girl" to an extent that makes me question Heinzelman's even-handed perception in these passages of "men doing so-called female labor and vice versa" (Heinzelman 60). In fact, the sisters do both men's and women's work under their father's instruction, and, in sharp contrast to the variety of housework in the Grasmere journals, only one kind of domestic labor is represented here (and that a questionable one, for reasons I will explain below). Nor are there any scenes of writing or reading, suggesting that such literary labors are not an integral part of this domesticity. It seems to me that what we see here is both the more fluid gendering of preindustrialized labor, and industrialization's increasing confinement of women to an ideally workless domestic space. To put it another way, William's participation in the "cult of domesticity," a participation Heinzelman locates in his later poetry, is already present here, interleaved with a strong critique of the emergent sexual division of labor. This makes even better sense of Heinzelman's per-ception that William differs from Dorothy in valuing domestic and creative activity: William already separates the two kinds of work, even as he idealizes their possible simultaneity.

I think it is helpful here to observe the very similar interleavings of labor ideologies in "Michael," a poem finished in 1800, which represents men

engaged in child care and other housework. Most striking, perhaps, is Michael's mothering of his infant son:

> For oftentimes
> Old Michael, while [Luke] was a babe in arms,
> Had done him female service, not alone
> For dalliance and delight, as is the use
> Of Fathers, but with patient mind enforced
> To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked
> His cradle with a woman's gentle hand. (162–68)[5]

Marjorie Levinson explores this as a scene of patriarchal dominance, signaling Michael's "creative appropriation of his son" and their peculiar relationship as "craftsman to artifact" (65). But Michael's departure from the leisurely "use/ Of fathers," "alone/For dalliance and delight," also engages him in child-rearing as labor: "service," "enforced," and "rocked" all underscore the difficulty, the laboriousness, the sheer physical action of child care. That this labor reads as a traditional craftsman's seems right, as do Levinson's concerns about the accompanying objectification of mother and son. But Michael's mothering also reads as domestic labor, and labor of a variety traditionally thought of (and here labeled) as "female." Similarly, Michael and Luke take up "such convenient work, as might employ/Their hands by the fireside" after their outdoors work is done, "card[ing]/Wool for the House-wife's spindle" and attending equally to "implement[s] of house or field"("Michael" 107–9 and 111). These passages do not stringently separate indoor from outdoor, domestic from public, women's from men's, labor, and suggest an accompanying valorization of women's work.[6]

But that valorization is significantly limited. In his representations of women at work in "Michael," William confines women's visible active labor to spinning and making or mending clothes (84–87, 127–30, and 296–97). While he frames the participation of male characters in indoor work as a celebration of the older integrated domestic economy, which made traditional but inessential gender distinctions, his concurrent reduction of other women's work, domestic or otherwise, to textile manufacture is actually part of the developing code of industrial domesticity.[7] As the isolation of the domestic space from the productive marketplace proceeded, even as fewer homes spun their own thread or wove their own cloth, textile work (sewing, knitting, embroidery, mending, etc.) paradoxically became the sole referent of the unmodified word "work," when that word describes women's exertions. In nineteenth-century fictional accounts of domesticity, sewing often stands in for almost all other domestic labor. As in the ideal middle-class practice of housekeeping, in which

all signs of actual physical labor were to be kept from view, cooking, water car-
rying, cleaning, washing, and so forth are relentlessly elided.[8]

Similar elisions are evident in "Michael." When Michael and his son come
in from their herding, they find a magically "cleanly supper-board" and pre-
pared food, Isabel's implicit labor disappearing into its products (101). Even
the several passages representing her spinning and sewing include just one
phrase in which she is an active subject—"The House-wife plied her own
peculiar work" (127)—and that couched in language that binds wife to house
and marks spinning as her specialty. The image of an active woman is brief
indeed: just one line later, her activity is doubly deferred in a metaphor for the
wheel's turning, which "mak[es] the cottage thro' the silent hours/Murmur as
with the sound of summer flies" (129–30). These are quite different rhetorical
constructions than those showing Michael and his son at work in the home:

> both betook themselves
> To such convenient work, as might employ
> Their hands by the fire-side; perhaps to card
> Wool for the House-wife's spindle, or repair
> Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
> Or other implement of house or field. (106–11)

The activity of the verbs chosen for the men's actions, the plain display of
nouns, and the greater variety and scope of Michael and Luke's specific tasks
(which encompass both house and field) contrast sharply with the appear-
ance of Isabel's work in disembodied, metaphorical terms and as spinning or
sewing only.

"Michael," then, resists a strict division of work from housework in its
representations of men actively performing indoor household labor and con-
tributing to the conventionally female work of child care. But the catch is no
doubt abundantly clear: if only male characters transgress the boundaries of
gendered labor, and if they most actively perform indoor labor, then labor is
gender specialized only, but definitively, for women. We can ameliorate this
problem by taking "Michael," as Heinzelman does, with *Home at Grasmere*, in
which women also do men's work. But the problem is recompounded when we
realize that, once again, the latter poem restricts indoor domestic labor to the
ambiguously significant textile work, suggesting a separation that apparently
can be effectively transgressed, here as in "Michael," only by a man's double
expertise. The sister who shepherds and cultivates is not the sister who spins,
and both are instructed by their father.

These various exclusions and containments of housework coincide, in both
poems, with turns away from corporate domesticity and toward freestanding

literary authority. "Michael" again provides helpful parallel reading, since the traditional understanding of the poem's "failed patrimony" plot so heavily inflects critical discussions of the narrator's claims to poetic authority. I do not mean to deny the foregrounding of patriarchal power structures in "Michael": the land lost to external debts, the son departing to earn the money that will reinvest the family, the failure of the son to return, and the end of the fruitful succession of fathers and sons. This strain seems very different from the overtly sibling-oriented plot of its companion poem, "The Brothers," or, for that matter, from that of *Home at Grasmere*. But Michael's and Luke's failure to fulfill their father-son covenant derives from the failure of the corporate sibling network that Michael evidently expects will ensure Luke's inheritance. As *Home at Grasmere* finally seems to chart a personal "progress," "Michael" offers an apparently larger economic history tracing the collapse of corporate domesticity as the market economy isolates households and individuates economic power.

The "contract of guarantee" by which Michael encumbers his land is "surety for his Brother's Son, a man / Of an industrious life, and ample means," whose forfeiture the narrator describes as the result of "unforseen misfortunes" (221– 22 and 223). The narrator's account conflicts with Michael's suspicious attitude toward his nephew—"An evil Man / That was, and made an evil choice, if he / Were false to us" (246–48)—but the rest of the poem adds no confirmation to either explanation, suggesting that the nephew's character does not determine these disastrous events. Instead, the problem seems to be the nephew's literal distance from his uncle's household, a household from which he claims and receives aid, but to which he has become a stranger. That Michael does not know whether his nephew is "an evil Man" locates the breaking point of their mutual obligation in a new mobility that divides corporate sibling-anchored households into discrete spousal families. When the nephew seeks and the uncle gives surety, they adhere to the different practices of corporate households, in which the fortunes of the nephew are the fortunes of Michael's household, and vice versa. But the physical and economic distances opened between the nephew and the uncle permit the intervention of forces the nephew's best efforts cannot avert and the uncle cannot understand. Michael can imagine no *economic* reason for his nephew's failure; his surety, and the nephew's labor, should have ensured the family's well-being.

Nor can Michael imagine any remedy outside the circles of family obligation. When he recoils from selling "a portion of his patrimonial fields" to pay the debt, we may well wonder at his seeming to set a higher value on his lands than his son. The poem leaves little doubt that Michael's attachment to his land is partly a matter of personal feeling, and to that extent it is Michael's individual "ownership" that is at stake. But the origins of

Michael's debt in his support of his nephew suggest that Michael does not think of his inheritance as a single private accumulation, the value of which belongs to an economically isolated spousal household. Although Michael owns his land (presumably) as eldest son and by his labor, Michael's brother or sister (the poem does not say which) shared the father from whom Michael inherits the fields. The kind of surety he stood for his nephew depends upon Michael's holding the patrimonial lands, and upon their mutual expectation of such aid. So to sell his patrimony is not only to dispossess himself and his son (although that is his only directly expressed concern), but is also to cease to have the power to assist his siblings and their children, to lose the ability to stand in surety for them, to fail in his inherited obligations.

Instead, Michael tries to tap into a still more extended familial economy:

> We have, thou knowest [he says to Isabel],
> Another Kinsman, he will be our friend
> In this distress. He is a prosperous man,
> Thriving in trade, and Luke to him shall go,
> And with his Kinsman's help and his own thrift,
> He quickly will repair this loss, and then
> May come again to us. If here he stay,
> What can be done? Where every one is poor
> What can be gained? (257–65)

Michael's error here is not that he "involves his family in the mechanisms of the market he had thus far avoided," as Levinson has it (68), but that he *again* unwittingly does so. As he mistook his surety for his nephew as a household affair within their control and knowledge, so he mistakes his kinsman's prosperity and his son's labor as sufficient in this crisis, failing to recognize the literally unfamiliar economic forms that may again intervene in their household and familial economies. The kinsman's first "good report" and Luke's "loving letters" suggest their initial efforts to maintain the old forms, the kinsman watching over Luke, and Luke dutifully sending words (although not money, we notice) to his home (440 and 442). But the distances between cottage and city, between old and new ways, are too great, measured not just by Luke's failure to return but also by his removal to the even greater distances of criminality and an eventual flight to "a hiding-place beyond the seas" (236).

Seen in this context, Michael's ruin cannot be thought of solely as the ruin of a freehold patrimony or the closed economy of a spousal household. Michael feels obligated to, and expects assistance from, a wider family, one that in the not too distant past might have been settled nearby or even within

the same household establishment. The poem's plot describes a household both more isolated and less independent than Michael's expectations, a household without functioning sibling supports or the comfort of a wider kinship, and yet one opened not just by their expectations but also by circumstances permanently beyond their control, to outsiders' depredations.

Among these outsiders, I would argue, is the narrator of the poem. Prominent critical discussions of the narrator identify either the narrator or William, with either Michael or Luke, reproducing traditional concerns with the patrimony plot in the narrator's story.[9] But the narrator appears to us as a houseless wanderer, speaking to us from a place where "no habitation […] is seen," "in truth an utter solitude" save for passing travelers (of whom he seems to be one, given the setting) (9 and 13). His story, he says, "appertains" to a "place" (18); it tells itself to him, being "the first,/The earliest of those Tales that spake" to him of shepherds "Whom I already lov'd, not verily/For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills/Where was their occupation and abode" (21–23 and 24–26). Not taught by, nor loving, people, the narrator rests his authority on the self-regenerating force of narration itself and his household affections in the out-of-doors world he terms an "abode." Though he tells the Tale now for us, he tells it only "for the sake/Of youthful Poets"—poets not yet present, appearing to us, like him, "among this Hills," who will be his "second Self" only after he is gone (37–39). If this narrator is at all like Luke, it is Luke in his latter days, domestic ties all cut, extracting what value he can from the old household, but working "out of doors," on his own.

Like the undomesticated narrator of "Michael," whose instruction by the Tale leads him to "think/At random and imperfectly indeed/On man, the heart of man, and human life" (31–33), the speaker of *Home at Grasmere* thinks "on Man, on Nature, and on human Life/[…] in solitude" (959–60). Transiting between his fervent account of the "enriched" household of strangers and brethren, and the well-known closing in which he takes up his poetic vocation, the speaker now characterizes this idealized domestic sphere as the "narrow bounds" of some pure enjoyment, not adequate to justify his existence:

> That humble Roof enbowered among the trees,
> That calm fireside, it is not even in them,
> Blessed as they are, to furnish a reply
> That satisfies and ends in perfect rest.
> Possessions have I wholly, solely, mine,
> Something within, which yet is shared by none,
> Not even the nearest to me and most dear,
> Something which power and effort may impart.
> I would impart it; I would spread it wide,

Immortal in the world which is to come. (*Home at Grasmere* 893–902)

This something is, of course, poetry, poetry that comes from him alone, from his inner self, now separated from his familial household, and *so* (the causal implication is powerful) immortal. In the lines that will become the "Prospectus" of *The Excursion*, the Eden once associated with the siblings' new home becomes the site of an abstract marriage, not of husband and wife, nor even, metaphorically, of a "solitary pair" of siblings, but an marriage of mind and world; and the speaker stands outside this married "couple," outside the household of world and mind, and "sing[s] in solitude the spousal verse/Of this great consummation" (1003–4).

In an important sense, these words return us to the beginning of the poem, in which (as in "Tintern Abbey") the speaker at first seems alone in the landscape, claiming sole possession. But the violence of such a return after nearly nine hundred lines embedding the speaker's literary labors in a "rich" conglomeration of siblings and spouses also marks the ideological distance between corporate domesticity and the solitary genius. That genius cannot be fully summoned until the poet withdraws from his brotherhood, implicitly privatizing the household that becomes the outgrown cradle of his individuality. The grown sibling leaves the house, his departure reframing his household's collective productivity as the production of an individual whose artistry issues from, and is possessed by, that individual alone—and that is realized, paradoxically, through his departure from the home place.

Mary Lamb's Industrial Household

In *Home at Grasmere*, the male poet's professional detachment from the domestic collective, though perhaps unexpected and in its own way fraught, is not complicated by his marital status. For the speaker of the poem, "marriage" functions as an enabling trope, a figuration of fruitfulness that amplifies the poet's capacities, that frees rather than trammels. A man's legal and economic autonomy, his relationship to or performance of productive labor of whatever kind, his civil identity, his family name—none of these can be altered by legal or, for that matter, metaphorical marriage. He remains himself, a freestanding public entity who owns what he produces. Not surprisingly, "marriage" has quite a different rhetorical function in Mary Lamb's "On Needle-work," in which a woman writer's claim to literary identity appears so complicated by her marital condition as to render Lamb's argument superficially inchoate to readers of our own time. Recognizing the extent to which cultural expectation continued to constrain unmarried women, we have tended to discount the significance of adult unmarried women's "uncovered" legal identity and (in

law) unregulated independence, lumping together adult women of the period as if they had all suffered the civil death of marriage. Yet this was not so, and Lamb's essay, advocating for the industrial household's carefully guarded domestic boundaries, addresses the challenge posed to such a household by unmarried women's autonomy.

In 1815, Mary Lamb sent an essay in letter form to the *British Ladies Magazine* under the pseudonym "Sempronia." Now known by the title "On Needle-work," this essay argues for the complete professionalization of sewing on the double grounds that working women need the income and that married (implicitly middle-class) women need the time they spend in needlework to pursue what Sempronia terms "the sum and substance of woman's domestic ambition": "To make a man's home so desirable a place as to preclude his having a wish to pass his leisure hours at any fireside in preference to his own" (178). Readers in our own time tend to find Sempronia's argument a maddening mixture of nascent feminist critique and entrenched patriarchal values. Aaron, for instance, speaks of the "abrupt ideological swerves which characterize this text," concluding that "no arguments sustain these reversals" (71 and 72). How, we wonder, can the restrictive notion of domesticity assumed by the passage above coexist in the same text with a claim that, as nearly as society could reach the point where "needle-work were never practised but for a remuneration in money […] so much more nearly will women be upon an equality with men, as far as respects the mere enjoyment of life" (Lamb 177)?

But to me "On Needle-work" seems in one respect entirely consistent: Sempronia bases her call for the professionalization of sewing on a sharp distinction between married and unmarried women, and between what she calls "*real business*" and "womanly employment" (177, emphasis original; 178). Not surprisingly, these distinctions are entangled in class difference. Sempronia seems to include not just wives but all women who keep house "in behalf of father, son, husband or brother" as possible "mistress[es] of the family" (178). But, as we will see, Sempronia's "family" is clearly a middle-class one in which these housekeepers, who are most successfully "employed" when the signs of labor disappear, are all "wives" in that they do not earn money or support themselves. In the same way, Sempronia's reiterated descriptions of "needle-women" as "supporting themselves," and being engaged in "real business," which she defines as active material productivity, but identifies them as figuratively single in that they are not "maintained" (179) by husbands.

In the essay's central section, in fact, unmarried middle-class women and married working-class women disappear entirely: there are only middle-class wives and single working women. As she justifies needlework for wages as a protection to men's predominance in other trades (an apparent "reversal" of

the type Aaron worries about), Sempronia imagines a world in which girls, like boys, would be raised to make their living—but only if we knew those girls would remain unmarried:

> If at the birth of girls it were possible to foresee in what cases it would be their fortune to pass a single life, we should soon find trades wrested from their present occupiers[…] Plenty of resources would then lie open for single women to obtain an independent livelihood, when every parent would be upon the alert to encroach upon some employment, now engrossed by men, for such of their daughters as would then be exactly in the same predicament as their sons now are. (178–79)

Sempronia then considers what it would be like if sons were in the same predicament as daughters, asking, "Who would lay by money to set up his sons in trade," or to apprentice or educate them for a profession, "if it were in a very high degree probable that, by the time they were twenty years of age, they would be taken from this trade or profession, and maintained during the remainder of their lives by *the person whom they should marry*" (179, emphasis original)? Under such conditions, Sempronia reasons, it makes no sense to prepare daughters to earn a living:

> What must then be the disadvantages under which a very young woman is placed who is required to learn a trade, from which she can never expect to reap any profit, but at the expence of losing that place in society, to the possession of which she may reasonably look forward, inasmuch as it is by far the most *common lot*, the condition of a *happy English wife*? (179, emphasis original)

To readers of the early twenty-first century, the argument may appear convoluted to the point of hypocrisy: needlework should be entirely professionalized, performed only for wages and (implicitly) only by women, because society's expectation that women will marry unfits them for professional training. There is no denying the "catch-22" of such a situation in practice. But our own wish for a differently activist polemic does not make the argument invalid. Rather, it seems to me, Sempronia successfully presses the legal distinction between *feme sole* and *feme covert* to its logical end, and does so in the specific context of industrialized/capitalized production. She articulates the crucial differences between married and unmarried women in their potential productivity, once productivity moves outside the home and is defined in monetary terms. Money spent training young women will likely be wasted, *because* (society expects) they will marry; young women can "never expect to reap any

profit" from their training unless they suffer the "expence" of not marrying. We may notice, though Sempronia does not explicitly do so, that the married woman's inability to profit from training is not only because married women are "maintained" by their husbands, but also because even their profits would be not theirs but would belong to their husbands. What married women can and should "possess" is not marketable skill or material wealth but a "place in society," a "*common lot*," a "condition"—that is, their place as *femes covert*, a lot common not only with other married women but also with their husbands, a condition that not only provides for their maintenance by their husbands but also for the appropriation of any profit or material possession that they might achieve to those husbands.

The work of married women, too, is not like that of men or of unmarried women, both of which groups may be said to enjoy "*real business and real leisure*, two sources of happiness which we certainly partake of in a very inferior degree" (177, emphasis original). Rather, women keeping house (and here unmarried middle-class women, sisters and aunts and daughters, reappear in the condition of figurative wives maintained by the man's work) have only "feminine duties," very different from "employment," in which "the faculties of the body or mind are called into busy action" (177). These feminine duties are thoroughly distinguished from work by their modifying adjective, and by their invisibility as work. Far preferable, in Sempronia's view, if the needlework that stands in for "real business" should be set entirely aside: "If a family be so well ordered that the master is never called in to its direction, and yet he perceives comfort and economy well attended to, the mistress of that family (especially if children form a part of it) has, I apprehend, as large a share of womanly employment as ought to satisfy her own sense of duty" (178). "Womanly employment," then, is defined by its invisibility. A woman "satisfies her sense of duty" when the "master" is unaware of the labor and the management of the household, perceiving only that the household is so "well-ordered" that it calls for no more "direction." This orderliness, this lack of need for his managerial skills, appears to him not in the person of his busy wife (or sister, or aunt, or daughter) taking the affairs of the day in hand but as the disembodied effects of "comfort and economy."[10]

Sempronia's use of "we" in the passage above is quite interesting, since it cannot include all women (but does include her, of which more later). The unmarried working woman must be engaged in "real business," employment for money outside the home, characterized by its "busy action." "Sempronia" is moved to write precisely because "workwomen [needle workers] of every description were never in so much distress for want of employment" (176), and in the very last sentence of the essay she contrasts needlework done as "entertainment" and "simple pastime" by (implicitly)

middle-class women with that done by "poor needle-women belonging to those branches of employment from which [the lady] has borrowed these shares of pleasurable labour" (180). "We," then, must be middle-class women, all of whom must fit that condition of "wives" in that they have no "real business," enjoying no "profit" and being maintained by men who do work and are truly productive. But women excluded from this "we" are all rendered figuratively single, whether they are or not in law. Earning money, engaged in "busy action," married working women might not enjoy "real leisure," but neither could they belong to the class that only took "shares" in "pleasurable labor." Rather, all professionalized practitioners of needlework become "unmarried women" in the sense that they are not "maintained" and are monetarily productive. At the core of Sempronia's scheme, in its fullest realization, there are no unmarried women inside the middle-class house, no sisters laboring at sewing for money and sewing for the family and maintaining domestic harmony. There are only workers and wives, and the two are utterly separate.

There are also no writers in the house, or rather no professional writers. Unlike the Grasmere journals' account of the Wordsworth "Concern," which locates Dorothy's literary work both in and out of doors, and which conflates domestic labor and publication, Sempronia establishes her literary identity by claiming to be a *former* professional. Her essay opens with these words: "In my early life I passed eleven years in the exercise of my needle for a livelihood. Will you allow me to address your readers, among whom might perhaps be found some of the kind patronesses of my former humble labours, on […] the state of needlework in this country" (176). In the next sentence she again calls attention to her double authorization as a needlewoman who is no longer a member of "the industrious sisterhood to which I once belonged" (176). In order to speak on this subject, Sempronia must have once done this work for wages, and apparently also must now not do this—her current freedom from this kind of work being an important condition for "intellectual improvement," as she says in the next paragraph (176). The essay's silence as to why its speaker no longer earns wages, together with the passage we have read, permits (though it does not enforce) the inference that she has married—that she speaks from that "we" that is really middle-class women—and that she is not, as in fact the historical Mary Lamb is, working for other kinds of wages as a professional author, housekeeping with her brother in a home where wage and domestic labor are decidedly mixed. Unlike her narrator, the historical author remains a member of an "industrious sisterhood," though not that of paid seamstresses.

Sempronia's split claim to her literary identity as one experienced in the marketplace, but now removed to amateur status, replicates the essay's distinction between middle-class wives and single working women. At the same time,

Sempronia implicitly professionalizes art, putting it outside the house and connecting it with paid labor. Needlework itself may be practiced as an art, as the term "patroness" in her opening words hints. The suggestion is confirmed in the essay's third paragraph, in which Sempronia points out that "fancy work, the fairest of the tribe" of sewing tasks, is too artistic an endeavor to coincide with good domestic management: "that lady must be a true lover of the art, and so industrious a pursuer of a predetermined purpose, that it were pity her energy should not have been directed to some wiser end, who can affirm she neither feels weariness during the execution of a fancy piece, nor takes more time than she had calculated for the performance" (177). In the very next sentence Sempronia asks whether it would not increase domestic comfort and happiness "if needle-work were never practised but for a remuneration in money" (177). Artistic needlework, like its more utilitarian cousins, is best performed outside the home and for pay, because the "industrious" pursuit of art by a "true lover" of that art conflicts with proper domestic labor (which is to say, the concealment of any labor at all).

How, then, can the now domesticated Sempronia claim her immediate identity as a published writer? The answer seems to lie in Sempronia's connection between the "intellectual progression" among middle-class women traced by the editor of the *British Lady's Magazine* (176) and advances in domestic management. Although Sempronia agrees that the "respectable" women whom she knows do not, "in their mental attainments, at all disprove the prevailing opinion of that intellectual progression […] yet I affirm that I know not a single family where there is not some essential drawback to its comfort which may be traced to needle-work *done at home*" (176, emphasis original). Sempronia's "yet" sets up the inference that middle-class women's intellectual progression is threatened by the poor domestic management represented in their pursuit of home needlework. That word "comfort," as we have seen, appears again in connection with "economy," as Sempronia describes the ideal ordering of the home place. The point of domestic management for the woman will not be the real leisure enjoyed by the man, we know, but rather still more work, as the woman uses her time to become "a conversational companion […] to study and understand the subjects on which he loves to talk" (177). Study, understanding, conversation all come hard to the woman who "labour[s] under [disadvantages] from an education differing from a manly one" (177). In such intellectual work, Sempronia implies, she herself has been engaged, leading apparently not only to conversation but also to writing. Yet Sempronia's particular case remains an exception in this picture, as her opening words make clear. A former professional, she writes from that double identity—and both faces depend on the full professionalization of her former art, and on its exclusion from the home place.

Women's Labor and the Lost Sister in Gaskell's *Mary Barton*

As in the versions of authority constructed by William Wordsworth in *Home at Grasmere* and "Michael," Mary Lamb's construction of Sempronia's literary identity detaches the artist from domestic labor, from household relations and potential collaboration, and adds two key elements that are also rendered as desirable: the open privileging of paid professionalism for artistic, as for utilitarian labor, and the exclusion of the adult unmarried sister from the house. Lamb's domesticity is in this respect an even more explicitly industrial domesticity than William's, pressing the legal distinctions between married and unmarried women toward an ideal domesticity that supports both—but very differently, moving unmarried women out of spousal households and into the public realm of paid labor where married women's thoughtful management creates an economic niche of genteel labor, household labors now rendered "industrial," in which unmarried women may labor with propriety for a sufficiency. The devil, as ever, is in the details, and Gaskell's *Mary Barton* enlarges on these details its representations of unmarried working-class women working in factories, at needlework at home and abroad, and in categories of paid domestic labor both higher and lower on the social scale than Lamb's essay considers. The novel is published a generation and a half after Lamb's essay, and takes as its setting an industrialized midlands much altered in that space of time, a landscape of labor more detailed and enlarged than that described in Semphronia's tightly woven argument.

The trajectory of *Mary Barton*'s titular character, working for much of the novel as a dressmaker's apprentice, seems partly in accord with Lamb's full-throated endorsement of industrial domesticity, and given the similarity of Gaskell's narrative persona to Lamb's, that accord would not be unexpected. But the full range of Gaskell's "Tale of Manchester Life" presents a differently complex argument in which we may read the ideals of corporate domesticity, particularly its celebration of the resident unmarried sister, still invoked, but increasingly complicated or outright thwarted by the growing compartmentalization of work and home in industrial society. In the novel's account the unmarried working woman leaving the parental or sibling home to earn a living, by needlework or otherwise, succeeds in securing only a marginal existence, and in some cases generates disastrous consequences for herself and her family. Specifically, the narrative develops two extended characterizations of adult unmarried sisters that point to the economic and emotional value that such sisters might be expected contribute to their married siblings' homes. But the catastrophic failure of one—the elder Mary Barton's sister Esther—and the qualified success of the other—Alice Wilson—also point to the fading efficacy of corporate domesticity's sibling cohorts. The deaths of Esther and

Alice close the case, as it were, of the sister in the house. Neither refusing (as Esther does) nor fulfilling (as Alice does) the valued role assigned to this figure by corporate domesticity seems to resolve the cultural challenge presented by, and to, the unfettered *feme sole*. Extending these qualifying complications further, Esther's story allows us to imagine that if she and John Barton could have legally married, much evil might have been averted or softened. Taken together with the end of the younger Mary's story, these implications suggest that even legal marriage cannot fully resolve the difficulties represented by the adult unmarried sister, at least not marriage in Gaskell's industrialized England.

Several years after the elder Mary Barton's death, her daughter "engage[s] herself as apprentice (so called, though there were no deeds or indentures to the bond) to a certain Miss Simmonds, milliner and dressmaker" for a period of two years without pay, "where afterwards she was to dine and have tea, with a small quarterly salary" (29). The narrator explores the advantages of such a position, as differently understood by father and daughter, in some detail. John Barton, who has become an active member of his union and of the Chartist movement in the years since his wife's death, has "never left off disliking a factory life for a girl" since Esther's departure and fall confirmed his belief that factory work's good wages gave young women too much freedom. But John is equally set against the other respectable employment alternative for a girl of Mary's class, domestic service, which he "considered […] as a species of slavery" (28). Mary, as the narrator tells us, has "less sensible" reasons for preferring dressmaking: wanting to keep the "independence of action" she has enjoyed since her mother's death, she is also "determined that her beauty should make her a lady," as she believes her vanished Aunt Esther has become, and thinks that the hard physical work domestic service would hurt her good looks (28). Although John's failed efforts to place Mary in a true apprentice-ship in a dressmaking shop leave him feeling that dressmaking "was not worth learning" after all (28), she convinces him to be "contented" with her less lucrative solution, "plan[ning] for the future so cheerily, that both went to bed with easy if not happy hearts" (29).

These cheery hopes are not borne out. Although her employment does continue when the factories lay off workers, so that Mary remains "secure of two meals a day" and enough in wages to pay their weekly rent (99), she cannot also feed her father or keep the house in that marginal comfort to which they had become used in good times. Mary's disastrous relationship with Harry Carson, and the monitory figure of Sally Leadbitter, demonstrate that employment in a dressmaker's shop involves no less moral hazard than John Barton associates with factory work. For all the hope Mary and her father place in her apprenticeship, a seamstress's lot in *Mary Barton* more nearly

resembles the famous popular description in Thomas Hood's "Song of the Shirt," or of Gaskell's extended treatment in her novel *Ruth*, than the salutary independence of Lamb's professional needlewoman.

In fact neither of Lamb's goals, the exclusion of needlework from the domestic space or self-sufficiency for the unmarried working woman, are achieved in Gaskell's version of the story. Beyond John's "ideas and feelings towards the higher classes," his objection to Mary's going into service was that "he disliked the idea of parting with her, who was the light of his hearth; the voice of his otherwise silent home" (28). Mary's position with Miss Simmonds neither requires nor enables Mary to live away from home, providing only "a *very* small [salary], divisible into a minute weekly pittance" (29, emphasis original). Remaining at home, managing what is left of the Barton household, Mary would have continued to do whatever domestic sewing is needed in the household—although, interestingly, the novel does not show her doing this particular domestic work (as it does, for instance, washing her father's shirts before he goes to London to present the Chartist petition). Margaret Legh, whom the narrative first describes as a "young workwoman" (the term meaning "seamstress"), also sews for wages, but at home, and by the piece order (31). On the night of the fire at Carson's, Mary helps Margaret as she hurries to finish mourning clothes for a funeral, a task Mary takes on for friendship's sake and without pay: "I'll sit down and help you with pleasure, though I was tired enough of sewing to-night at Miss Simmonds'" (43). In *Mary Barton* needlework remains in various ways domesticated, unpaid or underpaid, and when undertaken for wages outside the home, fraught with the perils of insufficiency and moral temptation.

In these deficiencies needlework seems no different from the other paid work that single working-class women undertake in the novel. A notable exception is Margaret Legh's singing, with which she begins to earn good money after her failing eyesight ends her ability to continue sewing (or nursing, as Alice does). As Margaret tells Mary when she lends her a "bit o' gold" (a sovereign), "money comes in so easily now to what it used to do; and it's downright pleasure to earn it, for I do so like singing" (123). Margaret's professional artistry is hedged round in interesting ways: driven by necessity (it is clear she would not have sought such employment on her own), located within her class (the first job is at the Mechanics Institute, singing songs to accompany a lecturer on music), and of course carrying the heavy price of disabling blindness. By the end of the novel we know that, cured of her blindness, she will marry Will Wilson and so be relieved of the necessity of maintaining herself. Still, the novel's recognition of women's artistry as profitable adds a further complicating feature to its representations of unmarried women's labor.

If these complications undercut any clear case for Lamb's sharply defined industrial domesticity, other elements of *Mary Barton* make it equally hard to advance corporate domesticity as a positive alternative for the novel's characters. John Barton and Job Legh live with their unmarried daughter and granddaughter respectively, but none of the four have living blood siblings, so that Margaret and Mary are metaphorical "sisters in the house," and in the parental house at that. The Wilson family forms a more recognizable corporate household, shaped and stabilized by sibling relationships, and both the Bartons and the Leghs form metaphorical and, eventually, affinal bonds with the Wilsons. But the characters who are adult unmarried sisters, both of whom have lived in married siblings' households, appear to draw significant limits to the hopes of corporate households like the Wilsons'. Gone missing or cut off from their birth homes, progressively compromised by addiction or disability, Mary's aunt Esther and Alice Wilson index the fading value of corporate domesticity in Gaskell's industrial midlands.

Although Esther seems to be outside the main plot for long periods, she returns at crucial junctures, and though the general tendency has been to regard her as a simultaneously sensational and didactic figure (drunkard fallen woman tries to save niece from same fate) occasionally functioning as deus ex machina, a different reading places her at one nexus of the novel's conflicts. In the novel's first chapter, John Barton talks with George Wilson about Esther's recent disappearance from the Barton home, where she had lived until recently. John believes that "she's gone off with somebody," and places the blame on Esther's beauty, her love of finery, and her imagining herself as a lady (14).[11] These are the familiar terms of the fallen woman's vain errors, but there is another culprit, as John explains, " 'That's the worst of factory work for girls. They can earn so much when work is plenty, that they can maintain themselves any how' " (14). By John's account, he loses his temper and confronts Esther, warning her that if she becomes "a street-walker" he will not let her into his house, and though they quickly simmer down to talk "more friendly," they agree that "we should be much better friends if she went into lodgings, and only came to see us now and then" (14–15).

In moving out of her married sister's household, and in already having a sufficiency with which to do so, Esther partly matches the profile of Mary Lamb's independently self-supporting unmarried woman whose labor has been successfully removed from the spousal household, to the advantage of that household as well as the advantage of the needle worker. But instead multiple tragedies seem to depend from Esther's economic autonomy and her separate householding. Esther eventually does go down the path John predicts, at first living with a man and having his child out of wedlock, then turning to prostitution to support herself and her daughter, and, after her daughter's

death from illness Esther could not treat because of their poverty, becoming that most vulnerable of prostitutes, a streetwalker, addicted to drink. Not long after Esther leaves, her sister Mary dies in childbed, and her grieving husband blames Esther for (in their doctor's word) a fatal "shock to the system" (24): "[John's] feelings toward Esther almost amounted to curses. It was she who had brought on all this sorrow. Her giddiness, her lightness of conduct, had wrought this woe. His previous thoughts about her had been tinged with wonder and pity, but now he hardened his heart against her for ever" (25).

John's growing bitterness over every wrong of the factory system includes this bitterness against Esther, for whose "lightness of conduct" he blames not only Esther but also the factories that give independent incomes to girls and the poverty that brings envy of the easy life of the masters and their ladies. His increasing intransigence and despair, and his own eventual addiction to opium, have more immediate causes as well, but Esther's departure and fall are clearly marked as a foundational element of his condition. The damage done lies not just in the moment of the married sister's death, in that "shock to the system," but in the continuing absence of the unmarried sister who might have taken her (metaphorical) place. The quotation above closes a paragraph, and the next paragraph opens: "One of the good influences over John Barton's life had departed that night. One of the ties which bound him down to the gentle humanities of earth was loosened, and henceforward the neighbours all remarked he was a changed man" (25). Esther's departure forecloses the possibility of the comfort and guidance that might have been offered to both John and daughter Mary by that deceased wife's sister who, although not legally marriageable to the widower, might still be expected to anchor the Bartons' domestic life as the unmarried sister in the house, providing material and emotional care.

In this scenario, too, the family would gain Esther's wages, at least so long as she was able to stay in work. The heartbreaking descent of the Bartons from the modest cheer of that first tea party to a bare house, gradually "stripped of all its little ornaments" and then necessities during the layoffs, and to increasing hunger, could only have been slowed, not stopped, by Esther's extra earning power (99). Mary's continuing, though still insufficient, earning power as a dressmaker underscores the likely disappearance of Esther's income as a factory worker. Yet Esther's earning potential, limited though it clearly would be, is not without value given the novel's relentless mapping of the demoralizing, ultimately fatal effects of poverty. As we learn from John Barton's and George Wilson's interventions in the stricken Davenport household, every piece of good cloth or cheap crockery has potentially saving value.

The thread of Esther's lost potential as the unmarried sister in the house is carried through the narrative by her repeated reappearances. As the novel's

"murder mystery" begins to unfold, Esther advances this part of the story in a series of carefully constructed encounters and misunderstandings, and one may indeed read her as a useful pawn in the author's plotting. But the narrative also consistently attributes Esther's reappearances to her guilty and heartfelt desire to now, belatedly, act as a sister should have to support her sister's family, turning first to John and then to Jem in a effort to save Mary from her folly with Harry Carson. "Listen to me for Mary's sake!" she begs John, accosting him in the street: "[Esther] meant his daughter, but the name only fell on [John's] ear as belonging to his wife" (106). Their misunderstanding doubly suggests the force of Esther's absence, which she understands as a failure to the child and he as a failure to fill the role Esther should have filled as mother Mary's sister. He upbraids Esther as a fratricide: "thou names that name to me! […] it was thee who killed her, as sure as Cain killed Abel […] at her judgment-day she'll rise, and point to thee as her murderer; or if she don't, I will" (107). As Esther focuses on daughter Mary's needs, John returns to what he understand as Esther's originary failure as mother Mary's sister. Esther's later frantic thoughts take up the terms of John's accusation. "Oh, what shall I do to save Mary's child?", she worries immediately after their encounter (108). Again, after her release from prison (where she was incarcerated for "disorderly vagrancy" just after talking to John), Esther sets out to act on the "one thought [that] had haunted her both by night and by day […] how to save Mary (her dead sister's only child, her own little pet in the days of her innocence) from following in the same downward path to vice" (108 and 135). It is the sister relation that drives Esther's delayed sense of responsibility and so (in the complicated causal chains of the novel) her reappearances—and, in turn, Jem's eventual release, since Mary's certainty of his innocence, founded on Esther's evidence, drives Mary's desperate race to clear Jem's name.[12]

Mary Barton's grimly realistic images of industrial poverty and its sensational expansion of the consequences of that poverty into a murder trial may claim our attention so completely that these nuances seem inconsequential. Yet I would argue that the lost sister theme is an essential, not an incidental, part of the novel's structure, as the complementary character of Alice Wilson indicates. Alice's story, which we hear her tell to Mary Barton and Margaret Legh in the fourth chapter, is both like and unlike Esther's: a country girl, she leaves her parents' house to join her brothers George and Tom in Manchester, where Tom has reported that "'terrible lots of work was to be had, both for lads and lasses'" (32). Alice calls herself "'young and thoughtless'" for being eager to leave her home, but she has also begun her tale by saying that "there was more mouths at home than could be fed" (32). Going into domestic service, Alice lives at the edge of sufficiency but loves her work, telling Mary, who says she is glad to have not gone into service herself, "thou little knows the

pleasure o' helping others" (33). When Tom and his wife die, leaving one child ("the Lord had taken six to himself," Alice explains), Alice "took him myself, and left service to make a bit on a home-place for him" (34). The boy, Will Wilson, goes for a sailor when he's grown, and when we meet her Alice dotes on his memory and hopes for his return.

Alice's tale of leaving home to live as an independent wage earner diverges from Esther's in Alice's fulfillment of her sister role. Her support of brother Tom, who she says was "a scapegrace, poor fellow, and always wanted help of one kind or another," and his wife, "but a helpless kind of body," extends after their deaths into fostering her nephew—giving up domestic service, but now becoming a washerwoman to support the aunt-and-nephew household (34). Not only does Alice carry out the role expected of an unmarried adult sister in corporate domesticity, but in so doing, despite her marginal success as a wage earner, she underwrites the family's material security and its posterity. Will returns from the sea, just after George Wilson's (his uncle and Alice's brother) death, to support and comfort Alice at the end of her life. He falls in love with, and eventually marries, Margaret Legh, and at the novel's end the couple is planning to join Mary and Jem in their Canadian Eden.

Will is not the only nephew supporting Alice as she fades toward death. Jem Wilson, George Wilson's son, also takes Alice's welfare as his responsibility. Even as he plans to ask Mary to marry him, having reached the point where he can "maintain a wife in comfort," he does so knowing that "his mother and aunt must form part of the household" (110). The narrator's account of Jem's thinking on his mother and aunt as part of his married home continues: "but such is not an uncommon case among the poor, and if there were the advantages of previous friendship between the parties, it was not, he thought, an obstacle to matrimony" (110). This further thought suggests that Jem perceives his responsibility for supporting his aunt, as well as mother, outweighing his desire to marry, implying that his marriage is economically possible only if they can form a single household. Later, when Jem receives (as Margaret puts it) "'two or three hunder pounds for his invention'" of an improved engine, he uses it to buy annuities for his mother and Alice (122). Jane Wilson explains, "He had [Alice's] name put down for her life; but, poor thing, she'll not be long to the fore […] And so, Mary, yo see, we're two ladies o' property. It's a matter o' twenty pound a year, they tell me" (124).[13] Alice, now helpless, had long been a support in George and Jane Wilson's household, as she had been in Tom and his wife's. Now the nephews, sons of her brothers, return the material and emotional "profits" of Alice's labor in her siblings' households. And if one understand Alice's early interview with Mary and Margaret as being an exemplary tale of love and service, a nurturing of these girls with more than the tea they are sharing, then Alice's hand in their

marriages to her nephews, in the living future of the family, is here faintly sketched as well.

Reduced to this shape, Alice's story—her faithful performance of the unmarried sister's part, the return of her care in her nephews' support, the parallel marriages of the nephew-cousins at the end of the novel—might seem a relatively uncomplicated celebration of corporate domesticity. But the narrative also identifies Alice with ways of life passing into nostalgic memory, with rural labors that can no longer support the younger characters of the novel. Alice's "invaluable qualities as a sick nurse," though founded in her compassion, also depend on her "considerable knowledge of hedge and field simples," as the narrator explains (20). Alice first appears to us as Mary comes to ask her to tea, and finds Alice "but just come in": "[Alice] had been out all day in the fields, gathering wild herbs for drinks and medicine […] on fine days, when no more profitable occupation offered itself, she used to ramble off into the lanes and meadows as far as her legs could carry her" to gather "all manner of hedge-row, ditch, and field plants […] which have a powerful effect either for good or for evil, and are consequently much used among the poor" (20).

"The fields" where Alice gathers her herbs are by implication the "Green Heys Fields" of the opening scenes of the novel, where the laborers of Manchester and their families are walking and resting. The narrator marks the "contrast in these common-place but thoroughly rural fields, with the busy, bustling manufacturing town," linking such picturesque rurality to times past: "Here and there an old black and white farm-house, with its rambling outbuildings, speaks of other times and other occupations than those which now absorb the population of the neighbourhood" (11). Those occupations, their sounds and sights, are lyrically detailed by the narrator: "the country business of hay-making, ploughing, &c. […] the lowing of cattle, the milkmaid's call, the clatter and cackle of poultry in the old farm-yards" (11). Perhaps most lyrical is the narrator's description of "the little garden surrounding" "one of those old-world, gabled, black and white houses […] crowded with a medley of old-fashioned herbs and flowers, planted long ago, when the garden was the only druggist's shop within reach, and allowed to grow in scrambling and wild luxuriance—roses, lavender, sage, balm (for tea), rosemary, pinks and wallflowers, onions and jessamine" (12). Although Alice gathers her "simples" by the way instead of from such a garden, her not-so "profitable occupation" belongs to these outmoded scenes of rural labor, now rendered picturesque and associated with leisure, "popular places of resort at every holiday time" for the laborers of the new industrialized world (11).

Alice's field forays cross the borders of these worlds, from her place at the margins of industrial life—washerwoman in a place of soot and city dirt, dweller in a damp cellar room kept clean by main force—to the dwindling

margins of the rural ways of her childhood. She carries her remedies—her herbs, her Biblical faith, her sisterly labors—to the children of Manchester, and appears in many ways to be the moral center of the novel's story. But though she longs and plans to return to her rural home, Alice finds here an uncrossable boundary: "Many a time and oft have I planned to go," she tells Mary and Margaret. "I plan it yet, and hope to go home again before it please God to take me" (33). Except in the vivid memories that remain as her sight, hearing, and sense slowly fail her, Alice does not return to her birth home: "Still she talked of green fields, and still she spoke to the long-dead mother and sister, low-lying in their graves this many a year, as if they were with her and about her, in the pleasant places where her youth had passed" (211). She dies the day after Jem, cleared by Will's testimony, returns from Liverpool, her work apparently complete.

Esther's death, like Alice's, is a lingering one, marked by delirium and, perhaps surprisingly, associated with rural images. When Jem goes looking for Esther so that he and Mary can convince Esther to emigrate with them, he is able to trace "the Butterfly"—her street name—to a lodging house. The landlady explains that Esther, whom she had briefly taken in, "wanted a spot to die in, in peace": "if she was far away in the country she could steal aside and die in a copse, or a clough, like the wild animals; but here the police would let no one alone in the streets" (323). When Esther appears at the Bartons' house (where Mary has returned), the country images—so different from Alice's, and yet with echoing evocations of innocent childhood—return in the narrator's account: "She had come (as a wounded deer drags its heavy limbs once more to the green coolness of the lair in which it was born, there to die), to see the place familiar to her innocence" (323). Like Alice, too, Esther dies in her now-dead sibling's home, with her sister's daughter at her side, as Alice dies with her brothers' sons at hers.

Esther's death also points back to the sister relation in a way unparalleled in Alice's story: "They laid her in one grave with John Barton. And there they lie without name, or initial, or date," with only an enigmatic Bible verse "inscribed upon the stone which covers the remains of these two wanderers" (324). The likenesses between Esther and John, their mutual though differently expressed hatred of poverty, their addictions and profound moral failures, drive one reading of this shared grave. But there is another possible meaning open to readers in a time when the legality of marriage with a deceased wife's sister was hotly debated, and when the propriety and the economic value of sisters living in their married siblings' homes were issues of detailed discussion: Esther and John are at last housed together, their names—their legal identities—obscured by a single phrase implying their eventual forgiveness. Whether one imagines Esther continuing as the unmarried aunt in the Barton

household, or indulges the political fantasy of Esther legally enabled to marry John, this possibility opens into a different narrative altogether, one in which "sister" and "brother" are housed together in life—and in which Mary Barton's story might be very different.

Yet if marriage is to transform unmarried sisters into wives, and sibling households into spousal households, then its potential in this novel seems singularly truncated. For Esther, the possible remedy of marriage fails altogether, except perhaps metaphorically and in death. For Mary and Jem, the positive potential of marriage and a spousal household can be realized only in a kind of exile. Turned off from the foundry where he has worked, knowing that his fellows at Mr. Duncombe's cannot believe in his innocence and that "sooner or later" the truth of John Barton's crime would become known and Mary become "a show to folk for many a day," Jem determines to leave England (310).[14] Mr. Duncombe finds him a post as "instrument maker to the Agricultural College they are establishing at Toronto, in Canada" (310), and to Canada they go, taking Jem's mother with them. This is a Edenic "Canada" that seems formed from equal parts of Wordsworth and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Evangeline*:

> I see a long low wooden house, with room enough and to spare. The old primeval trees are felled and gone for many a mile around; one alone remains to overshadow the gable-end of the cottage. There is a garden around the dwelling, and far beyond that stretches an orchard. The glory of an Indian summer is over all, making the heart leap at the sight of its gorgeous beauty. (324)

The narrator's description of Mary and Jem's Canadian home immediately follows the account of Esther and John's shared grave, with no other transition than the prophetic "I see." As the novel closes, Jem and Mary learn that Will and the soon-to-be-cured Margaret will marry, and plan to join them—perhaps with Job as well.

It is tempting to read in these final lines a reconstitution of corporate domesticity, a future in which the cousins eventually produce more cousins who might marry, the wives growing close as sisters, the mother and grandfather cared for as they should be. But not only is this "Canada" idyllic if not downright imaginary, it is not England. Back in the old country, Mr. Carson's spiritual transformation is working good changes, we are told, with many "improvements now in practice in the system of employment in Manchester" and "many yet to be carried into execution" originating in "short earnest sentences spoken by Mr. Carson" (320). Yet the novel's plot concludes that the future of Manchester's young workers, its artisans and sailors, does not lie

there: emigration from their birthplace is the only path opened for Mary and Jem, for Will and Margaret. And if the lyrical description of Jem and Mary's Canadian home closes the frame opened by the picturesque account of Green Heys Fields at the beginning of the novel, then this Canadian gabled cottage, its enveloping garden and its extensive orchard, are vulnerable to the same fate as those in England.

Published 13 years after Lord Lyndhurst's bill (the parliamentary action that initiated 70 years of active debate on Marriage with a Deceased Wife's sister) and in the same year as the *First Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the State and Operation of the Law of Marriage as Relating to the Prohibited Degrees of Affinity*, Gaskell's *Mary Barton* exemplifies the particular figurations that carried the weight of the Marriage to a Deceased Woman's Sister (MDWS) controversy. The adult unmarried sister appears in crucial roles that index the success, or lack thereof, of various domestic ideals; the individual's departure from the familial home place, often repeated in narrative cycles of departure and return, is further dramatized as a departure, temporary or permanent, from the national homeland. Chapter 3 engages the political and literary discourses of the MDWS controversy, demonstrating how both supporters and opponents of MDWS sought to counterbalance the culturally threatening economic and legal autonomy of the adult unmarried sister by her conversion into a metaphorical or a literal wife—the latter solution, in particular, effecting her permanent departure from the birth family. In these discourses, too, the tropes of departure and return, of expatriation and repatriation, link the homely and the national "domestic," enacting the grown sibling's departure from the household on a scale of international significance.

Chapter 3

THE PROBLEM OF THE SISTER
IN THE HOUSE

At the end of Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Sir Thomas Bertram finds that his personal happiness and his family's fortunes are embodied in a most unexpected person: the poor niece he fostered from her childhood, Fanny Price, who will marry his second son, Edmund, and so secure the family's future. With both of his blood daughters compromised, one by scandal and divorce, the other by a less than salubrious marriage, and his elder son weakened by a gambling habit and physical illness, Sir Thomas learns that "Fanny was indeed the daughter that he wanted":

> His liberality had a rich repayment, and the general goodness of his intentions by her deserved it. He might have made her childhood happier; but it had been an error of judgment only which had given him the appearance of harshness, and deprived him of her early love; and now, on really knowing each other, their mutual attachment became very strong. After settling her at Thornton Lacy [Edmund's living] with every kind attention to her comfort, the object of almost every day was to see her there, or to get her away from it. (546)

Fanny's domestic services to the family as constant companion to Lady Bertram and general household assistant will now be supplied by Fanny's sister Susan, who becomes "the stationary niece" and in a short time "could never be spared" by their aunt (546). With three Price nieces and nephews provided for (though William's commission can only indirectly be attributed to Sir Thomas), and one of them married to his second son, Sir Thomas finds happiness in "[Susan's] usefulness, in Fanny's excellence, in William's continued good conduct, and rising fame, and in the general well-doing and success of the other members of the family, all assisting to advance each other, and doing credit to his countenance and aid" (547).

We recognize here the outlines of a corporate household partially restored: despite the elder Ward sisters' initial hostility and later inattention

to their poorer sister, sibling ties reestablish themselves through the uncle-by-marriage's provision of material and, eventually, emotional care to his niece. The niece, too, carries out her expected role as she becomes an adult, contributing her care and labor—though this labor is light enough in the physical sense—to a spousal household, here not her own sibling's but her mother's sister's, fulfilling the accustomed role of the unmarried "sister" (as Edmund comes to regard her) in the house. The narrator's voicing of Sir Thomas's thoughts expresses much of his sense of recovered family feeling in the language of profit and investment, representing the felicitous mixture of material and emotional support, the simultaneous material and affective economies of corporate domesticity, that his fostering of Fanny at first lacked but now carefully includes: having "settl[ed] her at Thornton Lacy with every kind attention to her comfort," assuring her material security, he then seeks her company each day at one well-appointed house or the other. Though no children are yet imagined when the novel ends, the married cousins, and the not entirely disastrous marriage of Julia Bertram, suggest the possible renewal of similar lateral sibling ties when, and if, children are born.

But it has been a narrow escape, and the novel has given us plenty of reason to doubt the efficacy of the corporate family model. With the exception of Fanny's fostering (and that very nearly went wrong), the Ward sisters have rarely intervened for good in each other's family lives. Mrs. Norris's influence at Mansfield Park is obstructive and corrupting, and she contributes nothing to the material well-being of her sisters or their children until the very final pages of the novel. The case of the Crawfords provides yet another example (like Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill in *Emma*) of fostering by uncles and aunts gone wrong, while Sir Thomas is at first equally unsuccessful with his niece—and with his children, who are also damaged from his overemphasis on their material well-being and inattention to their emotional and moral growth.

What is it, then, that allows this general recovery of the values and practices of corporate domesticity at the novel's end? In terms of the novel's plot sequence, it is Fanny's doubled departures from, and returns to, her birth home and her foster home that lead to her marriage and, through this, the reestablishment of the corporate household.[1] Her move to Mansfield Park places her in that desirable situation of metaphorical sister among her cousins, allowing her and Edmund's relationship to develop toward their marriage (Mrs. Norris, as usual, is entirely wrong about this situation). Fanny's return as an adult to Portsmouth and her birth family's home, which Sir Thomas hopes will cure her of the "diseased" understanding that prevents her from accepting Henry Crawford's proposal of marriage (425), certainly succeeds in convincing Fanny that the material advantages of her life at Mansfield Park are not separable from the emotional fulfillment she had earlier imagined could only

be found with her birth family. The Prices' disinterest in her and in Mansfield Park, their lack of feeling for her and for their relatives, triggers Fanny's first disillusionment, but the narrative's emphasis then falls equally on the poverty of her surroundings. Fanny's recognition that "she could not respect her parents," and that her brothers and sisters are ungoverned, spoiled, and sullen, is of one piece with her critique of the small, loud, scantily appointed rooms of her parents' home as "the very reverse of what she could have wished. It was the abode of noise, disorder, and impropriety. Nobody was in their right place, nothing was done as it ought to be. She could not respect her parents" (450). There is no division, in this account and in those that follow of her Portsmouth sojourn, between the material and the emotional dearth of the household.

Fanny also applies "the riches which she was in possession of herself, her uncle having given her 10£ at parting," to remedy some of her siblings' failings of feeling and understanding (459). Purchasing a second silver knife ends the quarrel between Susan and another sister over a dead sister's bequest of the first silver knife, so that "a source of domestic altercation was entirely done away, and it was the means of opening Susan's heart to her" (459–60). Using more of her "wealth" to join a circulating library, Fanny expands her new emotional intimacy with her sister into Susan's intellectual and moral "improvement" (461). And once recalled to Mansfield Park, Fanny secures permission to bring Susan with her, replacing herself as figurative sister in the house. By means of these multiple departures and returns, the plot tells us, Fanny becomes marriageable—specifically, the "sister" becomes a wife, the niece a daughter—and family fortune and feeling are at last secured, both for several of the Prices and for the Bertrams.[2]

Many other things happen to forward these events, of course, and I am tracing only that thematic line most pertinent to my own argument. But it is worth noting that even though Fanny becomes better disposed toward Henry Crawford, and gains a clear appreciation of his well-bred manners when he visits her in Portsmouth, it is while she is there that he and Maria Bertram Rushworth run away together. This decisive event, which eventually unmasks Mary Crawford to Edmund as well as ends Henry's chances with Fanny, is chronologically placed inside Fanny's Portsmouth visit, so that all the driving forces of the novel's ending converge in this penultimate part of Fanny's double departure-return sequence.

As we will see, this trope of departure and return, of expatriation and repatriation, serves both corporate domesticity and industrial domesticity in what rather surprisingly turns out to be their common cause: the transformation of sibling into spouse, or more specifically, of the unmarried adult sister into wife. In its construction of sibling and spousal relations as mutually constitutive,

corporate domesticity relies on adult siblings in the house *as* siblings, legally outside of the bonds of marriage—a position that particularly elevates the adult unmarried sister's capacity to contribute to family well-being. But corporate domesticity simultaneously relies on those siblings' commitment to the married sibling and spouse, to the couple's children, their material prosperity, and their emotional well-being, as if the unmarried sibling were a third (or fourth, etc.) de facto party to the marriage. This is what Dorothy Wordsworth shows us in her representation of the ring exchange on William's wedding day, and what *Mansfield Park* differently represents by filling Fanny's empty place with Susan: one unmarried sister is made a literal wife, but another takes her place, "established at Mansfield, with every appearance of equal permanency," becoming "perhaps, the most beloved of the two" (547). The desirability of replacing Fanny also underscores the household's need for such a person, a sister not legally married, and the value of the domestic functions (labor might be too strong a word in this case) that she fulfills.[3]

Yet despite this high valuation of the unmarried adult sister in the corporate family, the conversion through at least a figurative marriage ("equal permanency," "most beloved") appears essential. Fanny Price shows us why: this poor, unprepossessing young woman, a dependent who avoids being seen and heard, nonetheless displays an astonishing capacity for independent action. Disapproving of the play the Bertram children and their friends want to mount in their private theatricals, she resists becoming part of the company even after her cousin Edmund gives in (though we feel she may be giving way, she has not yet done so when Sir Thomas arrives). Distrusting Henry Crawford, she steadily refuses to accept his proposal, even when importuned by her uncle and cousin. And although the money she spends in Portsmouth was given to her by Sir Thomas, she spends it as she pleases, and with significant effect. Her object in spending is also notable: she seeks to improve her sisters' lot (interestingly, by purchasing those masculine items, a knife and an education). Fanny would seem to be the last character in the novel to be thought of as strong, or rebellious, or either a danger or an asset to the family fortunes. But she is all of these things. Though heavily pressed by the obviously more powerful men and women around her, almost all of whom wield some kind of authority over her, Fanny is finally not compelled to playact or to marry against her will, and her ability to resist the strong persuasions laid on her points toward the extent of an unmarried adult woman's legal independence.

In the figure of the unmarried adult sister in the house, the legal identity of adult unmarried women, and the material economic value of siblings in corporate domesticity, meet to create a focus for the English nineteenth century's ongoing cultural negotiations about the proper definition of "family." As *feme sole*, unmarried adult sisters retained the legal rights women forfeited when

they married and became *feme covert.* Adult unmarried women could contract and bequeath, sue and be sued. Although of course they could not vote or hold office, they otherwise retained a separate civil identity not subsumed into any man's.[4] Corporate domesticity performs positive equivocations on this potentially destabilizing status, simultaneously enhancing and restraining the unmarried sister's economic and legal autonomy. As we have seen, unmarried sisters are imagined as an integral part of a corporate household's emotional and material economies, increasing the potential wealth of the household and its chances for survival or advancement. Through what Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall refer to as the "hidden investment" in the family enterprise, such sisters could contribute capital, wages, labor, and management skills.[5] The unmarried sisters also provided a ready source of domestic labor and household management. As caretakers of children, sick people, and the aged, they lessened the family's potential losses and exterior needs; as independent legal entities, they retained (though of course under serious cultural restraints) the ability to act as independent moral authorities, making them fit guardians and managers in their own rights. And, as Susan Sage Heinzelman points out, where the sister's moral autonomy is compromised, legal steps must be taken to restrain her: in order to care for her at home, Charles Lamb had to become Mary's legal guardian, making her "analogous to the wife, the *feme covert*" (98).[6]

Mary Lamb's legal position is merely an extreme version of corporate domesticity's imagining of the unmarried sister as wife. At the same time that it relies on her legal autonomy, corporate domesticity also contains the unmarried sister by a literal or figurative conversion to the married status of *feme covert.* One such conversion changes metaphorical "sisters" and "brothers" into spouses: two people who have described their relation to each other in this way move on to the status of declared lovers and then marry, with the expectation (though not always the achievement) of good results. These two may have affinal connections, like Emma Woodhouse and George Knightley, or they may be unrelated by either blood or law, like Jane Eyre and Edward Rochester. The 1818 and 1831 editions of *Frankenstein* display both between them, Elizabeth being Victor's cousin (his father's sister's child) in the first and unrelated to him in the second, and in both versions fostered by his parents as Victor's figurative sister. The double partnerships documented by Davidoff and Hall embody this imagining,[7] as do Coleridge's and Robert Southey's marriage of sisters in the days of their "Pantisocracy" scheme, and Coleridge's later hopeless attraction to Mary Wordsworth's sister, Sara Hutchinson, whom Coleridge thought of as part of the Wordsworths' "Concern."

In another common version of the transformation of sister into wife, a grown sister meets her future husband while working (for pay or in the home) to help support her birth family, so that her labor seems, in terms of the

plot, to lead to her marriage. Austen's heroines often fit this model, though it may be hard to recognize their labor as such. That, of course, is part of the point: domestic labor, especially of the managerial type, is often hard to "see" in nineteenth-century texts. Yet Anne Elliot and Elinor Dashwood are characterized by their readiness to manage and to labor physically. After Louisa Musgrove's leap from the stairs at Lyme Regis, Captain Wentworth urges that Anne become her nurse, finding "no one so proper, so capable as Anne" (*Persuasion* 329); Elinor's management is essential to her mother's and sister's retention of genteel status, and her nursing helps save her sister's life. Or we may think of Margaret Hale in Gaskell's *North and South*, where physical domestic labor is visible (we actually get to see Margaret ironing) and where the integration of the sibling relation with espousal is underscored by her brother Frederick being mistaken for her lover.

Finally, this transformation can be enacted in the "married" behavior of the legally autonomous sister: unmarried sisters living with their siblings were generally expected, and expected themselves, to behave as if they were submissive to the direction of their brothers or brothers-in-law, or were defined by their domestic labor (or both).[8] There were, of course, powerful cultural incentives for such expectations. Nineteenth-century middle-class women were believed to have few options for living independently, nor was such an outcome considered desirable. Although Harriet Martineau demonstrates in "Female Industry" (1859) that Victorian women actually worked outside the home in large numbers and at many jobs, she also points out that, in the face of what she calls "the jealousy of men in regard to the industrial independence of women" and the consequent restriction of training and employment for women, those "who must earn their bread are compelled to do it by one of two methods—by the needle or by becoming educators" (primarily governesses) (63 and 64). Martineau makes both points in the face of what she recognizes as a determined general belief that things are otherwise: "We go on talking as if it were still true that every woman is, or ought to be, supported by father, brother, or husband […] A social organization framed for a community of which half stayed at home, while the other half went out to work, cannot answer the purposes of a society, of which a quarter remains at home while three-quarters go out to work" (33). Few women faced both with the expectation that they would be supported in a man's household, and with the practice of restricted employment and pay projected from that expectation, would seek domestic independence unless driven by pressing necessity.

Unmarried women's behavior toward their brothers no doubt was also regulated by their difficulty in inheriting, or keeping what they inherited, or bequeathing any but small personal possessions. As Eileen Spring has argued, British law avoids creating heiresses through primogeniture, entail, and, of

course, appropriation of a wife's wealth to her husband (until the 1882 Married Women's Property Act). Marriage contracts were common among the upper classes, of course, but they were by definition exceptions to law, and touched relatively few women's fortunes—and not always in women's favor. All of this tended to reduce women's inheritances, since if (as most hoped) they married, neither the women nor their birth families were likely to keep the use of the wealth. The background of such legal constraints may partly drive the some-times convoluted inheritance plots of unmarried Victorian heroines: Gaskell's Margaret Hale, who inherits from her childless godfather, Mr. Bell; Bronte's Jane Eyre, who is recognized as her father's unmarried brother's heir through a series of nearly random circumstances; or Barrett Browning's Aurora Leigh, whose unmarried aunt—and the aunt would have to be unmarried to do so— leaves her a competence.[9]

These cultural and indirect legal constraints are so well known that they have pretty completely obscured the potential extent of the adult unmarried woman's legal autonomy. (I do not take the denial of suffrage, or of office holding and university attendance lightly, but my focus here is on unmarried women's economic and personal freedom in the family.) Our discussions of the "little death" that concludes so many nineteenth-century lives and fictions, the marriage that constitutes legal death as well as often prefigures physical death in childbed, have, logically enough, concentrated on the woman's lack of options outside of marriage and the home.[10] What we seem to have passed over is the increasing foreclosure of options inside the home during these years: the diminishing possibility of a positive valuation of unpaid, in-house labor, and of collective productivity.

I am not suggesting a critical revaluation of unpaid domestic labor as a "solution" to women's oppression, or a construction of some hypothetical golden age when work was ungendered. Rather my point is that if the alterna-tive values of corporate domesticity can indeed be traced in these nineteenth-century texts, then a distinction between domestic and public labor was neither self-evident nor necessarily indicative of a choice between subordination and autonomy, for many nineteenth-century English people. If we overlook this historical difference, if we continue to think that nineteenth-century women's only alternatives to the legal death of marriage were "outside" domesticity, we unwittingly replicate the sharp divisions prescribed by industrial domesticity's eventual dominance: the exclusion of labor from the home place, and the refusal to value unpaid labor as productive.

Reading the sister in the house provides an opportunity to escape this reit-eration, because she profoundly troubles these constructions. Recognizably a representative of corporate domesticity, she signifies labor in the house, whether the unpaid labor she might perform in the home or the paid labor she

might undertake outside the home in order to support its material economy. Simultaneously, the unmarried sister signifies woman as legal entity, capable of retaining inherited wealth, contracting to earn or otherwise acquire wealth, and bequeathing her accumulated wealth to whomever she chooses. This nexus can be fruitfully imagined in corporate domesticity because the sister's work, wealth, and potential power are not incongruent with that kind of domesticity, a domesticity not closed to labor or to monetary economies. As industrial ideologies, including the idealization of the industrial family, gradually succeed in affirming the incongruity of work, domesticity, and independence, corporate domesticity's imagined household becomes unstable and, finally, appears to be "unnatural."

In this chapter, I consider the long, complex fluctuations among the corporate and the industrial versions of domesticity in nineteenth-century England by more fully articulating the problem of the sister in the house. My argument develops through extended readings of the discourses emanating from the Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister controversy, a public debate as significant, and as intractable, for the Victorians as the controversies surrounding abortion and same-sex marriage have been for us. Opponents arrayed on the two sides generated hundreds of pamphlets, articles, and books between 1835 and 1907, arguing in terms that changed very little over seven decades. Parliamentary bills to permit marriage to a deceased wife's sister (MDWS) were introduced and debated with such monotonous regularity that Gilbert and Sullivan dubbed the issue Parliament's "annual blister." The MDWS debate turned on similarly fundamental cultural questions: How do, and should, we define "family"? How are the terms of familial relations— husband, wife, sister, brother—to be understood in different contexts? In the documents that at times seem to flood from this debate, we will be able observe how the instabilities of the distinctions between wife and sister, domestic and paid labor, and *feme covert* and *feme sole*, drive the sustained discourse about the adult unmarried sister's place in her married sibling's household.

Specifically, Victorians debated whether a widower could legally marry his deceased wife's sister: Was this sister legally, morally, perhaps even physically, the widower's sister, and was such a marriage therefore incestuous? Or was she what they termed "an indifferent person," unrelated in any prohibitive way to her dead sister's husband, and often the best choice for his second wife? The participants openly and extensively discuss what constitutes "incest," framing that discussion in terms of theological, legal, "natural," and individual definitions of familial relations, and of the impact of such definitions on private sexual behavior. From the beginning of the debates, such deliberations on "incest" are paired with considerations of what the participants called "the social question," that is, the question of how changes

in the status of the unmarried sister would affect the moral, emotional, and financial stability of families. Interestingly, despite opposed arguments with what seem to be radically different practical consequences, the opponents and the supporters of MDWS both seem determined to preserve the place of an unmarried sister in the house. But both also undermined the premises of corporate domesticity by sharply distinguishing sisters from wives, undoing the imagining of sister as "wife" that stabilizes the unmarried sister's otherwise dangerous autonomy.

As this stabilizing figuration gradually dissolves, the cultural necessity of converting all unmarried sisters to wives gains force, finding expression in part through the differently restraining figuration of the sister, and of the unmarried sibling in general, as expatriate. Corporate domesticity, while recognizing the necessary departure of siblings from their parents' home upon marriage, enables a continuing metaphorical residence in the birth home by placing high emotional and economic value on unmarried siblings living in the new spousal home. Yet even in the most positive constructions of corporate households, such as Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere journals, we can trace anxieties about the sister in the house in this figuration: although Dorothy and William return from their 1803 sojourn in France to a household anchored by multiple siblings and sibling figures, their temporary expatriation appears as a textual necessity before their different "marriages" into those households. Fanny Price's doubled departures and returns in *Mansfield Park* demonstrate the same kind of anxiety in a novel that ultimately conserves the corporate household, though not without considerable struggle.[11] And in the fraught treatments of adult unmarried sisters in Victorian fiction, we can observe the uneven but increasing pressure toward that stricter version of Lamb's dichotomy, the industrial domesticity that idealized a home without adult siblings, without their ideologically disruptive significations of labor and (in the case of sisters) female autonomy within a domestic space. As Chapter 2's reading of Gaskell's *Mary Barton* suggests, the achievement of this ideal industrial domesticity requires the thorough expatriation of all siblings from any version of their birth home.

Craik's *Hannah* (1871) demonstrates not only the fluctuating valuations of the sister in the house but also the entanglement between homely and national domestic spaces, dramatized as the legally necessary expatriation of the deceased wife's sister and her widowed brother-in-law, their subsequent marriage, and, most startlingly, their transformation into French nationals.[12] Hannah Thelluson and her dead sister's husband, Bernard Rivers, fall in love while Hannah is acting as Bernard's housekeeper and "mother" to his child. When they emigrate to France in order to marry, Rivers abdicates his English baronetcy, but reclaims his heritage as a descendent of England's

Norman conquerors; and in the last pages of the novel the narrator wonders if their son will return to England as "Sir Austin Rivers," baroneted again. Although the novel clearly celebrates the sustaining emotional and material value of the sister in the house, *Hannah*'s closing geopolitical fantasy figures the unmarried sister's autonomy as so dangerous that her potential inability to achieve the legal death of marriage threatens British sovereignty with a second Norman invasion. The rather astonishing force of Craik's ending suggests the importance of taking seriously the problem posed to nineteenth-century ideologies of the family by the unmarried sister's autonomy. Significantly, it was only after the Married Women's Property Act of 1882 and the case-law precedent *Regina v. Jackson* (1891) reduced the legal differences between married and unmarried women—that is, only after wives began to approach the legal autonomy of sisters—that the deceased wife's sister controversy was resolved.

The Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister Controversy

In 1835, Lord Lyndhurst's concern for the legitimacy of the Duke of Beaufort's son moved him to introduce a bill in the House of Lords calling for a limit on the time period during which a "voidable" marriage could be challenged. At that time, marriages within the Church of England's prohibited degrees of consanguinity and affinity were not void, but only voidable, in English common law.[13] The duke had married his deceased wife's half sister, which meant that this marriage fell within the prohibited degrees and could be declared void by the Ecclesiastical Court at any time during the spouses' lifetimes. So long as no challenge was made, or if the Court ruled favorably, such a voidable marriage was legal, its issue legitimate, and the inheritances of that issue as lawful as those depending from any marriage in England. But if the Court declared such a marriage void, then it became retroactively and absolutely unlawful: the children became bastards and inheritances passed into other family lines.

Lord Lyndhurst's aim was modest. He proposed a limit of two years after the marriage during which a challenge to the marriage's legitimacy might be made, and after which the marriage was to be considered absolutely legal; marriages accomplished before the passage of the bill might be challenged only during the six months following the bill's passage and then would become fully legitimate (Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Ser., xxviii, 204–5, 1 June 1835).[14] But Lords took this proposal as an occasion to regularize the inconsistencies caused by voidable marriage, and the bill assumed a quite different form: all voidable marriages performed prior to August 31, 1835, if not already voided, would be declared fully legitimate; all marriages within the

prohibited degrees performed after that date would be void, invalid from the beginning (Hansard 3 xxviii 204–6 1835).

The brief Hansard account of the debate in Lords suggests that a consensus on this measure was reached quickly and without substantial dissent.[15] But the morsel upon which Parliament was to choke for the next 70 years, the special case of marriage with a deceased wife's sister, made its presence immediately felt in Commons, where an amendment was introduced to except this kind of marriage from the bill (Hansard 3 xxx 792–5 and 948–53 1835). Although the amendment was rejected, primarily on the grounds that such an addition undermined the principle of consistency that had become the point of Lord Lyndhurst's bill, its appearance opened decades of debate on marriage with a deceased wife's sister—the very category of marriage, ironically, that Lord Lyndhurst had sought to legitimate in a particular instance. In 1842, just seven years after Lord Lyndhurst's Act became law, the first bill calling for legalization of marriage with a deceased wife's sister was introduced in Parliament, and from that time until the passage of the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill in 1907, the issue was revisited almost yearly. There appear to have been periods of heavier engagement, notably in the late 1840s, when Commons called for a Royal Commission on the subject and that Commission published its report, and then again in the early 1870s, when the first Married Women's Property Act (1870) and a new Infant Custody Act (1873) were passed. By the 1880s, as Cynthia Fansler Behrman points out, marriage with the deceased wife's sister was indeed that "annual blister" lampooned in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe*: "After 1882 [the year in which the second Married Women's Property Act passed] the question of legalizing such a marriage came up in every Parliament except two until 1907" (483). Even before then, as the euphoniously titled Lord Tweedmouth pointed out in his opening summary at the second Lords' reading of the 1907 Deceased Wife's Sister Bill, the issue had "been a subject of very constant debate in both Houses of Parliament for a very long time":

> Between 1851 and 1889 [Lords] rejected the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill thirteen times. In 1883 you read it a second time, and in 1896, on the Motion of Lord Dunraven, it was read a second time […] and the Bill was in that year passed through your Lordships' House to suffer extinction in the other house. In the House of Commons, during the fifty-eight years between 1849 and this year, the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill was carried by large majorities nineteen times. (Hansard 4 clxxxi 348 1907)

In addition to regular parliamentary bills and debates, pamphlets, letters, treatises, and statements from all sides were published steadily through this period; major journals carried articles from leading figures in the

controversy; from 1851, the Marriage Law Reform Association sponsored various public forums (meetings, petitions, etc.) to promote legalization; and at least five novels took marriage with a deceased wife's sister as their explicit subject.[16]

Yet the long cultural deadlock, its expressions so heated and so prolific, ended rather quietly, the passage of the last bill proposing the legalization of MDWS in 1907 (rapidly followed by the first British civil laws criminalizing incest) apparently producing an exhausted relief rather than any stronger reaction. A similar exhaustion persisted in scholarly circles through the twentieth century: legal histories relegated the MDWS controversy to a note or brief mention, while in literary studies just four articles published after 1965 considered its possible significance. Over the last decade and a half, as literary scholars have pressed their efforts to historicize our understanding of English families over the crucial transitional period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some have looked back to the almost forgotten ideological struggle with renewed, and occasionally sustained, attention. The fifth chapter of Chase and Levenson's *The Spectacle of Intimacy: A Public Life for the Victorian Family* (2000) provides the major outlines of the debate; Mary Jean Corbett's *Family Likeness* (2008) invokes the controversy as indicative of historical shifts in English ideals of family and household, devoting a full chapter (originally published as an article) to MDWS.[17]

Two earlier articles develop unique arguments that suggest the complexity of the forces sustaining the long controversy. Behrman's "The Annual Blister: A Sidelight on Victorian Social and Parliamentary History" (1968) persuasively argues that the long debate embodied "the unresolved relationship between church and state in England," its slow development allowing the gradual emergence of Parliament and civil authorities, rather than the church, as the arbiters of such questions (483). This interesting article is rarely cited except to repeat Behrman's quotation of the Gilbert and Sullivan tagline. Margaret Morganroth Gullette's "The Puzzling Case of the Deceased Wife's Sister: Nineteenth-Century England Deals with a Second-Chance Plot" (1990) also opens a singular line of inquiry, connecting the deceased wife's sister debate to the emergence of the second-marriage plot in English fiction. Gullette understands all the texts engaging the debate, whether novels, parliamentary debates, or articles in reviews, as part of an "ongoing national exercise in writing midlife fiction" (164) that eventually familiarized the coincidence of "two originally irreconcilable ideas—sexuality and aging" (159), thus advancing "the creation of mid adulthood" (147), of what we now call middle age, in the English nineteenth century.

Although Gullette's article is singular in focusing on a formal literary structure other than sibling characterization, its explanation of the sustained

controversy shares a nexus of interest in marriage, family, and sexuality with a third article from this earlier period. Nancy F. Anderson's "The 'Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister Bill' Controversy: Incest Anxiety and the Defense of Family Purity in Victorian England" (1982) takes the classic Freudian line, arguing that the solidification of the affective nuclear family, together with "the rigid Victorian code of morality, restricting extra-familial heterosexual relationships, dammed up libidinous feelings within the home," and so produced unusually eroticized emotional attachments to parents and siblings (70). Although she glances at other particulars of economic family history, such as the common practice of unmarried sisters living with their married siblings and the gradual movement of these women out into the paid workforce, Anderson's project in reading parliamentary papers and pamphlets on MDWS is to "[uncover] the increased incestuous striving, unconscious wishes which, if Freud is right, must be defended against by stronger protection against incest" (74). There seems little doubt that Anderson thinks Sigmund Freud is right.[18]

The most recently published of these four earlier articles, Elisabeth Rose Gruner's "Born and Made: Sisters, Brothers, and the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill" (1999), joins with the book chapters by Chase and Levenson and by Corbett in foregrounding the instability of "family" during the period of the debates and work toward historicizing those instabilities. As I noted in my "Introduction," I find Corbett's overall argument the most successful, and I will not repeat my comments on her decisive intervention here. But, just as Corbett does, Chase and Levenson, and Gruner continue to grant primary, generative status to those familiar categories naturalized in modern theories of family and self, and in the value structures of industrial domesticity: desire, sexuality, marriage, and the vertical axis of parents-child relations. These assumed priorities undermine the critics' historicizing intentions and rhetorical stances, implicitly reinscribing a timeless, fundamental family/household structure in which adult siblings are anomalous, and the sibling relation of secondary importance. To "admit" the adult unmarried sister to "family" as a significant figure, then, these studies turn to her sexual and cultural similarities to the married sister. Thus the unmarried sister's signal difference from a wife, her legal status as *feme sole* and all that this enables, remains invisible—as does the possibility of an ideal domesticity in which this status has enabling, enriching value and in which siblings play a primary, generative role.

Gruner's article exemplifies the difficulty. At first emphatically foregrounding the instabilities of "family" in the period, Gruner is explicitly attentive to the positive, "normative" status of the brother-sister relation in the nineteenth century (428) and to the need to read the MDWS debates "in relation to a shifting definition of family" (426):

Definitions of the family underwent a shift from a fluid network of
family relations in the early part of the nineteenth century to an increas-
ingly naturalized nuclear unit by about the middle of the century. The
negotiation between seeing the family as an affiliative network of friends,
neighbors, servants, and distant kin and seeing it as a privatized domestic
unit was neither easy nor complete by midcentury. Yet increasingly the
latter version was seen as "natural." (428)

Despite this nuanced overview, however, Gruner's specific claims treat the
Victorian family as a stable entity, exploring only the tensions in the "latter
version" of the family rather than the possible fluctuations among versions.
(Significantly, siblings are missing from the list of possible members of an
"affiliative" household.) For instance, as she enumerates the issues raised by the
MDWS debates, she says that they "demonstrat[ed] the internal contradictions
of the Victorian ideal of an asexualized domestic space" (424), and "focus[ed]
attention on that most sacred, yet fragile, of Victorian institutions, the hetero-
sexual, nuclear family" (425). In such formulations, which are characteristic of
the rest of her argument, the domestic space is fully closed, and the nuclear
family is a "Victorian institution," with both conditions afforded a rhetorical
stability.

So when she turns to the specific figure at issue, the wife's unmarried sister,
Gruner explains that sister's textual significance in terms of a stable nuclear
family: "the wife's sister fits right into this pattern [of literary heroines "defined
by their relation to a brother or brother figure"], subordinating herself to a
sister and brother-in-law in order to have a place in that all-important unit,
the family" (427).[19] The unmarried sister can only need to find a place in this
family if she already does not have one, which is to say only if "the family"
is indeed a nuclear family, already rhetorically and practically dominant; and
the assumption of this naturalized nuclear family supports Gruner's stabi-
lizing use of kinship terms she has said were actively contested.[20]

Chase and Levenson's extremely interesting chapter, and the book in
which it appears, engage a wide range of specific historical developments as
they observe the instabilities of "family" negotiated through various public
spectacles. Calling for "a more flexible notion of the public sphere" that
encompasses "'publicity' and collective revelation […] in small groups,
around a fireside as well as in a courtroom" (17), Chase and Levenson seem
poised to interrogate the putative stability of the Victorian family and its
closed domestic sphere. Their chapter "Love after Death: The Deceased
Wife's Sister Bill" reads the various contributions to the MDWS controversy
as partly driven by the "growing isolation and detachment of the middle-
class home […] the separation of the family from the workplace and the

rise of suburbia" (109), formulations that seem to suggest an ongoing process. Yet their analysis also implies that the private affective familial space already exists in such a stable and closed condition that the MDWS controversy "became a discursive forcing house, thrusting awkward questions into public circulation" (114). These "awkward questions," as Chase and Levenson articulate them, are primarily about "family affection," "passion," "desire," "innocence," and "corruption" (114), terms that point back to the interior not just of the privatized affective family and its space but also to the emotional interior of the individuated subject, and both private spaces seem already to be so insular, so enclosed, that special "force" is needed to open them.

In fact the emphasis of Chase and Levenson's analysis of MWDS falls on affection and desire from the beginning, and the chapter closes by identifying personal (male) desire as the fundamental (in the sense of "at the foundation") explanation of the MWDS controversy. Beneath the widowed husband's more material hopes that, in the person of a marriageable sister-in-law, his household will regain "a manager" and his children "a guide," Chase and Levenson argue, "a deeper fantasy can sometimes be glimpsed": "everywhere in the background of this strange episode, which changed the aspect of those sisters close at hand," they see the sister figure recast as "an invitation to the erotic wandering of mobile male affection: at least two wives, one for youthful pleasure, and one for the management of the home" (119–20).[21]

In Chase and Levenson's commentary we can again observe that common reversion toward interior self and stable conjugal home, a reversion that partially reinscribes the ideological structures they mean to interrogate. Foregrounding specific historical meanings of the MWDS debates, pointing to the contested meanings of "family," recognizing the importance of the sister and wife as managers (and so as performing one kind of labor) in the house, Chase and Levenson nonetheless find something "deeper" at work, a "background" that is "everywhere" in "this strange episode" (by which I take it they mean the MDWS controversy itself),[22] an "erotic" desire that once again sharply distinguishes between management (the household's material economy) and pleasure (sexuality and, since there are "two wives," marriage). Nowhere in their chapter do Chase and Levenson confront the legal autonomy of the unmarried adult sister, her signal difference from her married sister: that potential identity, and with it the possibility of a family differently constituted, remain invisible.

These cognitive and rhetorical reinscriptions of "family" as a stable, universal formation, even in studies explicitly confronting historical variations in and contestations of ideologies of family, disable (rather than merely confuse) our possible understandings of MDWS. A protracted public debate over what

"incest" between "brothers" and "sisters" means would be a very unlikely development if the industrial family had become a stable, fully dominant ideological formation before or during that period. If that were the case, there would have been widespread agreement about what "brother" and "sister" meant, and the status of the unmarried adult sibling in the house would not have been such a passionately contested issue. In particular, it becomes very difficult to explain any sibling, and especially a female one—and most especially an unmarried female sibling—as a figure of primary significance and central concern in a debate about "families" that excludes adult siblings and relegates sibling relations to a secondary, derivative status. While I am convinced that the controversy implicated all adult unmarried siblings living in their married siblings' homes, to make sense of the specific historical situation we must be precise: the defining figure of the MDWS debates was an adult unmarried sister, most specifically one living in her married sister's house before or after the married sister's death (and often both). Why, we must ask, is this particular sibling the crucial figure here?

Marriage with a deceased husband's brother, for instance, was cited by both sides as an unacceptable subject for exception from Lord Lyndhurst's Act; marriage with a deceased wife's niece was regularly mentioned as an immediately parallel case, one implicated in the decision about the wife's sister, but was never the focus of investigation or debate; and although first cousin marriage, a commonly practiced, literally consanguineous union not within the prohibited degrees, was discussed in some prominent journal articles and occasionally addressed in parliamentary debate, public discussion did not begin to approach the pitch of the deceased wife's sister controversy, nor did the issue precipitate any legislative action.[23] To be sure, the deceased husband's brother situation raised questions about the legitimacy of the English succession that few can have been eager to revisit.[24] But in purely formal terms, all these cases offered similar opportunities to revisit definitions of marriage, of incest, of the established church's role, or (in the first two cases certainly) of the meanings of aging and sexuality, and neither of the latter cases carried the kind of historical baggage of the first. What cultural pressures, then, drove such varied issues—changing relations of church and state, changing notions of marriage and family, developing concepts and practices of "middle age"—through this particular channel? What is it about the specific historical situation of this figure, the figure of the dead wife's unmarried sister, that fits it to carry such ideological weight?

Certainly men persisted in marrying their deceased wives' sisters after 1835, even when they knew this was illegal in England, and such marriages may have occurred in significant numbers. The Royal Commission's *First Report* (1848) gives quantity as the reason for focusing their broadly stated

charge "to inquire into the State and Operation of the Law of Marriage as relating to the Prohibited Degrees of Affinity, and to Marriages solemnized abroad or in the British Colonies" (iii), arguing that marriage with the deceased wife's sister "is, of all those within the prohibited degrees, by far the most frequent […] When, therefore, for the future, we speak, in this Report, of marriages within the prohibited degrees, we intend, when it is not otherwise declared, to confine our observations to marriages with the sister of a deceased wife" (vi). The results of a private three-month survey of five selected areas—1,364 marriages within the prohibited degrees, 90 percent of them with a deceased wife's sister, since 1835—cited by the Commission had actually been part of the evidence that moved Commons to call for the Commission in 1847 (*First Report* viii; Hansard 3 xcii 746 1847). Although both the methods and the results of this survey drew vigorous attacks by the opposition after the *First Report*'s publication, these arguments dropped into the customary background of the debates, suggesting that sheer numbers was not the crucial issue for either side.[25] For our purposes, too, sheer numbers beg the question: they may illustrate but do not explain the deceased wife's sister as an exceptional case.

The Victorian debates in and out of Parliament treat the value of the sister in the house as a central substantive issue, and two regular features of this treatment point toward the qualities that define this exceptional case. One is the frequent linkage between the deceased wife's sister's affective value and her material value to the household; the other is the absence of the widowed husband's unmarried blood sister (and other women who might have supplied love and labor) from the discourse, an absence remarked by at least one frequent participant in the controversy. As I will argue, both features suggest that the peculiar significance of the deceased wife's sister, the unmarried sister in the house who can be legally transformed into a wife, depends on the legal and economic distance between adult unmarried sisters and married sisters.

Both opponents and supporters of MDWS generally agree that the dead wife's own sister is especially well fitted to care for the wife's children after the wife's death; both understand it as quite usual that the wife's sister, if not already in the household during the wife's final illness, will enter the household's daily life if not actually become or remain resident. In the 1849 Commons debates following the publication of the *First Report*, for instance, a Mr. Cockburn, supporting a bill to legalize MDWS, calls the deceased wife's sister

the person who, of all other human beings, was the best constituted and adapted to act as a substitute for the mother. She was already, as it were, half a mother to them from her very position; and even the law

regarded her in the place of a parent. The children, who would have shrunk from a stranger, turned with affection towards the sister of their mother. (Hansard 3 civ 1207 1849)[26]

William Gladstone, speaking in opposition later that year, waxes more eloquent, but in very similar terms:

No doubt the children of the first wife derived an inappreciable advantage from the care of the sister of their mother after her death. She stood to them in a natural relation, approved by God and man; and, mindful of the tenderness which united her to one now removed, she carried the overflowings of her tenderness to the offspring of the beloved person who had been called away. (Hansard 3 cvi 628–9 1849)[27]

Obviously both speakers celebrate the "natural relation," by blood and affection, between the wife's sister and the wife's children. The clues to their conflict lie in that reported phrase of Cockburn's, "half a mother," and in Gladstone's emphasis on the sisterly, rather than the motherly, emotion: the crux of the legal and moral issue is whether the living sister can (and should) become a stepmother, or whether she must (and should) remain an aunt. Is the wife's sister a metaphorical sister, her brother-in-law's "sister," and that only while the wife lives? Or is she her sister's husband's literal sister, as completely ineligible to marry him as a blood sister? This conflict extends from legal and moral questions into the implications of these questions for a family's daily life: Could a wife's unmarried sister properly live in her brother-in-law's house, whether before or after the wife's death? And, if not, what effect would that have on the material and affective economies of the couple, or of the widower and his children?

Opponents of the deceased wife's sister exception argue that this unmarried sister is literally her sister's husband's sister, and that this status ensures her purity, the morality of the home, and her ability to act as caregiver to the children and the bereaved husband. The first of these propositions is argued from Scripture, and from church history and law, but it also implicates the common law definition of a wife as *feme covert*, which derives in part from these ecclesiastical figures.[28] According to the opponents of MDWS, at a marriage's consummation the husband and wife become "one flesh," making the wife's sister the legal and moral equivalent of a consanguineous sibling of the husband. E. B. Pusey, when asked by the 1849 Commission if he "put on the same footing, marriages of persons connected by consanguinity and by affinity," replied, "Yes; I regard them as the same—of course not the same in intensity, but equally prohibited" (*First Report* 37). Nearly forty years later, "J. F. Oxon,"

the Bishop of Oxford, writing for *Nineteenth Century*, was asserting the same doctrine even more plainly: "marriage between persons near of kin is prohibited in the Scripture, and […] no distinction between relationship by affinity or consanguinity is there to be found" (667).

There seems no need to rehearse these arguments in full, but I do want to lay out their scriptural foundations, which allow the opponents to further claim that the equivalence between a "sister-in-law" and a sister survives the wife's death.[29] There are two indispensable texts, the first in Genesis just after Eve's creation:

> And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.
>
> Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. (Genesis 2:23–24)[30]

The second is in Leviticus 18, the chapter devoted to listing forbidden sexual connections:

> Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, neither shalt thou take her son's daughter, or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness; for they are her near kinswomen: it is wickedness.
>
> Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life time. (Leviticus 18:17–18)

Obviously Leviticus 18:18 is the disputed passage. To my eye, as to those of the Victorian supporters of MDWS, "in her life time" seems permissive: it sets the prohibition of the wife's sister apart from the permanently prohibited connections with the wife's daughters and nieces. But the opponents, like the Bishop of Oxford in the passage above, point out that all of the violations in Leviticus 18 are held under the same final injunctions, with no degrees of punishment or disapprobation available. And, regarding the Genesis passage as "the principle upon which these prohibitions proceed" (Pusey in *First Report* 38), they recur to the idea that husband and wife are one—physically ("flesh of my flesh"), legally (in both canon and common law), and morally (the scripture being God's own word). Thus the conjugal transformation must survive a spouse's death: from the moment of the marriage's consummation, the unmarried sister of the wife can never again be "an indifferent person" eligible to marry the husband.

Two things interest me about the opponents' arguments in the context of their scriptural foundations. One is their potential materialism, which literalizes the equivalence between sisters and sisters-in-law. As one supporter

of MDWS noted late in the debates, the durability of affinal relations under the "one flesh" doctrine is comparable to the transformation of bread and wine in the doctrine of transubstantiation (Viscount Gage in Hansard 3 cciv 1875 1871).[31] While few opponents explicitly extend "flesh of my flesh" into its full implications, their recurrence to this phrase and to "one flesh" leaves us in no doubt that it is the language of materiality in the Genesis text, the rhetorical insistence on literal physical unity, that authorizes the textual—scriptural, canonical, legal—equivalence of affinal and blood relations.

The other point of interest is that the opponents' argument does not stop here. If, after all, marriage to a deceased wife's sister is incestuous according to God's law, as that divine law is embodied in church and civil law, and if that incest is material rather than metaphorical, what more need be said? But, significantly, the opponents also engage what was called "the social question"—that is, the question of the impact of such doctrine and law on family life. In this part of their argument, they claim that the wife's sister's durable status as the husband's literal sister is what authorizes the presence of an unmarried woman in the married couple's house, and in the house of the widower after the wife's death. Because the husband never can regard his wife's sister as an indifferent person, a marriageable woman, no affections can spring up between them and no scandal can attach to their cohabitation at any time; because the husband can never marry his deceased wife's sister, no improper jealousy can emerge between the wife's sister and the wife's children, because no new children can threaten the wife's children's emotional well-being or their material inheritances.

The opponents typically place their rhetorical emphasis on emotion rather than on material economy. In the May 3, 1849, Commons debate, for instance, Roundell Palmer laments the effects of "plac[ing] our sisters-in-law, with whom we now associate as freely and intimately as if they were our own sisters, upon the footing of first cousins": "We shall be deprived of the indulgence of that pure love and affection, unconnected with any thoughts of marriage, which now adds so much to the charm of life; of all that delightful familiarity, those tender and kind offices of the sister-in-law to the widower and his orphan children, which are now safe" (Hansard 3 civ 1237 1849). Similarly, Lord O'Hagen in the March 13, 1873, Lords debate wonders, "And for the maiden sister, would she not be precluded, in the circumstances this measure would create […] from entering a home where she would be 'ministering angel'" for "fear lest she should sometimes be distracted by the bewildering and corrupting thought" of a possible marriage to her brother-in-law (Hansard 3 cciv 1891–92 1873).

If anything needs to be "uncovered" here, it certainly is not incest. These texts articulate extensive, continuous discussions of what constitutes incest

and of its moral and material causes and effects. Certainly these discussions are often conventional in the sense that they rely on catchphrases, and are sometimes framed with equally conventional disclaimers about the "delicate" subject matter.[32] Certainly, too, these discussions do not explore the anxieties predicted by modern psychological theories, which follow different discursive conventions. But to perceive these sustained public Victorian conversations about incest as evidence of "repression" is to confuse our anxieties with theirs and, in my view, to misread the Victorian texts. Nor does it seem to me that the unmarried sister is rendered "asexual" by this rhetoric, as Gruner argues, a represented purity hiding her (real) desire. Rather, the affinal sister's natural sexuality is assumed, her desire not elided but additionally constructed as contingent on her expectations.

What might seem occluded in some of these accounts is the wife's sister's participation in the material economies of the household. We might be inclined to see a rhetorical masking of the social and material by the personal and emotional, and to some extent the opponents in particular do seem to elide the sister's material and economic value. Actually, though, the sister's economic meaning may not have been obscured for people reading in the context of a still functional corporate domesticity, in which the emotional and the material are not necessarily dichotomized. The "tender and kind offices" of which Palmer speaks are surely those of feeling, but may equally be presumed to include the more tangible duties of the housekeeper; the maiden aunt may be metaphorized as a "ministering angel," but the managerial and hands-on labors that constitute her ministry would be far from celestial. Other opponents give us explicit bridges between affective and material economies, interestingly divided between the upper-class issue of inheritance and the lower-class need for actual housekeeping. The indefatigable A. J. Beresford Hope, who debated this issue in Parliament for more than forty years, worries that "as soon as [the deceased wife's sister] marries their father she incurs the risk of having children of her own, who will be much nearer to her than her former charge, and, perhaps, the cause of her feeling jealous of them, who, as the eldest (in the case at least of families of fortune) will be their father's heirs in preference of hers. A good aunt may often be changed into, if not a bad, at least a less devoted stepmother" (*First Report* 149–50). At the other end of the economic spectrum, among the working classes, the Bishop of Oxford points out, not only are there other women perhaps better suited to care for the children ("the kinswoman who loved her best—her own mother"), but "in a large proportion of these cases, the [husband's blood] sister, or sister-in-law, is 'out at service,' and cannot leave her place without notice, or cannot afford to give it up to discharge a duty in her brother's house, for which he can give her no wages" (Oxon 671). Both accounts articulate the modulation from feeling through material well-being, or

vice-versa, which may be implied in the passages quoted earlier. Interestingly missing from both of these accounts, too, is the middle-class household, in which great inheritances would not be at stake, but in which a sister's labor would also be (relatively) invisible, precisely because wages are not at stake.

The supporters of MDWS, in contrast, tend to call attention to the economic role of the unmarried sister in middle-class households. Rejecting the opponents' claims for literality of both the "one flesh" text and the deceased woman's sister's relation to the husband,[33] the supporters point to the legality of marriage with a deceased woman's sister in other nations, to its acceptance among Anglican clergy, and to its favorable reception in middle- and upper-class families, establishing a picture of widespread perception of such marriages as legal and natural, and of the feelings leading to them, and the new households formed by them, as pure and decent. In this rhetorical strategy (broadly speaking, a strategy of normalization), the middle class plays a key role. Much of the supporters' evidence is anecdotal, the accounts of "respectable" middle- and upper-middle-class men—lawyers, merchants, army officers—about their love for their deceased wife's sister and the advantages to their households of such a marriage. There is a basic narrative: the wife's sister was a member of the household or a constant visitor both before and after the wife's death; the children had always loved her and regard her as their dead mother's representative; the husband came to rely on her help with household management and childrearing, and eventually his affection deepened into love. A frequent addition is the deathbed wish of the wife that the husband marry her sister, expressed to the husband or to both of them, and, where the illegal marriage has actually taken place, the story often stresses the preservation of the children's inheritance. Another frequent detail is the couple's consideration of getting married in a country where such marriages are legal, a solution usually rejected on practical grounds (although not in Craik's fiction on the subject). In each version of the story the sister's fitness to become the husband's second wife is described in terms of her role *as a sister* in the household's emotional and economic practices.

The anonymous testimonies of the *First Report* give us a particularly concentrated source of such narratives, from which a single extended example may be useful.[34] A solicitor who married a vicar's daughter testifies:

My wife died in ---------1845. We had six children, all of whom are living, three daughters and three sons. In the year 1834, my wife's next sister, one year younger than herself, came to reside with us; not with the intention, when she entered my house, of residing, but it has happened, that from that time to this she has entirely resided. She was my wife's intimate associate; her room companion. She soon, from my wife's confinement

and delicacy of health, participated very freely in the education of the
children and in the care of the family. She was present, I believe, at the
birth of every child, and my wife died in her arms. (*First Report* 64)

After the wife's death, at first because he wants to continue his girls' education
at home as the wife wished, the husband wants the sister to stay on. The wife's
and sister's parents insist that another woman "of a suitable age" be in the
house if the sister is to remain—a common though not universal precaution—
and a friend of the husband's obliges (64). But this friend must soon leave,
and the husband says that the double loss of this friend and the sister will
leave him in financial difficulties: "If I had been obliged to take a governess
or companion, at the cost of $100£$. or even $80£$. a-year, it would have pressed
very heavily upon my resources" (64–65). He is speaking of a chaperone for
the sister, but also clearly of the governess he would have to hire if the sister
were compelled to leave. The husband sees the sister not only as the natural
emotional guardian of his children but also as the provider of childcare and
educational services for which he would otherwise have to pay (and he says
nothing here of the household management implied in his earlier "care of the
family"). Yet he cannot see his way clear to either keeping the sister, unchap-
eroned, in his house, or to marrying her against the law. As he puts it, "it is
not merely my own respectability, but my bread and the bread of my children
depends upon my conduct being above suspicion of any kind" (65). Yet again,
he will not marry anyone else (clearly the other possible solution to the diffi-
culties of his domestic economies): "It would be repugnant to my feeling to
displace old associations, and to seek marriage elsewhere; I could not do it.
My wife's sister disturbs nothing; she is already in the place of my wife" (66).
    Although the details of these stories vary, the solicitor's tale is typical in its
characterization of an unmarried sister's presence as crucial to the emotional
and financial well-being of the household, both before and after the wife's
death. And this is, of course, not only an emotional presence but also a body
of labor linked to that feeling, intellectual, managerial, and physical work that
can only be replaced with wage or salaried labor—or by a wife. At the same
time, so powerful is the need to relocate (and thereby mask) the sister's labor
value in a wife that in this case, the brother-in-law rhetorically constructs her
as "already" in that "place."
    The perceived centrality of the unmarried sister's labor is underscored by
some supporters' claims that marriage with a deceased wife's sister is a "poor
man's question" and (though this claim is rarer) a "woman's question."[35] That
is, because wealthier husbands have many more options for the care of their
children—because they can, in essence, buy substitute wives in the persons
of governesses, housekeepers, and so forth—they are not so damaged by the

restrictions of Lord Lyndhurst's Act. But for a poor man the prohibition against marrying his dead wife's sister not only blocks the natural path of his emotional attachment (which, the supporters argue, is even more likely because of the close quarters in which the poor live) but also creates a material economic hardship. At the same time, as Edward Pritchard argues in an 1849 pamphlet replying to a *Quarterly Review* article, there is a considerable difference between the wealthy man's second wife, whose "only duty" toward the children is that of "providing an efficient governess for them, whilst she may spend her time in gaiety and pleasure," and the poor man's second wife, who "undertakes a most arduous duty":

> [A] poor man who has children must [marry a second time], or obtain gratuitous assistance for them; no woman not feeling interest in such children, would so exert herself, and none so likely to feel this interest as the deceased wife's sister; so that it very frequently happens a sister-in-law undertakes the duty […] the poor man […] can only repay the heavy duty his helpmate has to perform, by kind personal attention to her, which is likely enough to raise feelings of affection in her breast towards him; and then indeed it becomes a woman's question that they should be at liberty to marry together. (7–8)

Again the wife's sister's labor, her "arduous" and "heavy" duty, her exertion, are presented as inherently linked to her feeling for her sister's children and husband. The argument is rather like than unlike the Bishop of Oxford's rejection of the "poor man's question" I quoted earlier: not only feeling but also money and labor are at stake when one removes the sister from the house.

In short, the functional ideal of corporate domesticity is assumed by both sides, even though it would be to the advantage of the opponents to reject such an ideal. Complex fluctuations accumulate from this mutual assumption. On the one hand, the opponents' rhetoric often follows the Wordsworths' model: sibling-in-laws are called simply "sister" and "brother," becoming, rhetorically, full siblings. But instead of this language signaling a metaphorical siblinghood, mutually constitutive with marriage, it here signals a sharp disjunction of sibling and marital relations, one in which siblinghood, whether in blood or in law, is wholly incompatible with marriage. On the other hand, the desired end of this opposition, if we take the opponents' arguments to their logical conclusion, is the practical maintenance of corporate domesticity: the clear definition of the wife's siblings as literal siblings of her husband is important because it ensures the propriety of unmarried sisters in the spousal household, even after death dissolves the union.

But the opponents' clear separation of siblinghood and marriage also means that the two no longer function as mutually supportive models for practice. The language of siblinghood ceases to be a sign of possible marriage, or a term of approbation in which a good marriage can be praised; and the spousal relation becomes the "original" shaping structure of a household, the relation upon which all others depend. These conceptual shifts alter the shape of the corporate domestic household, reducing the significance of its horizontal and lateral relationships. The unmarried adult sister's place in the domestic economy is now defined by her necessary exclusion from the spousal relationship, by her difference from her own sister, rather than by a necessary, stabilizing inclusion of siblings of both spouses in which the functional resemblances of literal and metaphorical siblings are understood as positive bonds. The adult unmarried sister's labor now becomes auxiliary, a never fully commensurable replacement of the dead wife's, rather than an expected part of the household's emotional and economic functions.

The supporters of the deceased wife's sister bills lead us through a different set of conflicting ideological turns, but with surprisingly similar results. Like the opponents of the deceased wife's sister bills, the supporters appear bent on preserving the practices of corporate domesticity, as they work to safeguard the position of the wife's sister in the household. The supporters' position would seem to be even more congenial to the corporate ideal, because they understand "sister" metaphorically and contextually. They posit neither a literal blood tie nor a permanent legal relation between sisters- and brothers-in-law. Once a wife has died, her sister becomes marriageable and, although perhaps in some families still considered a proper part of the deceased wife's household even while unmarried, certainly a viable candidate to become the husband's second wife. It would seem that in the supporters' rhetoric, "sister" and "wife" still mutually constitute each other.

Yet the supporters' position, like that of the opponents, has a dissolving effect on the functional ideal of corporate domesticity, primarily because of the particularity of the exception. They do not argue for excepting the marriage of a wife with a deceased husband's brother, the obvious (and politically explosive) parallel. And the very vehemence with which they assert the special capability of the deceased wife's sister as caregiver to the children and, potentially, new wife to the husband, calls our attention to a curiously missing figure: the husband's blood sister, and, indeed, the unmarried adult women on both sides—aunts, nieces, widowed mothers, and so forth.

As the Bishop of Oxford's remarks above demonstrate, the other women who might care for children and manage the house were not wholly invisible in this debate. But their appearances are few, and seem to have no impact on the

ongoing controversy. "B. A. W." remarks that "it seems to be quite forgotten that the aunt may as well be the father's own sister, as his sister-in-law. And are there no other female relations to whose natural care and protection the children might be entrusted? are there no such things as mothers-in-law and grandmothers [?]" (19–20).[36] No one answers these questions. Clearly broad gender ideologies are at work here. Sister to sister works differently, in cultural terms, than sister to brother or brother to brother, because of women's iden- tification with idealized domesticity, and the particular voicing it gives to sis- ters' emotional models. But I would argue that there is a more specific reason for this silence in the MDWS debates, a reason that speaks to the shift from corporate to industrial domesticities: the peculiarly dangerous status of the unmarried blood sister in the house.

I mean "dangerous" in several registers. Generally speaking, any woman who remains *feme sole* endangers women's subordination through the legal doc- trine of *feme covert* and through the nearly intractable cultural practices accu- mulated around it. Eileen Spring's reading of legal history as an evasion of the heiress-at-law suggests the dimensions of this threat. More particularly, as industrial domesticities advocate and practice a "labor-free" home, any adult unmarried sibling becomes an unwelcome sign of labor in the domestic space—especially unmarried sisters, whose labor cannot be readily moved out into the world, and whose simple presence evokes the ideals and practices of corporate domesticities, in which public and private, materially productive and affective economies, were understood as congruent. Still more particularly, the unmarried blood sister poses a special threat, the threat of the inassimilable *feme sole* unquestionably prohibited from marrying the man of the house.

Let me lay this out once more. In the rubric of corporate domesticity, the unmarried adult sister, whether affinal or consanguineous, has extensive responsibilities and rights that are potentially enhanced by her status as *feme sole*. In legal fact, she is not under any authority in the house in which she works, owes her wages or inheritances to no one, and can work for pay without anyone's permission. This makes the unmarried adult sister a potential source of income and inheritance, and implies (though this is obviously a fraught point) an independent moral and emotional, as well as legal, authority. She can also contract and bequeath, which makes her a potential manager of family business in its full range of public and private economies, including the business of acting as the guardian and benefactor of her siblings' children. Although generally a cultural danger, the unmarried adult sister's status as *feme sole* contributes to the stability of a corporate household, in which private and public, affective and material economies are congruent.

There is no question that, by custom, the unmarried adult sister gives up her legal autonomy for cultural subservience to the brother in the household

in which she lives, gaining in return the (sometimes empty) expectation of support. But it is at this crucial juncture that we notice a significant difference between the wife's and the husband's blood sister as residents in the husband's home, a difference that turns not on the sister's status as *feme sole* but on the wife's status as *feme covert*. Despite the wife's unmarried sister's status as a *feme sole*, she can inherit little or nothing from her married sister, because her married sister can own nothing substantial (I speak here of the middle and lower classes); nor does she own or control any part of her married sister's household during her married sister's lifetime. After her married sister's death, if the supporters of the deceased wife's sister exception get their way, the deceased wife's sister becomes fully eligible to marry the husband—that is, she can be made *feme covert*, her labor and its fruits, her property and her children, fully appropriated by her husband. But the husband's blood sister is determinedly *feme sole*; she cannot be assimilated to that household, but will always (so long as she resides there unmarried) retain her legal powers and identity.

Discursively speaking, corporate domesticity performs a positive equivocation on the differences between married and unmarried, affinal and blood, metaphorical and literal sisters. The legal differences and similarities among married women, affinal sisters, and blood sisters, the stuff of the MDWS debates, is also the stuff of corporate domesticity, in which a sister's labor, paid or unpaid, and her ability to function as a producer, manager, and transmitter of capital, is essential. To notice the possible value of the husband's blood sister in the house is thus to reinvest in corporate domesticity—a reinvestment that neither side of the MDWS debates, apparently, is willing to make. To champion the particular case of the deceased wife's sister, in contrast, is also to *not* champion the potential cases of the more powerful siblings—any brother, of course, but most strikingly the unmarried adult sister of the husband, whom that husband can never of himself render *feme covert*. Thus, despite its apparent maintenance of corporate domesticity, the drive to legalize marriage with the deceased wife's sister *as a special exception* undermines that model, simultaneously denying the equivocation of "sister" and "wife," and rendering all (textually visible) sisters as potential wives.

It is no coincidence, I think, that the debates about marriage with the deceased wife's sister escalate toward resolution after two legal events that alter these conditions: the 1882 Married Women's Property Act, which, despite its troubling maintenance of women's "separate property," creates married women *feme sole* with respect to their individually held money and property; and the 1891 case law precedent *Regina vs. Jackson*, which denies the right of a husband to imprison or restrain his wife without special legal cause. Mary Lyndon Shanley emphasizes the limitations of these reforms, documenting the restricted language of the 1882 Act as passed in comparison to its original

sweeping proclamation of married women as *feme sole* with respect to all property, and outlining the uncertainty of married women's rights to their bodies throughout the 1890s (126 and 156–88). Nonetheless, these changes substantially reduced the legal distinctions between the married and unmarried sisters, and between the wife's and the husband's sisters (or any adult unmarried woman relatives). At least one reformer perceived the reduction as decisive: as Shanley reports, despite the obviously restricted language of the 1882 Act, Ursula Bright, an influential activist for married women's rights, publicly stated that the Act gave married and unmarried women equal property rights (127). Now, it would appear, the exception is no longer such a "safe" one: marriage to a deceased wife's sister no longer renders the sister wholly subordinate within the household economy (outside, of course, is another matter) or ensures her physical subordination (although marital rape was upheld in case law through the 1890s).

Granting their limitations, it seems clear that the changes accomplished by these two legal reforms significantly reduce the exceptional status of the deceased wife's sister, and that these partial reforms strengthen expectation of an eventual complete emergence of married women as living legal entities. I would argue that this diminishing of the essential differences among types of sisters, and between sisters and wives, this further dissolution of the grounds of corporate domesticity's fundamental equivocation, importantly contributed to the end of the deadlock. As married women became more "dangerous," it was no longer possible to understand the deceased wife's sister, or indeed the deceased wife herself as a special case. Any exception became moot and so, ironically, acceptable. The other controversies, explored by Behrman and Gullette, which were playing themselves out within the figure of the debate worked toward their own resolutions, and the MDWS bill finally passed as the combined contextual pressures sufficiently shifted. It had been roughly a full generation since the 1882 Married Women's Property Act had passed.

Unmarried and Married Sisters in Dickens's *David Copperfield*

To speak of unmarried sisters as "dangerous" may seem excessive. But Victorian fiction regularly treats unmarried sisters as just that. I do not mean to discount the general disapproval leveled at all unmarried women, or the traditional "jokes" about widows, or the inclusive misogyny evident in some writers' works—Dickens, for instance, who is an obvious exemplar here—but rather to make the special case of the adult unmarried sister visible. Leila Silvana May's *Disorderly Sisters*, which explores nineteenth-century constructions of family relations, notes both the general cultural worries about

siblings, and those directed at sisters in particular: "nineteenth-century *anxiety* [about family roles and structures] is directed at sisters and brothers; indeed this unease is directed most pointedly at the female member of the sibling dyad […] who, in her innocence, purity, dedication, and servitude, is most highly valued, but who is also found most suspect and hence most deeply dreaded" (201, emphasis in original). But I would specify the adult unmarried sister, with her unacknowledged and unsettling legal and material economic power, as the most intractable source of such cultural anxieties. The figuration of the danger such sisters embody varies with the degree of autonomy sought or achieved, with whether they are blood sisters or affinal ones, and with whether their siblings are sisters or brothers—not to mention the variations linked to class, age, and so forth—and its rhetorical correction ranges from masculinization and physical abuse, through ridicule, to the highly desirable outcome (culturally speaking) of civil death by marriage.

While we might turn to almost any novel of the period for examples of this range of figuration, the familiar territory of Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1849–50) immediately yields an interesting array of literal and metaphorical sisters in various marital conditions. The most villainous of these is the never-married Jane Murdstone, blood sister of David's mother's second husband, whose masculinized appearance, preference for hard metallic personal ornaments, and metaphoric association with jails and prisons are explicitly linked to her housekeeping for her brother. Appropriating the household keys from David's mother, as she appropriates all the household decisions, "Miss Murdstone kept the keys in her own little jail [purse] all day, and under her pillow at night" (42). Although the reiterations of her hardness produce a kind of humor, they are quickly rendered sinister by the Murdstones' abuse of David, their expulsion of him from the house and subsequent neglect, and the decline and eventual death of David's mother (together with her infant, whom she dies bearing). Miss Murdstone later turns up as Dora's chaperone, and betrays Dora and David's secret correspondence to Dora's father; and late in the story we learn that the Murdstones have ensnared yet another innocent woman "'with a very good little property,'" as Mr. Chillip puts it, and have made her "'nearly imbecile'" (713).

While it is plain enough that brother and sister are a team of "murderers" (David's favorite corruption of their name), the outward signs of a husband's legal power over his wife, of his power to rule and imprison her, have been transferred to the unmarried sister, while the sister's share in that power depends on her living in her married brother's house, and on her labor in keeping that house. No character other than a second husband is needed to strip David's mother of her autonomy, her property, and finally her life. But the novel constructs the evil locus of this power as a brother-sister household, and the visible emanation of

that power as the unmarried blood sister. And should we have any doubt of Miss Murdstone's inherent power to disrupt domestic happiness, the episode with Dora establishes her as an independent predator. In the tales of the Murdstones, the corporate household becomes a gothic nightmare.

In one of the most memorable scenes in the novel, Jane Murdstone is chastised by Betsey Trotwood, David's great-aunt, a married woman long separated from her profligate and possibly abusive husband, now living under her maiden name and protecting her small cottage from trespassers with brooms and threats. Aunt Betsey's story is first told (in the first chapter) in a comic tone that invites our ridicule of her concern for "Betsey," the girl-child she believes is about to be born. Although far gentler in manner than Jane Murdstone, and somewhat distanced from that lady's dangerous condition by her indirect identification as a "sister" (an aunt, and a great-aunt at that), Aunt Betsey temporarily takes control of the household, announcing her intention to supervise her imagined godchild's upbringing so that there will be "no trifling with *her* affections, poor dear" (6, emphasis original). Like Miss Murdstone, too, Aunt Betsey is marked as less than feminine in her appearance, and is associated with confinement in her early treatment of David and her fostering of the simple Mr. Dick, who would otherwise be in an asylum. But Aunt Betsey's protective custody is rapidly shown to be positive, not least in the scene where she turns the Murdstones out of her house, threatening Jane particularly: "Let me see you ride a donkey over *my* green again, and as sure as you have a head upon your shoulders, I'll knock your bonnet off, and tread upon it!"(183, emphasis original)

A certain irony in this scene is not immediately apparent, because at this point in the novel the reader believes that Aunt Betsey's husband has not merely gone abroad but is dead. But three chapters later, as the chapter title says, "Somebody turns up" (211). The reader is at no loss to identify the mysterious man who, Mr. Dick reports, lurks about the house, frightens Aunt Betsey into fainting, and extracts money from her. Of course, it is the supposedly dead husband, from whom Aunt Betsey is separated only "by mutual consent" (3) and to whom she is still legally married. Although he conveniently dies (still nameless) in chapter 54, the husband reappears twice more, demanding money and moving Aunt Betsy to terror and tears. So when Betsey Trotwood drives off Jane Murdstone, we are watching a married woman enacting the autonomy over property and person that actually belongs to the unmarried woman. It would appear that Aunt Betsey's manifest power in this scene derives both from her marriage and from her appearance of spinsterhood: the (invisibly) married aunt in an independent household trumps the unmarried blood sister living in her brother's house, beating the sister at her own favorite games of eccentricity, confinement, household management, and rhetorical violence.

One of the disturbing things about Aunt Betsey's story is that, in terms of the novel's internal logic, she becomes a fully sympathetic character only when we learn that she is terrorized by her husband. The implication appears to be that those favorite games of the stereotyped *feme sole*, even when benign in their effect, are rightly curbed, though at the expense of the woman's happiness and material security. This idea, that sisters (or aunts, for that matter) should marry, even if the marriage is bad, is confirmed by the fate of nearly every woman in the novel, and there is no positive example of a middle-class corporate household that might establish another legitimate place for the unmarried sister. The good servant Clara Peggotty, a working-class sister, is quickly shown to have marital prospects that she fulfills with the willing but short-lived Barkis; Little Em'ly, metaphorical sister to both David and Ham, falls because she does not marry Ham, and Ham dies essentially of the same cause; Rosa Dartle is ruined by her metaphorical brother Steerforth's violence and disregard for her love; and Agnes Wickfield, David's metaphorical sister, his housekeeper while he lives with the Wickfields (with her own set of keys), and his eventual bride, poses a considerable danger to her father and his business in her temptingly unmarried state. We might look at these characters and at *Copperfield* as a whole in much more detail, of course, but my point here is the broad one that, in novels of this period, the unmarried (or apparently unmarried) sister's labor and autonomy, even if turned to good causes as in Betsey's and Agnes's cases, carries a taint or threat that calls for some correction or restraint. In an extreme case like *Copperfield*, in which the restraining figurations of corporate domesticity seem to have almost wholly disappeared, the implicitly preferred correction is clearly the sister's actual marriage, the disappearance of her labor, and the death of her legal autonomy. We notice too that where this is not possible, emigration proves an acceptable substitute: Emily's best hope for peace and a useful life lies in the colonies, and the apparent necessity of her departure is further enforced by the expatriation of all of the surviving, and unmarried, members of the household.[37]

The Expatriate Sister in Craik's *Hannah*

In Craik's *Hannah* (1871), expatriation appears not as a second-best substitute but as the necessary mechanism of the unmarried sister's conversion into a literal wife in an England that prohibits a ready path to such conversion, the marriage of the deceased wife's sister to her widowed brother-in-law. As is common in these topical novels, *Hannah* takes an explicit stand on the deceased wife's sister controversy.[38] Long before Craik's narrator proclaims that a legal prohibition against the marriage of two people unrelated by blood is "against nature," the reader is well aware that Hannah Thelluson and her dead sister's

widower, Bernard St. Rivers, are experiencing "the gradual growth of that fond, intimate affection which is the surest basis of married happiness" (134 and 135). Their story both parallels and diverges from the characteristic testimonies of the 1848 *First Report*, repeating their familiar tale of an unmarried sister's care and labor attaching her to her dead sister's children and to the widower, but placing the development of emotional bonds after the married sister's death. *Hannah* puts explicit emphasis on the unmarried sister's natural maternal feelings, on her status as an "indifferent person" with respect to her brother-in-law, and on the economic value of her labor, while at the same time figuring Hannah as Bernard's wife. The pressure of this configuration toward the sister's necessary marriage is increased by the novel's representation of the prohibition of MDWS as a pervasive degenerative force in English society, a force that threatens the moral and material stability of all classes.

Most startlingly, *Hannah* extrapolates from these domestic (in both senses) disruptions to an international solution, explicitly proposing French law and customs as correctives to the degenerations of the English system. Hannah and Bernard emigrate to France, marry, and raise their children there. As the novel closes, the narrator wonders whether they or their firstborn son—now landed French gentry—may return to reclaim their English lands and titles in a second, peaceful Norman invasion. In this entanglement of familial and national domesticities, *Hannah* follows a trope partly developed in the *First Report* and in the parliamentary debates: the frequent citation of other nations' marriage laws as superior national definitions of "family," "sister," and so forth.[39] But the novel's specific proposition of France, that old nemesis and well-known novelistic signifier of questionable morality, as a desirable alternative to England amplifies the trope, implying the extraordinary extent of the danger posed by unmarried adult sisters, a danger that here threatens England's sovereignty.

The novel opens with Hannah Thelluson, governess to Lady Dunsmore's daughters, reading a letter from her widowed brother-in-law, Bernard Rivers. Bernard, a clergyman, is the second son of Sir Austin Rivers of the Moat House, but is expected to inherit the land and title because of his elder brother's epilepsy. Hannah's sister Rosa has died in childbed, and Bernard's letter asks Hannah to come care for his six-month-old daughter, Rosie. Hannah is surprised by Bernard's request, both because she scarcely knows him and because "he has sisters of his own" (11). Later in the story, we learn that Bernard's blood sisters are entirely unsuitable as replacements for Bernard's wife, being variously vain, weak, and flirtatious. Hannah, in contrast, almost immediately recognizes in herself a profound "need to be a mother to somebody or other" (13), and agrees to Bernard's request. This emphasis on the unmarried sister's fulfillment of her dead sister's maternal duties, a favorite topic in the MDWS

debates, is carefully sustained throughout the novel, Hannah's relationship to Rosie always leading toward her relationship to Bernard rather than the other way around.[40] Unlike the typical narratives in the *First Report*, though, Craik's plot distances Hannah from her sister's household both economically and materially, so that before her sister's death Hannah is an independent worker and is also unacquainted with her brother-in-law.

These elements of distance serve to underscore not only Hannah's status as an "indifferent person" with respect to her brother-in-law but also her economic autonomy and the market value of her domestic labor. Hannah's bare acquaintance with Bernard lends weight to the novel's opening critique of the MDWS law, voiced by Lady Dunsmore as she tries to dissuade Hannah from joining Bernard's household: "Are you aware, my dear Miss Thelluson, that this is the only country in the world in which a lady of your age and position could take the step you are contemplating? […] Has it never occurred to you that your brother in law is really no brother, no blood relation at all to you; and that in every country, except England, a man may marry his wife's sister?" (23). Although Lady Dunsmore's questions make "a faint color [rise] in [Hannah's] cheek," suggesting Hannah's natural emotional response to their implications, Hannah remains unconvinced. She tells Lady Dunsmore that, the law being what it is, Bernard is "simply my brother" (24). But Hannah's further reason for believing herself safe from any attachment to Bernard is that she considers herself "married" to her first cousin, Arthur, to whom she was betrothed before his death from consumption (26). The novel's discussion of this collateral issue, the questionable practice of allowing such closely consanguineous marriages (Hannah's physician father opposes it), implies that a sister's widower is a much healthier choice. But the figurative marriage to Arthur also reinforces Hannah's position as figurative wife to her dead sister's husband: Hannah moves in with Rivers, taking up Rosa's duties not only within the household but also in his parish work.

Hannah's position as Bernard's "wife" takes another shape as Bernard and she negotiate the economic value of Hannah's labor in the household in terms of her paid labor as a governess. When Hannah cannot attend a bridal party because she does not have proper clothes, Bernard realizes that Hannah has no money coming in and offers to pay her "a quarterly allowance, or annuity, large enough to make her quite independent personally" (75). Despite the promise of independence, the form of an allowance or annuity suggests that Hannah would become Bernard's dependent. But, in an argument reminiscent of the solicitor's testimony in the *First Report*, Bernard presses his case by casting his offer as wages for work that he would have to hire done in any event: "I am not giving; only paying, as I should

have to pay some other lady" (76). Hannah tries to extend this market model to the form and amount of her pay, asking Bernard to "give me the same salary that I received from Earl Dunsmore" (76). But Bernard apparently follows his own notions here, leaving a hundred pounds "on her toilette-table, in a blank envelope" (77).

After this, there is no further discussion or display of the labor-money exchange between Hannah and Bernard. We presume that Bernard continues to support Hannah in exchange for her work in the household, but the trans-action has become invisible, as it would be in marriage. That Hannah has become figuratively *feme covert* is doubly coded here, first in her lack of clothing suitable to a bridal party (which her acceptance of Bernard's money could supply), and second in the appearance of the money at the intimate site of her dressing table literally covered by a blank envelope that unnames the recipient. Hannah is working, and her work has specific monetary value; she is still lit-erally *feme sole*, still an unmarried sister contributing crucial (and measureable) labor to a sibling's household. But Hannah silently accepts his figurative transformation of her status: she no longer earns a salary, nor is money pub-licly exchanged—nor, for this purpose, does Hannah have a name. Yet this marriage, like Hannah's affective "marriage" to Arthur and her householding with Bernard, is indeed figurative, and Hannah remains, in the novel's terms, both eligible for and in need of an actual legal marriage to Bernard.

The necessity of Hannah and Bernard's actual marriage becomes the main thrust of the novel from here, as the text describes the fluctuating feelings and resolutions of Hannah and Bernard as they separately and mutually realize that they have fallen in love. Various plot crises, spreading over about one hundred twenty pages of the 1872 Harper edition, provoke new rounds of moral struggle, during which Hannah repeatedly resolves to leave Bernard's house and renounce his love, and then stays because of Rosie. These cycles of renunciation are clearly meant to demonstrate the seriousness and moral probity of the couple, and also to reinforce Hannah's role as substitute mother. Interestingly, too, they mimic the perpetual renewal of the parliamentary debate. At last Bernard, defying his family and public opinion, openly declares his intention to marry Hannah, and Hannah finally leaves his house. As the action accelerates from here to the end, it also shifts to France, where Bernard and Hannah meet again after her departure, and where they emigrate so that they can marry.

I have so far characterized the novel as Hannah and Bernard's story. But *Hannah* also indicts the prohibition of MDWS as the source of a pervasive social degeneration not unlike that emanating from Chancery in Dickens's *Bleak House*, a degeneration that does not regard class and that is often figured as bodily illness.[41] Hannah's employer, the Earl of Dunsmore, is a leader in

the efforts to approve MDWS in Lords. He and Lady Dunsmore encourage Hannah and Bernard in the hope that their desired marriage will soon be legitimate. Bernard, of course, belongs to the landed gentry; Hannah's father was a physician, while she has "sunk" to that ambiguous worker/lady position of governess, and then "risen" again to the status of (paid) lady-of-the-house. Given the social entanglements of these differently classed characters, it is not surprising that the failure of their collective hope is embodied in its physically debilitating effect on Bernard, who faints and then becomes seriously ill when he hears of the bill's latest defeat at Lord Dunsmore's house. Similarly, when Bernard's invalided sister Adeline, having endured the flirtation of her thoughtless husband with another of her sisters, finally dies, the narrative ascribes the fatality to her heart having "starv[ed] for love, and then grow poisoned with a nameless jealousy"—a jealousy that Hannah has earlier said might be cured if Adeline could only look forward to her husband marrying her sister when she dies (232 and 227). The strained logic of this scenario suggests the urgency with which the narrative frames the English prohibition of marriages like Bernard and Hannah's as a pervasive, contagious dis-ease in the body politic.

Even when not figured as physical illness, the disastrous consequences of the MDWS law are shown to reach down from the recalcitrant Lords into the working and servant classes. In an extended subplot, Rosie's nurse, Grace, suffers the consequences of her marriage to her dead sister's husband, James Dixon. Bernard had refused to marry the couple, who lived in his parish. Encouraged by her brother-in-law's family and not knowing the law, the innocent Grace marries him anyway and bears him a child, not realizing that the child is legally a bastard. Dixon leaves Grace for a woman he can legitimately marry but, tiring of the new wife, tries to retrieve Grace from Bernard's house. As Bernard confronts the drunken intruder, Dixon makes the similarity of their cases explicit: "people do say, Mr. Rivers, that you and I row in the same boat; only I was honest enough to marry my wife's sister, and you—wasn't" (129). Hannah defends Grace, and Grace not only keeps her place as Rosie's nurse but also ultimately joins them in their emigration to France (which in this novel is the land of milk and honey). But it is clear that the prohibition against MDWS compromises the morality and the material stability, even the physical well-being, of every class of English society.

Even without Hannah and Bernard's emigration, *Hannah*'s England would show signs of disintegration: marriage, legitimacy, inheritance, religious faith, personal morality, all seem dangerously destabilized by English law's prohibition of MDWS. Hannah herself seems the furthest thing from "dangerous": modest, motherly, hardworking, devout, law abiding, emotionally

warm yet in control of her passions, submitting readily to Bernard's moral and economic guidance. Yet, as her repeated reevaluations of her position demonstrate, these stereotypically feminine virtues are very nearly undermined by what the novel regards as her society's moral confusion. Grace's tale is more obviously cautionary: a true innocent, though acting virtuously, she falls because this law runs athwart of her natural morality. In *Hannah*, the confusions that threaten English moral and material security occur because Hannah (and others) cannot marry, cannot leave her legal condition of *feme sole* for the desirable civil death of marriage, although she has in every other way become Bernard's wife. But in fact the novel's dramatization of the dangers attending the unmarriageable sister does not stop at home, but goes abroad to contrast disintegrating English morality with the preferable condition of its long-time nemesis, France.

As a first-time reader of *Hannah* with some experience of Victorian novels, I was surprised by an early passage in which Bernard describes his French heritage to Hannah: "'We are supposed to have been the De la Riviere, and to have come over with William the Conqueror. Not that I care much for this sort of thing'" (46). Although we might take Bernard's nonchalance as a becoming modesty or as a distaste for French conquerors, the narrative voice then adds a positive note in its description of Bernard as "tall and handsome, [with] his regular Norman features, and well-knit Norman frame" (46). It seemed an odd moment, since the signification of French ancestry is conventionally negative, rendered even odder by the reference to that old French conquest of England, and I wondered whether it foreshadowed some flaw in Bernard's character. On the contrary, Bernard's Norman ancestry eventually helps him set aside his identity as an English baronet and become that surprisingly better thing, a French gentleman.

As Lady Dunsmore's initial discussion with Hannah suggests by calling attention to England's unique prohibition of MDWS, comparisons between English marriage laws and those of other modern nations were a staple of the MDWS debates. But there is a significant difference between comparing England with many nations, and comparing it with France alone. Charlotte Brontë's Madame Beck (*Villette*) and Dickens's Hortense (*Bleak House*) are not unusual specimens of the assumed character of the French in fiction of this period as duplicitous, violent, selfish, lawless, superstitious, and so forth, and these vices are usually attributed to inferior French religion, education, political history, and law. Of course these overtly negative meanings are often complicated in ways that suggest a backhanded indictment of English arrogance—*Villette*'s Lucy Snowe, for instance, reviles Roman Catholicism but almost never attends Protestant church herself—but the reflex action of writers and readers is clearly the opposition of French vice and English virtue.

So to idealize French manners, landscape, family life, and law, even when this idealization is partly accomplished by granting them English attributes, as it often is here, seems peculiarly subversive.[42]

Yet this is exactly what happens late in the novel. With no further foreshadowing, France reappears in the last 60 pages of the novel, first as a refuge to an ailing Hannah, and then as the location of a "chance" meeting with Bernard. After Hannah leaves Bernard's house, she unsurprisingly begins to fail in health. Lady Dunsmore sends Hannah to her friend Madame Arthenay in Paris, and despite missed connections and Hannah's worsening condition, Madame—an unstereotypically domestic, neat, Protestant Frenchwoman—finally appears to take care of Hannah. When Bernard appears, Madame praises his accent: "Monsieur speaks French like a Frenchman, as he ought, having been at school at Caen, he tells me, for two years" (273). Despite her "English" characterization, in fact, for Madame Normandy is the standard of the good life:

> "Ah, you should come and live among us," said Madame Arthenay. "In this our Normandy, though we may be behind you in civilization, I sometimes think we are a century nearer than you to the long-past Golden Age. We lead simpler lives, we honor our fathers and mothers, and look after our children ourselves. Then, too, our servants are not held so wide apart from us as you hold yours. Old Jeanne, for instance, is quite a friend of mine!" (273)

The implications of this passage are complex. England is given the palm for "civilization," which seems here to mean material and technical advances, since Normandy's virtues derive from "simpler" times gone by. Madame's specific advocacy for close emotional bonds between servants and the blood family suggests that older family structure, belonging to agrarian and early industrial culture, which might include servants. So Madame's praise is not for France at large, or indeed France in modern days, but for "our Normandy" of years past, persisting today and ready to act as a reserve of the old virtues for these fallen English folk.

Similar complications are evident in the description of Chateau de Saint Roque, just purchased, Madame says, by a descendent of the De la Rivieres. When Hannah and Bernard visit there, they find a virtual paradise:

> Saint Roque is one of those chateaux of which there are many in Normandy, built about the time of the Crusades—half mansion, half fortress. It was situated in a little valley, almost English in its character, with sleepy cows basking in the meadows, and blackberries—such

blackberries as little Rosie screamed out with delight, they were so large and fine—hanging on the hedges, and honeysuckle, sweet as English honeysuckle, perfuming every step of the road. Suddenly they came upon this miniature medieval castle, with its four towers reflected in the deep clear water of the moat, which they crossed by a drawbridge—and then were all at once carried from old romance to modern comfort, but picturesque still. (274–75)

Saint Roque's characterization as typically Norman, fortified and medieval, is thoroughly mixed with its characterization as "almost English," pastoral and modern. The chateau simultaneously exists in France and in England, before the Reformation and after industrialization, and for that reason, it would appear, is better than either alternative.

But despite such softenings of Bernard's turn toward France, negotiated in these passages by the emphases on Normandy and its similarities to England, that turn is in fact to modern France and its laws. After a last period of renunciation, during which Bernard's elder brother dies and Bernard inherits the Moat House, Hannah and Bernard finally make up their minds to emigrate to France. Bernard gives up his English title and lands, planning to naturalize as a French citizen, marry Hannah (there is a pro forma dispensation), and settle at Saint Roque. He describes the possibilities of their future life as French citizens to Hannah:

[A]m I not replanting my family tree where its old roots came from? Who knows? Years hence I may revive the glory of my Norman ancestors by making a speech in my very best French, before the Chamber of Deputies. What say you, Hannah? Shall we shake British dust entirely off our feet, and start afresh as Monsieur and Madame De la Riviere? (330)

There is little softening here of their conversion. Bernard still speaks of his ancestors—his conquering ancestors—as "Norman," but the language of his new political power is French, as is his new name, and "British dust" is "entirely" out of the question.

As the novel closes, Craik's narrator turns from the finality of Bernard and Hannah's (re)patriation to the possibility of their heir's triumphant return. "Beloved and honored" in their new country, the narrator says, the two have found

that the human heart beats much alike, whether with French blood or English, and that there is something wonderfully noble and loveable about that fine old Norman race which […] once came over and

conquered and civilized us rude Saxons and Britons […] Whether the master and mistress of Saint Roque will ever return to England, or whether little Austin, the eldest of their three sons […] will ever become not only the heir of their French estates and name, but one day Sir Austin Rivers of the Moat House, remains to be proved. (309–10)

Despite this passage's rhetorical emphases on emotional solidarity and its overt discounting of nation and place, the plot clearly demonstrates that the family's happiness, not to mention little Austin's legal existence and inheritance, depends precisely on where they are, on their nation and its laws. English happiness in general, the health of its human hearts and its families and even its landed powers, evidently may require another invasion by those "wonderfully noble and loveable" conquerors from across the channel—this time in the form of English capitulation to the greater wisdom of French laws. Only when Bernard and Hannah's marriage is legalized, after all, can Austin legitimately claim his English estates.

Or, to put it another way, only when the unmarried sister can be married, can be made *feme covert*, is England safe. Hannah's story is of course the primary generator of this moral, with its careful construction of the perfectly motherly/wifely sister ready for conversion, its gothic cycle of threats to her social and sexual honor (never defiled but repetitiously believed to be so), and its installation of Hannah as wife, mother, and lady of the manor. But all unmarried sisters are rendered legally or literally dead in this story, and the fates of Bernard's blood sisters remind us of the harsh rhetorical treatment often meted out to the less marriageable specimens. Not long after he proposes that Hannah and he should "shake British dust" from their feet, Bernard consigns his blood sisters to their various graves with little regret: "'I have not much to leave behind: my sisters are all married—Bertha will be next spring. No one will miss me; nor perhaps shall I soon come to miss anything—except a few graves in Easterham churchyard" (304). Adeline, you may recall, is not married but actually dead by this time. Bertha, whose flirtations helped kill Adeline, cannot marry Adeline's husband as Hannah thought most healthy and proper, but will marry nonetheless. Bernard's dismissal of his sisters, and his thorough conflation of their deaths and marriages, once again marks the level of threat presented by unmarried sisters. Here the more dangerous blood sisters, already distinguished by their considerably less-than-perfect characteristics, are sharply put in their places underground or under (potentially inappropriate) husbands. Meanwhile, the affinal sister's multiple significations of labor and autonomy, the traces of a still functional and even celebrated corporate domesticity, can be erased only by what must be called radical means. In Craik's *Hannah*, the potential dangers

of renouncing England for France are clearly preferable to the dangers of leaving any marriageable sister unmarried.

As my discussion of the range of texts generated by the MDWS controversy suggests, Craik's novel, if remarkable for the vehemence of its solution, is commonplace in its embodiment of anxieties about women's autonomy during the rise of industrial domesticities. The particular elements of this much invoked figure—female, unmarried, middle class, laboring, domestic, and sororal—clearly delineate the issues at stake: gender, autonomy, labor, and family. Through this figure, which stands at the confluence of shifting constructions of wife and sister, woman and worker, industry and domesticity, household and family, nineteenth-century English people persistently reconsidered these issues, framing them again and again as the problem of the sister in the house. Only slowly and gradually, and only in uneven strokes, with many uprisings and backslidings, does corporate domesticity lose ground to the industrial family.

Yet this is finally the drift of the long fluctuations of the nineteenth century: the ongoing ascent of industrial domesticity, and the simultaneous gradual expulsion of labor and adult siblings from the house. In the end, the problem of the sister in the house is solved by her removal—but not only by hers. Although she functions as the prime figure through which corporate domesticity is disputed, industrial domesticity requires the removal of all adult siblings and their labors. One of the most interesting solutions to the problem of the sister in the house begins to fulfill that more difficult task: the removal of the brother, with his culturally legitimated autonomy and properly public labor, from the spousal household. In the next chapter, I turn to George Eliot's novelistic history of England as an influential version of the history of the nineteenth-century English family, in which the adult brother in the house is rendered a "sister," made incapable of labor, and, in some cases, killed off.

In Eliot's novels, too, we will consider the full significance of the figuration of the adult unmarried sibling as expatriate. The departure of the adult sibling from the birth home, an essential feature of industrial domesticity, ensures the household's restriction to a conjugal pair and their children, and locates authority within the individuated psyche, now apparently separated from the birth family in which it was grown. Yet, as Bernard Rivers's story suggests, this individuated psyche is also understood to be seated in the physical body, its essential identity determined by the parents' blood heritage and so their national heritage, stretching back through the vertical bloodlines of successive spousal couples. Bernard's "regular Norman features, and well-knit Norman frame" are eventually realized by his return to Normandy, where he can turn the wheel through its next cycle, marrying and fathering children—children at

once Norman and English, prevented from fulfilling their double blood heritage, their double inheritance, only by perverse English laws. As we will see, in Eliot's "natural history" of the English family, the necessity of departure from the birth household is matched by the necessity of return to an essential identity defined by blood heritage.

Chapter 4

GEORGE ELIOT'S NATURAL HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH FAMILY

Readers of nineteenth-century British novels know that writers' and readers' interest in sibling relations was not confined to the topical novels embedded in the Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister controversy. Regardless of their explicit thematic foci, novels of this period characteristically engage the wobbling, uncertain development of domestic ideologies at the crux of sibling relations. A particularly revealing variation of this engagement is the replacement of the adult unmarried sister in the house, the figure that carried the weight of public discourse about legal familial identities, with an adult unmarried brother. Characters like Tom Pinch (Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewitt*, 1843), Phineas Fletcher (Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman*, 1856), and Mordecai Cohen (Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, 1876) typify this variation: feminized as gentle and in delicate health, paired with blood or metaphorical siblings, these adult brothers take the place of an unmarried sister in a married sibling's house. Theoretically these male characters should not represent a threat to ideal domesticity of any sort, their rightful autonomy being fully authorized in cultural as well as legal and economic terms. Yet their novelistic trajectories suggest otherwise: rendered incapable of labor, made dependents in their siblings' homes, and, in more than one case, killed off, the fate of the unmarried adult brothers in these fictions points to no less pressing a need for their expulsion from the ideal household than the need excited by their more obviously "dangerous" sisters.

   None of these substitutions of brother for sister is uncomplicated, nor is any of them wholly consistent with one "side" of the field of fluctuating domestic ideals. In the case of Phineas Fletcher, for instance, his relationship with the eponymous hero of Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman* is marked by womanly qualities on both sides: Phineas is gentle, invalided, bookish, but John is physically beautiful, and it is John who dies at the novel's end. The idealized love of the two men (compared in the novel to the love of the Biblical Jonathan and David) is further complicated by the death of one metaphorical brother, and with him, the sibling household. As we would expect, then, the replacement of

sister with brother, and the brother's subsequent elimination from the household, functions as another template upon which alternative domesticities may be projected, mixed, and explored.

As the publication dates of these three novels suggest, this figurative replacement of sister with feminized brother appears in various guises throughout the period when the Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister debate so preoccupied English readers. But in Eliot's novelistic history of the family, the uneven mixtures of the two domesticities, and the varying extremities of the brother's incapacity, appear as a smoothly rising (or falling) trajectory. Eliot's English-setting novels represent the rise of industrial domesticity, and the disappearance of corporate domesticity, as a natural historical event: a generally progressive and necessary development, analogous to the development of the individual, in which the beautiful but childish sibling-based home inevitably gives way to the mature spousal household. There is loss, a fall that is regrettable and yet somehow fortunate—or so the primary trajectory of these novels asserts. Yet as Eliot's history of family unfolds, from the sibling-based artisan household at the end of *Adam Bede* (set in 1799–1801), through the uncertain and fatal efforts of Maggie to leave her sibling and his semiagrarian ambitions behind in *The Mill on the Floss* (set in 1820s–1830s), to the decisive transfer of cultural value from the dying Mordecai to his sister's husband in *Daniel Deronda* (set in the mid-1860s), the dream of the corporate household persists. This persistent recurrence to corporate domesticity as ideality, if not as reality, signals the ideology's continuing cultural force—even as we see its crucial stabilizing figure, the sister in the house, resexed, disempowered, and finally killed.

Throughout Eliot's history we also may trace the entanglement of the homely domestic with the national domestic, an entanglement that becomes more visible as the brother who has replaced the sister comes closer to cultural death. In Craik's *Hannah*, it is enough for the unmarried sister and her brother-in-law to leave the country, and the imagined "history" that follows implies that in time their sibling-based household might (should) return. But Eliot's novels propose that this is not enough. A more thorough alienation, the actual demise of the grown sibling, the eradication of labor and of woman's autonomy in the household—in the history Eliot writes, all these are necessary to assure the stability and continuity of familial and national identities.

It is not surprising that Eliot articulates this "development" through masterful, compelling accounts of individual histories—histories of subjectivity, rendered in a magnificent development of that language Armstrong believes is "invented" by the Brontës. *Deronda*'s narrator reminds us that the great currents of public history are no more important—indeed, are themselves driven by—the vagaries of individual lives. And in the "Brother and Sister" sonnets, an important auxiliary to the novels, Eliot implicitly writes an

individual life into consonance with the greater natural history of the English family that she articulates in her novels. Under the weight of Eliot's explicit and implicit privileging of histories of subjectivity, the histories of homely and national domesticities through which we might glimpse the public, material elements of these stories of brothers and sisters are compressed and partially obscured. Eliot's prime strategies—the characterization of sibling love as simultaneously childish and dead, the alienation of adult siblings from homely and national domesticities, the eventual transfer of familial power from brother to husband—are essential to her novels' naturalization of the historical ascendancy of the industrial household. Yet these strategies raise the very ghosts they seek to lay, displaying them not as ghosts at all but as living aspects of the English family in the late nineteenth century.

The Brother in the House

As we have seen, the cultural dangers figured in the adult unmarried sister in the house appear to be constrained by various rhetorical conversions of "sister" into "wife." This conversion, of course, constitutes legal death (though sometimes simply through the acquiescence of the sister, as when Hannah accepts Bernard's blank envelope of money), and at its extreme may take the form of bodily death, as in the death of Adeline Rivers in *Hannah*, or the implied physical threats to Aunt Betsey in *David Copperfield*.[1] But other modes of rhetorical constraint work through the figure of the adult brother in the house, a figure in which we can see clearly that what makes the sister in the house dangerous is not her gender alone but her status as a sibling, and we can also see that the threat posed by the adult sibling in the house is a specific threat to stable familial economies, to their approved vertical lines of descent, and to their insular detachment from the world of public work.

Since adult males are fully authorized by the surrounding culture as laborers and wage earners and as autonomous legal beings, representational constraint of these features of corporate domesticity involves "feminizing" them, so that their economic and legal autonomy is figuratively disabled, rendered less than legitimate. Significantly, the disabilities of these brothers in the house are in large part economic: they cannot work, or do not work, and it is in conjunction with that condition, sometimes directly by that means, that their posterity is truncated. In Craik's *John Halifax* and Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit*, as in the writings of the Wordsworths and Mary Lamb, artistic labor (literary and musical, respectively) provides a specific site for considering the place, if any, of labor generally in the ideal household. The various ways in which this authority is expelled from the household mark that full separation of artistic labor and identity from the household, and from wage earning and material

economic entanglement generally, in a culture gradually dominated by industrial domesticity.

Tom Pinch of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, and the linked pair of Phineas Fletcher and John Halifax in *John Halifax, Gentleman*, demonstrate a range of variations that may be worked on this revealing brother figure, which is my primary reason for selecting these out of the many novels (many just by Dickens) we might turn to at this point. But I have also chosen them because of how widely both were read. *Chuzzlewit* was perhaps the least successful of Dickens's novels, with its parent periodical, *Master Humphrey's Clock*, falling to a "mere" 20,000 in circulation at the novel's opening numbers, but some of its characters—the dissolute nurse Sairey Gamp, for instance, and that consummate hypocrite Mr. Pecksniff—became bywords among the reading public. *Halifax* enjoyed broad popularity in both Britain and America, and has remained in print since its publication.[2] Another reason to look at these particular novels is that, although neither explicitly identifies family as its primary subject, each casts its overt interests—in the moral fault of selfishness, and in the definition of "gentleman," respectively—in tales of deferred and conflicted familial inheritance, embodied in large part in sibling relations. In these novels, then, we see the pervasive concern with domestic ideologies and sibling relations in mainstream literature that does not take "family" as its overt subject.

Tom Pinch's role in *Martin Chuzzlewit*'s main plot of suspicion and greed among the Chuzzlewit brothers and cousins is both peripheral and pervasive. His emergence as the moral center of the novel seems to depend on his distance, by blood and by action, from the corrupted Chuzzlewits' mutual deceptions. Tom and his sister Ruth provide the novel's alternative to the Chuzzlewits' unsavory familial bonds, first (and briefly) as a brother-sister household, and then, together with John Westlock, as a weakened corporate household where the siblings have become dependents rather than contributors. The Pinchs' trajectory works specific changes on the notion of corporate domesticity, with Tom performing as both sister and brother, and Ruth moving from a worker in the outside world, to a sister keeping house, to a wife. In the process the sister's signification of labor is transferred back and forth between the two, and is finally muted to a mere cover story for Tom's material dependence on the husband's labor. So although the novel closes with a picture of an apparently desirable sibling-based household, the adult sibling in the house is no longer a functional sign of either paid or domestic labor in the house, while the spousal pair covertly supplies the stable organizing principle of their small family.

Tom's first appearance in the text, carried on throughout in the original illustrations, lays the groundwork for his feminization:

> An ungainly, awkward-looking man, extremely short-sighted and pre-
> maturely bald […] [h]e was far from handsome, certainly, and was drest
> in a snuff-coloured suit, of an uncouth make at the best […] [with a]
> clumsy figure, which a great stoop in his shoulders and a ludicrous habit
> he had of thrusting his head forward, did not redeem […] He was per-
> haps about thirty, but he might have been almost any age between six-
> teen and sixty. (16)

Tom's general unattractiveness is specified in baldness, shortsightedness, and
stooped posture, conditions suggesting not a man of uncertain age but an eld-
erly man, one whose physical deterioration has left him "far from handsome,"
no longer a potential lover or husband. In this case, though, it would appear
that no physical development has ever taken place or ever will: Tom is arrested
in an indeterminate but recognizably impotent state, male without being mas-
culine. To Mary Graham, Tom's unrequited love, Tom is simply invisible as
a man, appearing to her as a "good angel" (488)—a phrase applied to her in
an earlier scene between them, clearly pointing to Tom's identification with
feminine emotional and moral traits.[3]

Similarly, Tom's physical inability to see matches his blind submission to
Pecksniff's moral posturing, a submission rooted in Tom's economic depen-
dence on Pecksniff. Placed in Pecksniff's house as a kind of apprentice by his
grandmother, a "gentleman's housekeeper" who has spent her savings to gain
Tom this chance to "live to be a gentleman" (22), Tom maintains an unshak-
able faith in Pecksniff's goodness and generosity until he hears of the man's
perfidy from a source he cannot ignore. Only when Mary Graham tells Tom
about Pecksniff's efforts to seduce her does Tom break with his supposed ben-
efactor and set out on his own.

While he remains in Pecksniff's house, Tom's emotional, moral, and eco-
nomic dependence mimics the position of an unmarried sister who functions
as "wife," an identity that is enforced by a variety of details. Tom acts as the
sweeper-up of small and odious tasks in Pecksniff's establishment, a sort of
professional housekeeper doing the work Pecksniff devalues and avoids. Tom
too considers his labors as falling short of productive work, remarking that
he is unfit for "[Pecksniff's] kind of business […] or indeed for anything else
but odds and ends that are of no use or service to anybody" (22). Repeated
characterizations of Tom as gentle, meek, and forgiving also reinforce his
potential feminization: "his heart was very tender, and he could not bear to see
the most indifferent person in distress" (98). Tom's capacity for self-sacrifice is
demonstrated most completely in his renunciation of Mary Graham and his
enduring love for her. Relinquishing her to the undeserving young Martin,
Tom contents himself with the love of their child—remaining, as it were, the

adult unmarried sister without heirs of her/his own body, his own physical and economic posterity cut off by his devotion to Mary.

Tom's artistic work is markedly feminized: as he plays the church organ in this early scene, his musical talent is represented as emotional rather than technical:

> Great thoughts and hopes came crowding on his mind as the rich music rolled through the air, and yet among them […] were all the images of that day, down to its very lightest recollection of childhood. The feeling that the sounds awakened, in the moment of their existence, seemed to include his whole life and being; and as the surrounding realities of stone and wood and glass grew dimmer in the darkness, these visions grew so much the brighter. (171–72)

Tom's artistry appears in quite a different register than, say, the technical prowess and professional ambition of Klesmer or the Alcharisi in *Daniel Deronda*, more nearly approximating Mirah's miniaturized drawing-room capacities, so clearly tied to her moral and emotional capacity. Nor is there ever any suggestion that Tom could earn money as an organist or perform in public: his artistic labors are entirely privatized, tied to the home places and home feelings of the novel.

Yet this feminized character—physically weak, emotionally and economically dependent, tender and self-sacrificing, unfit for professional work, with diminutive artistic capacities—is both a man and a brother. There are several surprising sequences in which, despite the persistent feminization of Tom's character, Dickens seems intent on reminding us of Tom's masculinity, as when Tom confronts and then knocks down the bully and eventual murderer Jonas Chuzzlewit. These sequences may make more sense if we identify them as contributing to the replacement of the adult sister in the house with a brother, and the subsequent expulsion of labor (if not the sibling) from the household: the revival of Tom's masculinity allows us to read him as a brother in action, as well as in name. When Tom finally leaves Pecksniff, he acts decisively to extract his sister from her job and sets out with her to London to make their way in the world. Tom shows considerable grit in finding a place to live, and gains a sort of employment, and Ruth's devotion to Tom and her delight in being Tom's housekeeper ("What dignity!" [597]) seem to signify her regaining of the position of sister in the house that Tom had been filling at Pecksniff's.

In their brief London idyll, corporate domesticity seems in full bloom, with Tom's and Ruth's roles sorted out into traditionally gendered brother and sister. We are shown Ruth wielding the household keys, and Ruth actually cooking

food that Tom buys, complete with apron and rolling pin and flour strewn about. But the tone of these scenes is arch, and we are constantly reminded that Ruth's destiny is to become an actual wife, legally married to another man. Almost everything about their situation, in fact, suggests a kind of pleasurable sham. Their odd little cottage is likened to a "doll's house" (597), a tiny make-believe realm requiring little management; Ruth is an inexperienced cook whose primary concern seems to be whether her apron is straight; and Tom's employment is a sinecure provided by the elder Martin, his only work the cataloging and arrangement of books in the fake library of an nonexistent employer. John Westlock, Ruth's future husband, is a dominant presence from the beginning, hosting their first dinner in town, attending their second (for which Ruth has cooked), acting as initial contact for Tom's "employer," and rapidly becoming Ruth's fiancé.

At that point, Tom's temporarily reinforced masculinity fades again. Ruth and John agree that Tom will live with them after their marriage, and when Ruth reveals Tom's "great secret" (his unrequited love for Mary Graham), John projects a future in which Tom is protected from the truth of his emotional and economic dependence on them:

> [T]hey would try, he said, only the more, on this account, to make him happy, and to beguile him with his favourite pursuits […] [John] had a capital opportunity of establishing himself in his old profession in the country […] he had been thinking that it would afford occupation to Tom, and enable them to live together in the easiest manner, without any sense of dependence on Tom's part; and to be happy as the day was long. (815)

Beguiled, indulged, his occupation (or lack thereof) "afforded" by the husband, Tom sinks from his brief position as an adult brother who has occasionally shown something like real independence. The illusions of dependence on Pecksniff have been replaced by the illusion of independence in a married sibling's house—a position actually more dependent that that of the unmarried sister in the corporate household, whose contributions would have been a valued part of the household's collective sufficiency.

The novel's overview of its characters' fates finds Tom at the keyboard of his organ, playing dreamily away. He is now the provider of "cash" to a fallen and begging Pecksniff (832), but the production of this money is entirely elided in the closing pages, throughout which whatever occupation John may have created for Tom remains unmentioned. Nor are there signs of any domestic caregiving that might add value to the household economy. Unlike Eliot's Seth Bede, shown at the end of *Adam Bede* carrying his young nephew on his back

and still working at his carpentry, Tom's interactions with Ruth's children (the number and names of which we are not told) are represented as play: "little feet are used to dance about thee at the sound [of the organ], and bright young eyes to glance up into thine" (832). We meet only "one slight creature [...]—her child, not Ruth's" (832) for whom Tom actually works, nursing her when she falls ill, and this child does not live in his household.

Not only has the adult unmarried sister become a wife, but also signs of any adult sibling laboring in the household have been extinguished or muted. The plot makes Ruth's paid labor outside the home (as a governess, an always liminal position in itself) and Tom's dependent position as an unmarried "sister" laboring in Pecksniff's house, coeval, equating the two and insisting on the dependence, rather than the autonomy, of any adult sibling in the house. The brief idyll of brother-sister householding is treated as charming but inauthentic: both siblings' labors are represented as a kind of play, while their material maintenance comes from the gift of a "fairy godfather." Their ineffectual efforts at domestic self-sufficiency do compare favorably with the deceptions and criminality of the Chuzzlewit brothers and cousins, the results of whose alienation render even make-believe domesticity desirable. In the end, though, the emotional and economic prosperity of the Westlock household is anchored primarily in the spousal pair of John and Ruth. Ruth's love for Tom does ensure his material well-being, but John's labor, not their collective labors, produces their economic security. Tom's lack of "any sense of dependence" is a happy illusion encouraged by his sister and her husband: Tom appears to make no material contribution to the household, and even his emotional contributions are generalized and, within their household, unconnected with domestic labor. The formal structures of corporate domesticity remain, but much of their ideological content—the crucial emotional and economic contribution of the adult unmarried sibling to the household, the mutually sustaining labor of the householders—has been vacated.

John Halifax, Gentleman, in contrast, might be inferred to be the textual fruit of corporate domesticity: the novel appears to be the published memoir of Phineas Fletcher, John's "brother" by emotional affinity and economic partnership, and a householder with John and his wife, Ursula March. Although Phineas does not work, John's economic success originally derives from Phineas's father's business, in which John rose from apprentice to partner, and by the novel's end only Phineas, the unmarried member of the metaphorical sibling household, survives, the spousal pair dying within hours of each other. These aspects of the novel suggest a greater emphasis on the adult sibling's labor and the collaborative origins of artistry than we find in *Chuzzlewit*. But there are complications: the wholly metaphorical relation of the "siblings" to each other, the death of the "siblings" most strongly associated with

productive paid labor, the differently feminized identities of both "brothers," and the departure of the Halifax children, each associated with some kind of foreign exile, into separate spousal households. Here too, though in a different register, we observe the disabling of the adult sibling as an autonomous economic force.

Phineas first describes John as his metaphorical "elder brother" on their second meeting, early in the third chapter (53), and maintains this language through frequent repetition throughout the novel.[4] In the first chapter Phineas compares them to the biblical David and Jonathan, linking this legendary love to brotherly love at various points, and Phineas's language and, evidently, feeling are soon echoed by John. Once John and Ursula have decided to marry, she too joins the sibling cohort, with Phineas claiming that "from the very first of her betrothal there had been a thorough brother-and-sisterly bond established between her and me" (243). While his father lives Phineas does not become a member of John and Ursula's married household. But when his father dies, about a year and a half after their marriage, Phineas says, "John and Ursula then demanded with one voice, 'Brother, come home'" (257).

There are interesting crosscurrents at work in Phineas's relation of this development. His account leaps forward from Abel Fletcher's death to ten years later, so that we see Phineas instantly translated into a long-time resident of a house that now includes three Halifax children—the metaphorical siblings' household suddenly achieving much longer standing than the brief spousal household, and a set of blood siblings suggesting an extension of such relations into the future. Yet Phineas explicitly states his continuing objection to the arrangement: "it is one of my decided opinions that married people ought to have no one, be the tie ever so close and dear, living permanently with them, to break the sacred duality—no, let me say the unity of their home" (257). Clearly Phineas would have written pamphlets against the sort of household that might lead to marriage with a deceased wife's sister, and yet his practice says something rather different. Similarly, he professes his desire "to try and work for my living, if that were possible—if not, that out of the wreck of my father's trade might be found enough to keep me, in some poor way" (257). But, as he tells it, "John Halifax would not hear of that," and importuned by Ursula to stay for the baby Muriel's sake, Phineas agrees (257).

The ebb and flow of these conflicting ideals of family appears also in some hints of a contagion infecting the various households. Abel Fletcher dies on the same day that the baby Muriel is discovered to be blind; the Fletchers' housekeeper, Jael, dies almost immediately after; and many years later John admits to Phineas that he has a fatal malady that he believes will lead to a death "not unlike your father's" (488). John does indeed die, and Ursula expires on his body hours later. But the significance of this shadowy contagion

is far less clear than in Craik's *Hannah*, which plainly represents the exclusion of marriage with a deceased wife's sister as a legal and moral disease within the English body politic. Nor does it seem likely that these scattered instances of disease within the family represent what Phineas might fear they do, some fatal interference in the "sacred unity" of the spousal household: Abel's death is a precondition of the corporate householding that follows and Muriel was conceived in the spousal household. But certainly John's and Ursula's deaths bring their corporate household to an end, and though the unmarried "sibling" survives, the two who have died are powerful representatives of labor in the house.

John, after all, exemplifies the overt moral of the novel: work hard and (with some luck and a presentable person) you will succeed. When, soon after he is apprenticed there, Phineas asks John if he likes the tanning yards, John admits, "I hate the tan-yard" (60). But because it is what he has, he says, he will "stick to it as long as [he] can": "I would like to be anything that was honest and honorable. It's a notion of mine, that whatever a man may be, his trade does not make him—he makes his trade" (60). John's serial success in various businesses—tanning, flour milling, textile milling—as worker, partner, and owner maintains a strong connection between his identity as "brother" and his capacity for productive labor. He gains his first regular employment partly through Phineas's intervention, becomes one of Abel Fletcher's heirs—Phineas being the other—and eventually becomes the primary economic contributor to the corporate household.

Ursula, despite her birth into wealth and her leisured youth, shows the same willingness to work after her marriage, represented in unusual scenes of physical household labor:

> Often she would sit chatting with me, having on her lap a coarse brown pan, shelling peas, slicing beans, picking gooseberries; her fingers—Miss March's fair fingers—looking fairer for the contrast with their unaccustomed work. Or else, in the summer evenings, she would be at the window sewing—always sewing—but so placed that with one glance she could see down the street where John was coming. (248)

While Phineas deploys Ursula's former social status as a piquant contrast to her domestic labors, there is none of *Chuzzlewit*'s coy tone about such labors here: Ursula's work is given positive value as "unaccustomed" but genuine. She also becomes a monetary partner in the household enterprise, her deferred inheritance arriving just in time to save John's textile business from ruin.

While the Halifax/March/Fletcher household continues, it generally prospers, rising beyond various reversals to a seemingly unassailable

security, and its prosperity seems founded in the collaborative labors and contributions of the metaphorical siblings. Even Phineas, who does no productive physical work (not even shelling peas), contributes his remaining portion of Abel Fletcher's business and does the artistic work of chronicling the household's history. Yet no blood ties bind this trio. While one of the features of the corporate household was its inclusion of those without blood ties—servants, metaphorical siblings, and so forth—as members of the family, its primary structures were nonetheless anchored by consanguineous sibling relations. The absence of any blood tie among the adult "siblings" suggests that one of the material functions of such a household—the consolidation of bloodline inheritances, of family wealth—is also missing. Just as the Pinch line presumably will die with Tom, so the Fletcher name and fortune will die with Phineas: the heirs of the house are Halifaxes, and the Fletcher money, long since subsumed into John's business, passes entirely into their use.

Not only have the blood relations that anchor corporate domesticity been rendered entirely figurative—or, I should say, entirely transmuted to emotional affinities—weakening the legal and economic meanings of blood siblinghood, but also the "brothers" are both feminized in specific ways that delegitimize their labors. Although it manifests for all kinds of reasons at different times, Phineas's constitutional weakness takes the specific shape of keeping him from learning his father's business and forestalls Abel's hope that Phineas will follow him someday:

> Mentally and physically I alike revolted from my father's trade. I held the tan-yard in abhorrence—to enter it made me ill for days; sometimes for months and months I never went near it. That I should ever be what was my poor father's one desire, his assistant and successor in his business, was, I knew, a thing totally impossible. (56)

The one who becomes Abel's "assistant and successor" is, of course, John, whose quick and thorough grasp of the work eventually moves Abel to make John his partner. John's vigorous good health and his desire to do business stand in sharp contrast to Phineas's revulsion and incapacity.[5] So when we finally learn, in the penultimate chapter, that John has been chronically ill for some years, the echo with Phineas's illness casts an unexpected shadow on John's fitness for business. It is not that he has not labored well and successfully, but that a constitutional weakness, one comparable to Abel Fletcher's fatal malady and also to Phineas's lifelong illness, has been lurking there in John all the time. In the end, there is no "sibling," married or unmarried, whose capacity for productive labor, and specifically for labor that generates money, has not been at least potentially truncated.

While Phineas's physical weakness and incapacity for labor are apparently absolute and so obviously feminize him, John's case is more fraught. Phineas and John are both represented as susceptible to the "softer emotions," another mark of their collective feminization. But just as Phineas's illness manifests continually, while John's lies hidden, so Phineas's emotional needs are evident from the beginning in his figuratively feminized desire for and devotion to John, while John's feeling for Phineas is rendered in ambiguous terms.[6] At their second meeting, as John helps Phineas back into his house, Phineas remarks on John's display of gentle feeling: "Well nursed and carefully guarded as I had always been, it was the first time in my life I ever knew the meaning of that rare thing, tenderness […] a quality which can exist only in strong, deep, and undemonstrative natures, and therefore in its perfection is oftenest found in men. John Halifax had it more than any one, woman or man, that I ever knew" (53). Despite the declaration that tenderness is "oftenest" a masculine attribute, the reference to nursing and the allowance for tenderness in women allows a feminine dimension to John's emotional capacity.

Similar ambiguity is evident in Phineas's descriptions of John's physical being, which seem to mix masculine strengths with feminized beauties: "Everything in him seemed to indicate that which I had not: his muscular limbs, his square, broad shoulders, his healthy cheek, though it was sharp and thin—even to his crisp curls of bright thick hair" (1–2). Phineas leans heavily on the masculine side of this mix at times, and his declaration that John has "that which I had not" implies that the two are somehow opposites, with Phineas the lesser/ more feminine of the two. But John's body is also repeatedly subjected to Phineas's admiring and sensualizing gaze:

> I watched him standing, balancing in his hands the riding-whip which had replaced the everlasting rose-switch, or willow-wand, of his boy-hood. His figure was outlined sharply against the sky, his head thrown backward a little, as he gazed, evidently with the keenest zest, on the breezy flat before him. His hair—a little darker than it used to be, but of the true Saxon colour still, and curly as ever—was blown about by the wind, under his broad hat. His whole appearance was full of life, health, energy, and enjoyment. (130)

In the following sentences Phineas casts the admirer of this sight in variously gendered roles, while John's role in the scene (as the phallic whip in his hand suggests) is figured as masculine: "any father might be proud of such a son, any sister of such a brother, any young girl of such a lover" (130–31). But John has also been rendered as a view, the object of gazes ranging from patriarchal to sexual. While Phineas clearly aligns himself primarily with the

sister and the young girl—"I wondered how long it would be before times changed and I ceased to be the only one who was proud of him" (131)—he leaves John's gender identity somewhat ambiguous, masculine in most respects but subjected in feminine fashion to the appraising, and specifically sexualized, gaze of others. Phineas's habit of "taking a view" of John continues throughout the novel, underscoring not only John's potential femininity but also the ambiguity in Phineas's own gender identity.

These different feminizations not only make the "brothers"' identifiable as "sisters" but also specifically incapacitate them, explicitly or implicitly, for productive labor. Despite *John Halifax*'s prosperous household founded on the collaborative labors and economic contributions of its "sibling" partners, here, as in *Chuzzlewit*, the ongoing celebration of the emotional components of corporate domesticity coincides with the eventual exclusion of all siblings and their material labors from the household. And *Halifax* adds one final, interestingly framed twist: the three surviving Halifax siblings (Muriel dies along the way) all require some kind of exile from England before they can marry. Edwin (the second, business-savvy son) marries the family's governess, "Louisa Eugenie Silver," who reveals herself as Louise Eugenie D'Argent, expatriate daughter of a notorious Jacobin (399). Guy (the eldest profligate son), who has also fallen in love with Louisa, flees to the Continent, accidentally kills a man in Paris, and emigrates to the United States. When Guy returns, he brings with him William Ravenal, reformed scion of Ursula's aristocratic cousin and suitor for Maud Halifax's hand, who has become his partner in America. The three men now enter into a business partnership, interestingly extending the economic function of corporate domesticity and reintroducing the blood ties missing from the original trio's household. But in each case the espousal depends on the experience of exile, the alienation, in some sense, of the sibling from the family home, the national homeland, or both.[7]

I have offered these lengthy examples from two popular mid-century novels partly to demonstrate how the figure of a brother, substituted for the adult unmarried sister in the house, may be used to exclude all siblings and their potential labors from the spousal household. But I also wanted to demonstrate the degree to which ideologies of family were mixed and recomplicated in such novels. Although the patterns of plot and characterization produce some strongly marked effects, ones that to me demonstrate the gradual ascension of spousal over corporate households, and that emphasize the desirable exclusion of adult siblings and their labor from the home, it is also true that these novels, taken as single texts, are ideologically incoherent on this point: they both celebrate and undermine the competing domestic ideologies, coming to no clear conclusion within themselves. The meaning I see in them depends on my retrospective sense of historical flow rather than on the novels' individual

internal features. For instance, although I take the evocation of exile and alienation in the Halifax siblings' marriages as crucial, it is also true, as I noted, that the men now enter into a business partnership, renewing the confluence of material and emotional economies. As Phineas observes on the day of Guy and William's return, "That night we gathered, as we never thought we should gather again in this world, round the family—Guy, Edwin, Walter, Maud, Louise, and William Ravenel—all changed, yet not one lost […] the family bond, which had lasted through so much sorrow, now knitted up once more, never to be broken" (486). In my view, "the family bond" now means something very different than it did at the beginning of the novel. But my particular emphases cannot be justified from any one of these texts alone.

This is why Eliot's natural history of the family, stretched across her novelistic oeuvre, is so significant: unlike any single novel, whether hers or anyone else's, it coherently chronicles a necessary replacement of corporate domesticity with industrial domesticity, of sibling households with spousal households. In Eliot's work we see the rationale for and the rhetorical strategies through which the material, economic, and legal dimensions of these alternative domesticities were suppressed to make way for an ideally affective, privatized model of the family.

Even if we confine ourselves to plot and characterization, it is not difficult to trace a progressive history of the family in *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *Daniel Deronda*, the three of Eliot's novels most attentive to sibling relations. The endings of the novels provide a brief for this history. *Adam Bede* closes in a harmonious, fruitful corporate household, in which Adam and his wife, Dinah Morris; their children; and the unmarried brother, Seth Bede, are sustained by Adam's managerial and Seth's artisanal labors, with Dinah providing the domestic management and labor, and Seth assisting in the care of the children. At the end of *The Mill on the Floss*, the unmarried brother and sister protagonists, Tom and Maggie Tulliver, are overwhelmed in a flood and drown in each other's arms, having never realized their imagined childhood ideal of householding together. And *Daniel Deronda* ends with the eponymous hero married to Mirah, whose brother Mordecai joins Mirah, and then the couple, in householding for a brief time before, in a remarkable scene we will look at in full later, he expires with Daniel's and Mirah's arms around him just days before their departure to "the East."[8]

In none of these novels are we shown an unmarried blood sister laboring in a married sibling's household. There are some instances of unmarried sisters maintained by brothers, married or unmarried (for instance, Rev. Irvine's sisters in *Bede*), or unmarried sisters maintaining themselves, sometimes with a sibling or a parent as well (Maggie in *Mill*, or the Meyrick sisters and to some extent Mirah in *Deronda*). The lateral relations—niece, aunt, metaphorical

sister or wife—appear frequently, and in these there are considerable nuances of fluctuating family ideologies to be read. What we do not see is that dangerous figure of a laboring blood sister who contributes economic value to the household of a married sibling. Instead these novels place brothers in the house, feminized or incapacitated from labor to a greater or lesser extent, and in the latter two novels, dying. Seth Bede is merely shown as gentle-natured and religious, and continues to labor productively for the sibling household. The feminization of the two brother figures in *Mill* is far harsher, linked directly to the failure of both the Tulliver and the Wakem lines. Tom Tulliver, though determined to provide for his family, receives a useless classical education that makes him "more like a girl than he had ever been in his life"—"susceptible," prone to tears over his failed lessons, daydreaming over the past (*Mill* 125). This is no chimerical feeling: Tom's lack of practical training materially hampers his efforts to earn a living after his father's financial failure, and whether it is a question of causation or not, Tom never in fact succeeds in his effort to regain his family's standing and fortunes. As in Craik's *Halifax*, there is a second "brother," Philip Wakem, the crippled son of Mr. Tulliver's enemy. Like Phineas Fletcher, Philip is physically and mentally unsuited for his father's (or indeed, any) business. Unlike Phineas and John Halifax, though, Philip and Tom profess no fraternal love. Once schoolmates, they become enemies through their fathers' enmity, their material and emotional fortunes conflicting rather than coinciding. Philip's positive relation from those same school-day associations is with Maggie alone, and though he loves Maggie as a metaphorical brother is supposed to, according to the ideals of corporate domesticity—that is, with a brotherly love that shifts to romantic love—she returns his love as if he were a blood brother, with no desire or prospect for a spousal relation. We might as readily say that she loves him as a sister: both Maggie and Tom at various times see Philip as girlish, perhaps most notably when Maggie, having implied that she would like to marry Philip, "stooped her tall head to kiss the pale face that was full of pleading, timid love—like a woman's" (296).

   Mill is the most explicit in its expulsion of the laboring sibling, ending with the death of both the unmarried brother and the unmarried sister, but in this field of characters there was never a prospect of a successful sibling household. *Daniel Deronda* stages this expulsion differently, limning the persistence of corporate domesticity in two partially, or temporarily, functional sibling households—the Meyricks, and Mirah and Mordecai—and in the potential for at least two others: Rex and Anna Gascoigne (and their four other siblings), and Gwendolyn and her four half sisters. As we shall see, all of these are disabled in some fashion, while the new dispensation appears in the (presumably) successful marriages of Klesmer and Catherine Arrowpoint, and of Mirah

and Daniel. The effect here is striking: Daniel's marriage to Mordecai's sister completes the alienation of the entire household from England, by death, by a physical expatriation that may well be permanent, and by transfer of Deronda's familial identity to his Jewish heritage and a national condition of permanent expatriation.

With these broad strokes in place, I will turn to the various structural and rhetorical devices by which Eliot's novels construct this trajectory of change as a naturalized, desirable historical progress. In *Mill* and *Deronda*, in particular, these devices are pervasive: the use of lateral sibling relations (niece, aunt, etc.) to allude to the corporate ideal, while rarely showing it in a fully functional state; the chronological and symbolic consignment of the corporate household to the immaturity of both persons and nations; the expatriation of unmarried siblings from their birth family, through a "foreign" identity (sometimes figurative), a temporary or permanent sojourn abroad, and in some cases a subsequent marriage to an exogamous spouse; and the transfer of economic power from sibling collectives to individuals and spouses, specifically husbands. It is by these means that Eliot's novelistic history closes the borders of family and household to those outside a tightly defined blood cohort.

Corporate Domesticity as Present and Past in *Adam Bede* and *Mill on the Floss*

In *Adam Bede*, set in 1799–1801, corporate domesticity is a functional ideal, with the structures and values of industrial domesticity emergent but not yet well developed. The first chapters establish the intertwining of sibling labors and spousal affections characteristic of corporate domesticity as we move from "The Workshop" where brothers Adam and Seth labor as carpenters, to Dinah Morris's preaching (a woman's unpaid but public labor), to Seth's rejected offer of marriage to Dinah. Though Adam and Seth live with both their parents, the next episode, in which Adam finishes the coffin promised by his drunken father and the father is found dead, shows plainly that it is the grown brothers' labor that sustains the family's home. Similar configurations of labor and householding run throughout the story, the corporate ideal usually emblematized in the lateral relations derived from siblinghood. Dinah, raised by her unmarried aunt Judith, now lives in Stonyfield and earns her own living, but while in Hayslope, she stays with her aunt Rachel Poyser, and we see them doing the work of the house side by side with another niece, Hetty Sorrel. (Hetty's butter making, we might note, is not only an occasion for Arthur Donnithorne to admire her beauty but also a crucial part of the dairy production that old Squire Donnithorne later tries to use as part of a bargain with the Poysers.) The Rev. Mr. Irwine forgoes marriage to maintain

his two sisters and his mother (this is the only other household in the novel encompassing blood siblings and labor), and even the misogynistic Bartle Massey shelters a comic cognate of the "unmarried sister," the ironically named stray Vixen, in his house. Vixen's affinity with human versions of the unmarried sister are underscored by the narrator's fanciful description of the kitchen table as being "as clean as if Vixen had been an excellent housewife in a checkered apron" (225), while Vixen's recent litter of puppies completes the expected transformation into a metaphorical wife, conflating the dog's obviously unmarried status with her imagined position as "mistress" of the house.

In a very different emotional vein, Vixen's situation also parallels Hetty's illicit liaison with Arthur, and the birth and death of their illegitimate child.[9] This ghastly conclusion of Adam's unrequited love for Hetty, and Arthur's and Hetty's mutual seduction, has long been understood as a critique of the class system that is dissolving under the pressure of the modern. But an unrecognized part of that critique is that both Adam's love and the couples' liaison stand outside the ideal forms of corporate domesticity, a middle-class formation that incorporates labor into the home space and so contradicts genteel (as well as industrial) values. The early preference of Adam's mother, Lisabeth, for Mary Burge, Adam's master's daughter, as her future daughter-in-law is not a choice that would cement any sibling or cousin tie, but it does underscore the mutual domestic supports of labor and love, and would effectively create a sibling household. Were Adam to wed Mary, he would bind not only his fortunes but also Seth's to the Burge workshop and house. That Adam still becomes a shareholder in Burge's business and eventually master of the timber yard and workshops suggests that his final choice is equally efficacious as a consolidation of the family fortunes. Dinah, already implicated in their household through her work beside Lisabeth and Seth's love for her, also represents labor in the house and the intertwining of sibling fortunes, and confirms Adam's resolution to remain near the Poysers, whom he has come to regard as family. The novel's epilogue (set in 1807) shows us what appears to be the ideal corporate household: Adam and Dinah, their children, and Seth, still working as a carpenter in the old workshops and helping care for the children.

Though it is barely noticeable until we know the full run of Eliot's history of the family, Seth's character alerts us to the emergence of industrial domesticities: the unmarried sister whom we might expect as the contributor of stabilizing value has been refigured as a brother, so that the immediate danger of an autonomous woman laboring in a domestic space is relieved. In comparison to the refigurations of *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *John Halifax, Gentleman*, this is very gently done. Seth remains physically able to labor, and does in fact keep earning for the household; and though he himself may not have children, the bloodline of his birth family continues in Adam and Dinah's children. We can

even imagine a future in which Seth enters the obverse of marriage with a deceased wife's sister: should Adam die, Seth's subsequent marriage to Dinah would seem a natural sequel.[10] But Adam's character provides further signs that the doors of the house will soon close against siblings altogether. Adam's education, his cross-class friendships and refusal to accept certain kinds of patronage, his initial desire for Hetty (the niece who labors but longs to be a lady), his accomplished intention to attain his own business, his management of the old landed estate for the Donnithornes, and his keen interest in "the canals, an' the aqueducs, an' th' coal-pit engines, and Arkwright's mills there at Cromford" (11) all foreshadow what is to come. As has often been noticed, Adam strides toward the industrial future, a future known (in part) to Eliot's first readers as it is to us.[11] The final confirmation of an emergent domesticity congruent with this industrial future is Dinah's silence. Her sect's new rules forbid her preaching, and though Seth regrets that she did not "[join] a body that 'ud put no bounds on Christian liberty" (500), Adam approves Dinah's decision to submit to the new order. The creative labors associated with Adam from the novel's beginning—his interest in all things new, in the making of objects both useful and beautiful—is now vested in a husband and manager, rather than a brother and fellow laborer, and is (and will be) located in public economies outside the home.

Despite such foreshadowings, *Bede*'s closing scene of a harmonious and prosperous sibling household contrasts sharply with *The Mill on the Floss*'s final apocalyptic dispatch of its unmarried sibling protagonists, who by this time have lost every material and emotional possession but their most distant memories of each other. To the range of personal and cultural inundations that readers have found represented in this scene, I would add the death of corporate domesticity—or at least its intended demise, though as we shall see, it will take a little more to construct the dominance of industrial domesticity in its most developed form. From the beginning, the novel presents the relations among siblings as radically different from those represented in *Bede*.[12] Maggie and Tom are introduced to us as young children, not as grown workers, and as this structural alteration suggests, *Mill* represents corporate households as failing to achieve the ideal coherence of monetary and emotional economies to which laboring adult siblings were supposed to contribute. The extensive household, financial, and emotional entanglements of the four Dodson sisters and their spouses, seconded by those among Mr. Tulliver and his sister, Mrs. Moss, rather than promoting familial stability and unity, produce an endless stream of discontents and failures. The linked households seem unable to exchange either money or feeling readily, each transaction or potential transaction tainted by demands for gratitude, expectations of submission

to the giver's will, and the free dispensing of blame when things go wrong, as well as by a variety of financial failures. When Aunt Glegg is dissatisfied with Mr. Tulliver's plans for Tom's schooling, Mrs. Tulliver imagines that her sister might threaten to call in the £500 she has lent Mr. Tulliver. He in turn then thinks of calling in the £300 he has lent his sister's husband (while conveniently ignoring the £1000 his sister contributed to the mortgage on the mill, half its total amount), withdrawing his demand only when he compares Maggie's future lot with his sister's present. As a final twist of this particular knife, Tom must worry about the existence of the note for £300 when Tulliver is incapacitated after his failure, finding and destroying it so that the creditors will not demand payment.

Such unhappy tangles are commonplace in the novel, as what should ideally be mutual economic and emotional support fails or misfires. Perhaps the most serious instance of this ongoing failure, aside from Maggie and Tom's fate, is the Gleggs' loan to Tom so that he can invest in goods and more rapidly increase his fund for repaying Mr. Tulliver's debt. It is worth noting that the whole deal originates with Tom's strolling peddler friend, Bob Jakin, and that it is Bob's deft handling of Aunt Glegg (in a wonderfully comic scene) that wins Tom the full £50 to invest: the material success of the venture depends as much on this outside commercial advice and labor as on the uncle and aunt's patronage. But even in this apparently successful application of sibling monies, the consequences are unforeseeably disastrous. Mr. Tulliver, his pride and surface health restored by Tom's repayment of the debt, attacks the elder Wakem and is fatally injured in the struggle. In this sequence, as is characteristic of such causal chains in the novel, the economies of money and feeling seem disjunct rather than coincident, and the mutual aid of sibling-anchored households proves ineffectual in securing their well-being.

In their different ways, Maggie and Tom both try to carry on in accordance with this obviously disintegrating model of family life. After their father's death, Maggie goes "into service" (apparently as a governess, though at times the description of what she does seems vague) and continues to take in plain sewing, at which she now excels, and to both Tom and Philip Wakem she asserts her desire for financial and domestic independence. But although she attempts to carry out the unmarried sister's role as economic support for the family, she has to go live in other houses to make money rather than laboring (for pay or not) within the frame of the sibling household. Tom does pledge to support Maggie and their mother in a single household when he can. But he never envisions Maggie as a fellow laborer in this house or any other. Rather, he disapproves of her decision to work:

> You know I didn't wish you to take a situation. My aunt Pullett was willing to give you a good home, and you might have lived respectably amongst your relations, until I could have provided a home for you with my mother […] I wished my sister to be a lady, and I would always have taken care of you, as my father desired, until you were well married. (344)

That the issue between them is Maggie's paid labor "out of doors" identifies again the specific fault line between money and feeling, between labor and the domestic space, which is becoming a dominant feature of domestic ideality. For different reasons, both Maggie and Tom want to remove the sister's labor from the household, and it is this specific issue that makes it impossible for them to keep house together.

The narrator makes it quite clear, in fact, that the Dodson sisters' families, with their annoyingly insistent efforts to conglomerate their households, belong to a now undesirable past. In a long digression opening Book Fourth the narrator compares "this old-fashioned family life on the banks of the Floss" (238) with her views of "the dead-tinted, hollow-eyed, angular skeletons of villages on the Rhone" (237):

> It is a sordid life, you say […] you are irritated with these dull men and women, as a kind of population out of keeping with the earth on which they live—with this rich plain where the great river flows for ever onward, and links the small pulse of the old English town with the beatings of the world's mighty heart […] but it is necessary that we should feel it, if we care to understand how it acted on the lives of Tom and Maggie—how it has acted on young natures in many generations, that in the onward tendency of human things have risen about the mental level of the generation before them, to which they have been nevertheless tied by the strongest fibres of their hearts. (238)

The "suffering" of such "young natures," the narrator argues, "belongs to every historical advance of mankind" (238). Within the frame of the digression's ostensible subject—"A Variation of Protestantism unknown to Bossuet,"— family life, family values, become the practical means by which "historical advance" is measured. Dodson family values, the narrator asserts, embody their "simple, semi-pagan" religion, "revering whatever was customary and respectable" (239), and it is clear that the determined materiality of Dodson family values is a great part of the problem: "The right thing must be done toward kindred. The right thing was to correct them severely, if they were other than a credit to the family, but still not to alienate from them the smallest rightful share in the family shoe-buckles and other property" (240).

Although in these passages the narrator seems to deplore the disconnection of material well-being from family feeling, her own language works to accomplish the same disconnection on another level. Our supposed readerly problem is that we are "irritated," when in fact the narrator holds that "we must *feel* this sense of oppressive narrowness" (emphasis added), must feel its effect on individual interior lives—"young natures in many generations"—so that these "young natures" were able to progress in their mental development despite the ties through "the strongest fibres of their hearts." The reason the narrator can equate the decomposed cottages of the Rhone with this middle-class English family life is because the equation happens through feeling, through "natures" and "hearts," whether ours or theirs. Even though the material and historical distance between the readers' world and the characters is presumed to be the reason we would feel irritated, the narrator then sets these distances aside, claiming that only the individual capacity for sympathy is needed to bridge the gap.

These implicit claims appear in explicit form in Eliot's essay "The Natural History of German Life" (1856), a review essay praising W. H. Reihl's study of the same name. In the opening pages she critiques Dickens for a purely external realism that fails to extend its verisimilitude from the outwardly visible to the intellectual and emotional interior. Praising his portraits of "the external traits of our town population," Eliot goes on to argue that "if he could give us their psychological character—their conceptions of life, and their emotions—with the same truth as their idiom and manners, his books would be the greatest contribution Art has ever made to the awakening of social sympathies" because it would afford us the fictional equivalent of "a true conception of the popular character" (271 and 272). Of course this "true conception" would actually be achieved in a nonfiction study of "the natural history of our social classes, especially of the small shopkeepers, artisans, and peasantry,—the degree in which they are influenced by local conditions, their maxims and habits," their religious instruction, the relations of the classes themselves, and finally, "the tendencies in their position towards disintegration or towards development" (272–73). This, she says, is Reihl's achievement in writing about the German peasant.

As Eliot prepares to summarize Reihl's natural history of the modern German peasant, she explicitly ties such a project to the representation of family life, and identifies current German peasant family life as well behind the times. She directs us to "remember what the tenant-farmers and small proprietors were in England a half a century ago, when the master helped to milk his own cows, and the daughters got up at one o-clock in the morning to brew,—when the family dined in the kitchen with the servants and sat with them round the kitchen fire in the evening" (273). More references to

older models of domesticity follow—the uncarpeted parlor and lack of art
on the walls, the spinning and dairy work of lightly schooled girls preparing
for marriage—and the essay writer remarks that we should think of Germans
of the same classes as "about on a par, not certainly, in material prosperity,
but in mental culture and habits, with that of the English farmers who were
beginning to be thought old-fashioned nearly fifty years ago" (274). It is worth
noting that "fifty years ago" would be 1806, or just one year before the date of
Bede's epilogue, in which the still functional structures of corporate domesticity
already show evidence of changing values in Adam's status, Dinah's silence,
and Seth's "sisterly" position.

As we might expect, then, what readers of Reihl will find "old-fashioned"
in the "mental culture and habits" of contemporary German peasantry is
embodied in the practices of corporate domesticity and of provinciality. Even
in the absence of any specific mention of siblings, the conflation of servants
and family, the visible labor of women as an adequate preparation for
marriage, the absence of marks of a traveled, sophisticated world, all suggest
the values of corporate domesticity. One prong of the implicit dismissal of
these standards is their consignment to the past (though this is shot through
with the usual nostalgia). The other prong, as in the narrator's digression in
Mill, is the turn to such outward practices not as important in themselves but
as evidence of the internal condition, the "mental culture and habits" of the
people.

Eliot's rhetorical power in creating such "structures of feeling" is well
known, and has been discussed in many venues since Raymond Williams's
classic formulation. I reiterate this particular instance because of its signifi-
cance in Eliot's history of the family. By consigning the Dodson family values
to the boneyard of European history, the narrator creates the expectation
of some new, better family that is in the making. By insisting that it is the
feeling of oppression, acting on individual interior psyches, that produces
both readerly sympathies and historical progress, the narrator disconnects
feeling and progress from any particular material or historical configuration.
It is not only that corporate domesticity, once represented by the harmonious
and fruitful Bede household, has passed away. It is that its particular mate-
rial arrangements never really mattered. The rise in the "mental level" of
humanity will be accomplished through interior emotional experiences, which
now appear distinct from material life.

The rhetoric of the narrator's digression repeats the patterns of plot and
characterization, in which the possibility of a sibling household is relegated to
a childhood dream. Very early in the novel, the childish Maggie and Tom both
voice their expectation that they will live in a corporate household—although
their versions are interestingly different. In the midst of worrying about Tom's

dead rabbits, which she has forgotten to feed, Maggie tells Luke (the head miller), "'I love Tom so dearly, Luke—better than anybody else in the world. When he grows up, I shall keep his house, and we shall always live together. I can tell him everything he doesn't know'" (27). Not long after, Tom thinks that despite Maggie's silliness, "he was very fond of his sister, and meant always to take care of her, to make her his housekeeper, and punish her when she did wrong" (35). Despite their conflicting versions of who will teach whom, the central features of corporate domesticity—the siblings' mutually sustaining labor and their mutual affection—are clearly in place in the children's vague visions of a future householding together.

So it is no small matter that this shared expectation never comes to pass. When Lucy tells Stephen that Maggie held her "situation" for "nearly two years," she adds, "ever since her father's death" (320), clearly indicating that there was no interim period of the siblings working together in one house. Nor, as we have seen, does either sibling turn to this potentially fruitful possibility later on, Maggie preferring independence and Tom wishing for her to live as "a lady" in an aunt's house—that is, not as a worker inside the home either, but as a sheltered young woman waiting for marriage. When the "golden gates of childhood close" after their father's financial ruin, they close on their mutually imagined corporate household as well as on the Edenic freedom from care that they enjoyed (168).

Nor is Maggie able to realize this imagined idyll with her metaphorical brother, Philip Wakem. From their first meeting, they employ the language of siblinghood, reinstating it when they meet years later in the Red Deeps and Philip, now in love with Maggie, begins to press his suit. In one of their conversations, it is clear that the term "brother" is under contention:

> [Maggie says] "O, it is quite impossible we can ever be more than friends—brother and sister in secret, as we have been. Let us give up of thinking of everything else."
>
> [Philip responds] "No, Maggie, I can't give you up—unless you are deceiving me—unless you really only care for me as if I were your brother. Tell me the truth." (295)

Though to readers of our time Maggie's terms—brother and sister, nothing more, nothing romantic—might seem clear, to Philip they are confusing. When he suggests that she is "deceiving me," he seems to mean that the term "brother" itself is deceptive. He wants her to mean "brother and sister" in the sense of that relation as a prelude to matrimony, a model of spousal relations, but fears that she means "brother" in the sense of one excluded from such possibilities. Does she "really only care for me as if I were your brother"? "Tell me

the truth," he pleads. He needs her to tell him which meaning of "brother" she intends, the one that leads to marriage or the one that does not.

But the ideal upon which Philip rests his hopes, the ideal of mutually sustaining sibling and spousal relations, finds no correspondence in this novel. Maggie's explanation to Lucy, just before Maggie elopes with Lucy's fiancé, Stephen Guest, sets out the problem: "I would choose to marry [Philip]. I think it would be the best and highest lot for me—to make his life happy. He loved me first. No one else could be quite what he is to me. But I can't divide myself from my brother for life. I must go away, and wait" (385). The strange wording, "I would choose," implies the missing "if I could" that is detailed in the next sentences. Her marriage to Philip would be medicinal, an act of emotional nursing, a "best and highest lot" precisely because she is not moved to it on her own account. His happiness, his love for her, the uniqueness of their relation are her motivations, not some absolute primacy in her own emotional life, nor yet any support beyond the emotional for him: she imagines that she would make him happy, not that she would keep house for him (this is left a mere implication) or support him. And Maggie's love for her blood brother prevents this potential union between metaphorical siblings—exactly the opposite of the desired effect in corporate domesticity, where the blood siblings' affections should enable their marriages. Her remaining option is to "go away," to leave the household and make her own way as an unmarried sister, unable to marry her metaphorical brother.

The significance of this doubled closure of the corporate domestic paradigm may appear in sharper relief beside the "Brother and Sister" sonnets (1869, pub. 1874).[13] These sonnets, which critics have often read along with *Mill*, emphasize the bright joys and emotional growth of the siblings in their childhood Eden with vivid sensory imagery, while drawing the later separation of the sister-speaker and her brother very briefly and abstractly. The sonnets also focus entirely on emotional and moral growth, making no mention of an imagined adult domestic idyll or, for that matter, of its loss. The result is a hermetically sealed childhood paradise, theoretically unrecoverable but also more rhetorically "present" to the reader than the speaker's adult life.

The first sonnet's beautiful image of the sister and brother's close-knit childish lives as being "like two buds that kiss/At lightest thrill from the bee's swinging chime" is carried through the sequence with image after image of flowers and sweet scents: "firmaments of daisies," "the bunched cowslip's pale transparency," "Lady-fingers in deep shade," "tangled blue Forget-me-nots," "the scented elder-flowers," and in the final (eleventh) sonnet, "scents from varying roses that remain/One sweetness, nor can evermore be singled." With the exception of that last quotation, I have drawn this incomplete selection from the first six sonnets, where the flower images predominate. In the last

five sonnets the images swing toward the human production of food, though with no less vividness. "Our brown canal," with its barges and imaginary "fair pavilioned boat for me alone," yields a "silver perch" to the speaker's careless fishing; her brother, with more thought, gathers "fruit that hung on high beyond my reach" and provides captivating boyish games that displace the speaker's efforts "with dream-fruit dream-wishes to fulfill" (sonnets 6–10).

What the children learn with each other is rendered in somewhat more abstract terms. Sonnet 5 sets out the "deepest lore" learned in the children's wandering: "the meanings that give words a soul, / The fear, the love, the primal passionate store / Whose shaping impulses make manhood whole." In sonnet 9 the brother learns to guide and protect his sister and to restrain himself, and the speaker imagines that "his years with others must the sweeter be / For those brief days he spent in loving me." The sister, playing the boy's games, learns the "harder, truer skill / That seeks with deeds to grave a thought-tracked line" (sonnet 10). But in each case these abstractions are mixed with those characteristic evocations of flowering and fruitfulness—for instance, when in sonnet 5 the speaker characterizes the wanderings that taught the "deepest lore" as "seed to all my after good" (the allusion to Wordsworth is obvious).

Such evocations are entirely missing from the final sonnet's assessment of the siblings' present relationship, except in reference to their lost childhood. "School parted us," the speaker begins, and mourns the loss of that "twin habit," the shared nativity that she figures as the single scent of different roses, the traces of which persist:

> Till the dire years whose awful name is Change
> Had grasped our souls still yearning in divorce,
> And pitiless shaped them in two forms that range
> Two elements which sever their life's course. (lines 9–12)

The imagery of these lines lacks the sensory immediacy that pervades the sequence's evocation of childhood, an evocation that makes its last brief appearance in the "singled rose" line. The personification of "Change," a rare device in these sonnets, further distances the siblings' present from the sensory paradise of childhood. As the speaker expresses her longing in the final two lines of the sequence, the impossibility of recovery is clearly drawn: "But were another childhood-world my share, / I would be born a little sister there."

The differences between the "Brother and Sister" sonnets and *Mill*'s representations of such a relationship are in part a function of genre, but this does not lessen their interpretive significance as we consider Eliot's history of the family. The sonnets enclose idealized sibling love in childhood and the unrecoverable past much more thoroughly than the novel. In this much shorter

text, the childhood Eden consumes almost all available space, its powerful sensory imagery nearly overwhelming the speaker's present mourning, even in the sorrowful final sonnet. Rather than making the speaker's present palpable, the imagery of the siblings' separation actually disembodies them: the grown siblings' divorced souls become "forms that range" through "elements," leaving the reader with no graspable sensation of their loss. Without *Mill*'s imaginings of a future domestic idyll—only the allusive use of "divorce" in the last sonnet gestures in that direction—the reader cannot know exactly what has been lost, other than childhood affection. We learn nothing of the terms of this "divorce," of what it was about school that separated the siblings, of how that "twin habit" of a shared nativity was ended. How do the siblings live now? We cannot know, nor (the gaps in the sequence imply) does it matter. In the sonnets, the childhood Eden of sibling affection stands as an intact, palpable "reality," unaltered by whatever failures the adult siblings have suffered in the (undescribed) present.

But in *Mill* the sibling affections of Maggie and Tom's supposedly Edenic childhood are among the roots of their problems. Maggie's early memories of Tom, her preeminent love for him, blocks her relation to Philip, making it impossible for her to be either Philip's "sister" or his wife. And yet her memories of Philip during their childhood and youth, their metaphorical siblinghood, also disrupt her relation to Tom, seeming to require that she deceive Tom in order to fulfill a different, conflicting duty to the past. Faced with this complete breakdown of the corporate ideal they all subscribe to, Maggie has only the choice she arrives at in talking to Lucy: go away.

And so Maggie does, but not alone or as a worker. Instead she leaves with the aptly named Stephen Guest, a man with no childhood relation to her and who in no way stands as a brother to her (except possibly through his engagement to her cousin Lucy, which seems a stretch). The narrative enforces the "wrongness" of Maggie's elopement in various ways. Yet we may also be aware of a paradoxical "rightness" of her action, not only in its evasion of the double closure of the corporate household but also in the terms of progress that the novel's narrator insisted on earlier. Is not Maggie's suffering, before as well as after the elopement, that very "suffering" of "young natures" that the narrator has declared to be the engine of progress, the means by which the "mental level" of humanity is raised? Are we to read her moral lapse only as a moral lapse, or are we also to understand her active response to her feeling toward Stephen as pointing to some other model of family, one in which the sister's departure from the sibling household positively enables her marriage? Maggie's elopement marks the narrative's rhetorical separation of emotion from economy, of the inner psyche from material conditions, of sibling love from the household—and that for all its apparent moral suasion to the contrary, the narrative also suggests the rightness of this separation.

Consider, for instance, the narrator's ironic commentary on society's probable reaction if Maggie and Stephen had completed the elopement, married, and returned to St. Ogg's. "The world's wife," as the narrator caustically names what Dickens calls "the voice of Society," would have seen only their handsome looks and genteel manners, their standing in the community, Stephen's future in commerce and politics (431). The narrator's tone implies that all these things having to do with economy and political life, with material circumstance, should have no bearing on our judgment of the situation. But how then are we to judge? Maggie pays no mind to such sordid matters when she leaves with Stephen. She is drawn into the moment by music, by his voice, by her emotional affinity for him, and by the flow of the river. If the narrator would have us set aside the material and social concerns of "the world's wife," then is the alternative a purely individual emotional response, which must (dangerously) include the present as well as our memories of the past? Should Maggie have indeed completed her "foreign" sojourn down the river, her expatriation from her birth family, and returned a wife, her identity consonant with the "progress" represented by Stephen's commercial and political future?

The rhetorical conundrum is a complex one. The narrator's irony marks the opinions of "the world's wife" as morally bankrupt, implying a positive judgment of Maggie's refusal to go through with the elopement. The old memories and old values would seem to be affirmed. As Maggie says to Stephen as she prepares to leave him, "If the past is not to bind us, where can duty lie?" (417). Yet we also know, if we give this same narrator full faith and credit, that the past is not to bind them, that it finally cannot bind them, because the young must move beyond the oppressive narrowness of societies like St. Ogg's and must do so by means of inner feeling. Where, exactly, does that leave us but on the river, one way or another? Maggie can float down the river with Stephen, or be overwhelmed in the flood with Tom. I would not pretend that any singular meaning can be assigned to the remarkable final scenes of *Mill*, but surely it is clear that part of their potential meaning is the simultaneous confirmation of the binding power of the past, and the condemnation of our dutiful responses to that power as futile or destructive. If it is true that humans advance beyond the restrictive narrowness of the previous generation only in spite of being "tied by the strongest fibres of their hearts" to that generation's values, then Maggie should have left with Stephen and married him, not returned dutifully to her past. In returning to that past she may achieve a personal moral victory, but she has advanced the mental level of humanity not a whit—and her death, together with the death of the brother she sought to save, may be read as confirming that.[14]

In the context of the novel's representations of familial relations, Tom and Maggie's deaths may also be read as a dramatization of the necessary death

of corporate domesticity. The flood's emotional effect on Maggie and Tom is to carry them back to their childhood intimacy, an intimacy expressed in Tom's return to "the old childish—'Magsie'" (458). Yet here again, and for one last time, their mutual effort to sustain each other both materially and emotionally fails. Despite their emotional reconciliation (or perhaps, symbolically speaking, because of it), they cannot row to safety. What kills them is a combination of the flood's natural force and the artificial instruments of material progress: "wooden machinery" broken loose from the wharves, "[h]uge fragments, clinging together in fatal fellowship" that make "one wide mass across the stream" and take the boat under (458). They are literally sunk by the machinery of commerce—not, interestingly, by fragments of the old mill, with its semiagrarian connotations, but by the newer constructions of trade and mercantile wealth—driven by the force of the flood's inevitable natural cycle.[15] Against the material weight of the industrial world, propelled by the natural and expected force of time, sibling feeling and labor cannot prevail.

Nor should they, given the disastrous applications of corporate domesticity that this novel portrays. Tom and Maggie's valuation of each other belongs to an antediluvian world and must give way to the future. Yet in *Mill* there seems to be no new structure, no new positive value advanced to take the place of what is lost. The narrator tells us that as Maggie and Tom go down "in an embrace never to be parted," they "[live] through again in one supreme moment the days when they had clasped their little hands in love, and roamed the daisied fields together" (459). While it may be argued that this constitutes a recovery of Eden, it is an entirely personal and interior recovery, barren of fruit in the world after the flood. As in Wordsworth's "Michael", the remaining value of the past is incarcerated in a memorial text: "In their deaths they were not divided," the inscription on Tom and Maggie's tomb, closes the novel. While we presume that many read this in the rebuilt churchyard, we know of only two readers for sure. One is Philip, "whose greatest companionship was among the trees of the Red Deeps, where the buried joy seemed still to hover—like a revisiting spirit" (459). The other is Stephen, who "visited the tomb again with a sweet face beside him—but that was years after" (459). In neither known use of the text can we find any sense of futurity. Philip gains nothing from the tragedy but a perpetual haunting, though a pleasant one, and while readers might wish to suppose that Stephen has married Lucy, the narrator leaves their relation vague. If those destructive fragments of machinery are indeed the future rushing on, then this novel, at least, cannot show us what the future has brought, except for change itself. As the narrator tells us, "to the eyes that have dwelt on the past, there is no thorough repair" of the flood's depredations (459).

Industrial Domesticity as Future in *Daniel Deronda*

Daniel Deronda, like *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss*, consigns corporate domesticity to the past of individuals and societies. But in this last novel we also learn what the future may look like: a cosmopolitan world of travelers and exiles, exogamous with respect to national as well as homely domestic spaces. In the new model implied by this last of Eliot's novels, the sister and brother must leave their siblings and their country to marry successfully; the individual must leave his birth-place to secure his heritage. Yet in this moment of apparently outward movement, a paradoxical thing happens. As the doors of the spousal household close protectively on a new blood cohort bred of exiles, enforcing the coherence of the exogamous couple and their children as an ideal family, so the individual's national identity retracts toward his blood heritage, granting blood primacy over profound emotional relationships, even those formative of his childhood. In this novel, no matter where the individual is born, or lives, or travels, he must return toward his parents and their blood heritage to realize his true and singular identity.

Yet, despite this coordinated closure of homely and national domestic spaces around a small conjugal blood cohort, the structures and values of corporate domesticity persist. The personal and political solutions of the novel's plot grow out of the metaphorical and blood relations among Daniel, Mirah, and Mordecai, which are solidified during a brief period during which the blood siblings live together, and a still briefer period when the married Daniel and Mirah live with the dying Mordecai. Although the narrator's and characters' descriptions of these relations give primacy to spousal or romantic relations rather than to sibling feeling, the corporate household still appears as a short-lived platform from which the spousal relations—the spiritual one between Daniel and Mordecai, and the physical one between Daniel and Mirah—are launched. The force of the ending, the collapse of this original corporate domesticity into a dramatically altered model of household and nation, seems irrevocable to me. Nonetheless, even as the novel demonstrates the necessity of human culture's development toward the new forms of industrial domesticity, it reinscribes the ideals of corporate domesticity, representing them as an apparently necessary substrata of the new familial model.

If it seems hard at first to see the continuing fluctuation of these family models as a key issue in *Deronda*, it is not only because so much is going on in this large and magnificent novel, but because of the novel's deliberate recurrence to histories of subjectivity as fundamental. Even as the narrative explores in detail the differences generated by time, place, nation, and religion, including shifting ideals of family, *Deronda*'s insistent displacement and deval-uation of such material chronologies renders these differences as secondary,

as driven by personal trajectories that form the "real" matter of the novel's histories. Yet the shift from corporate to industrial domesticities is essential to the novel's claim that the shift does not matter. That is, in order to retract historical significance into the sphere of the individual psyche, the narrative must fully enclose the privatized spousal households within which that individual psyche is nurtured. Only when identity can be seated in private emotional experience, in a fully individuated childhood primarily shaped by parent-child relations (rather than a collective childhood experienced by one's self and one's siblings), and an adulthood distinguished by its singular emotional adaptations, can material and cultural history become a secondary manifestation, rather than an important cause, of identity.

This dependence of this very doctrine on that which it needs to deny, the significance of a particular family model belonging to specific historical conditions, is evident in the novel's handling of Daniel's Jewish identity, and in its other invocations of the figure of the Jew—at that time, emblematic of the permanent expatriate. *Deronda*'s apparent interest in—I think we could say, advocacy of—the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, an issue that seems incontrovertibly located in the "big picture" of national histories and contemporary geopolitics, occurs in tandem with its ongoing definition of "Jew" as an individual identity, dependent on one's parentage, one's blood heritage, and in the conscious acceptance of one's parentage as the primary determinant of identity.[16] The narrative enforces this move in a variety of ways, ranging from general narrative commentary about the genesis of national concerns in individual lives, through recognition scenes in which Jews who do not know Deronda detect his heritage simply by looking at him (Gentiles see only a general foreignness), to Deronda's unfolding discovery of his parentage and his eventual embrace, through this discovery, of his authorial and political mission to advocate for the Jewish homeland. What might seem to be a principled call for a geopolitical initiative is thereby translated into a personal quest authorized by an individualized identity derived from the parent-child blood relation.

The narrative concurrently insists on a second thread of identity—the feelings and experiences of the individual, corresponding to that "suffering of young natures" so central to human development in *Mill*—and it is this second thread that assures futurity, the movement away from the narrow traditions of previous generations. But this thread too leads back into the individual psyche, into one person's internal responses to his upbringing and ongoing perceptions; and the history of this subjective development is housed in and given veracity by a legible body readily identified as "not English" or even specifically "Jewish," its essential identity determined by the spousal pair that produced it (and by the spousal pairs that produced each of them,

and so forth). *Deronda*'s narrative calls explicit attention to the significance of parentage by having all three major Jewish characters—Daniel, Mirah, and Mordecai—born in England, and speaking English as their first language. Yet sooner or later each one asserts his or her "true," and incontrovertible, identity as Jewish—predicated on their parentage, that is, not on their possible citizenship or their early cultural experiences or their childhood feelings. So it is that *Deronda*, while constructing the natural historical replacement of corporate by industrial domesticity, also asserts that the specifics of family structure simply do not matter, except as evidence of a steady progression of the race, which (as in *Mill*) is itself located in the development of individual sympathies.

Deronda's opening scene, a set piece identified with Eliot's having once seen Lord Byron's great-grandniece gambling, directs us at once to the novel's concern with the location and legibility of identity.[17] What is at stake at this gaming table (and this does seem to be an intentional textual pun) is national and class identity most broadly, but also specifically English identity. Daniel Deronda, our initial point of view, and Gwendolen Harleth, the initial object of his view, are both English travelers abroad in Europe, individually aware of their dubious class and family standing, and neither can "read" the other's identity. What they overhear and see tends to misdirect them (and us). Daniel hears conversations suggesting that Gwendolen is the cousin of an English baroness rather than the niece of an English rector. When Gwendolen asks "Is he [Daniel] an Englishman?," her chaperone answers only that "he is reported to be rather closely related to the baronet," Hugo Mallinger (9). In fact, as the ambiguous "reported to be" suggests, Sir Hugo is only Daniel's guardian, a former suitor of his Jewish opera-singer mother—a history that will not be fully revealed for some six hundred pages.

Yet if Daniel and Gwendolen are at a loss to read each other clearly, the narrative simultaneously asserts the ease with which various national and class types may be distinguished by a mere observer. The gambling company includes "very distant varieties of European type: Livonian and Spanish, Graeco-Italian and miscellaneous German, English aristocratic and English plebian" (4). Within these distinct varieties, individuals are still more specifically distinguished: we see the "white bejeweled fingers of an English countess," "a respectable London tradesman, blond and soft-handed," "a handsome Italian, calm, statuesque," and so forth, each described at some greater length (4). These perceptions too are implicitly seated in Daniel's viewpoint, and their apparent clarity suggests a general ease of classification with respect to groups that fail in particular cases, perhaps those where speculation (in one of its many senses in this novel) has outrun observation and knowledge.

In fact Daniel and Gwendolen have both gone abroad during what we would call an "identity crisis." Daniel, aware that his relation to his "uncle"

Sir Hugo is not what it is publicly named to be (he believes himself to be Sir Hugo's illegitimate son), and increasingly disaffected with university, has asked to go abroad for the specific purpose of expanding his understanding beyond what he believes to be his English heritage: "'I want to be an Englishman, but I want to understand other points of view. And I want to get rid of a merely English attitude in studies,'" he tells Sir Hugo (168).[18] Daniel has also just rescued Mirah from her intended suicide in the Thames, encountering in her "something quite new to him in the form of womanhood […] He felt inclined to watch her and listen to her as if she had come from a far-off shore inhabited by a race different from our own" (208). What "race" and "our own" mean here is quite uncertain, since Daniel knows Mirah is Jewish, but does not know that he is. But in this new, intense relation to Mirah he feels already the mesmerizing force of something "not English," drawing him as readily as his desire to study abroad. It is in this condition, then, that he encounters Gwendolen at Leubronn.

Gwendolen too goes to Europe with the deliberate intention of breaking with an old identity. The eldest of her twice-widowed mother's five daughters, now under the patronage of her uncle and aunt Gascoigne, Gwendolen's primary business (ably seconded by her ambitious uncle) has been to marry well. She readily attracts a noble suitor, Henleigh Mallinger Grandcourt (who is, among other things, Sir Hugo's nephew and heir), but breaks off their protracted courtship after the mother of his four illegitimate children confronts her. In an uncharacteristic burst of good judgment, Gwendolen then leaves for Europe with the friends whom we see chaperoning her in Leubronn. While her decision is by no means as deliberate as Daniel's, and has no apparent relation to her Englishness, Gwendolen's gambling literalizes her "play" with her class and familial identity. Her stakes at the table turn out to be her family's last money, which she gambles away in a fit of pride under Daniel's provoking scrutiny, and she then tries to pawn a necklace made with stones that "had belonged to a chain once her father's" to raise a new stake (15). She leaves for England without actually gambling this inheritance away: Daniel sees the pawnshop transaction by chance and returns the necklace, leaving Gwendolen feeling too humiliated to return to the tables. But these feeble, half-conscious efforts to "change her luck" are clearly also efforts to change her family and her status, to set up some identity other than that of marriageable niece.

The complex emotional and economic transactions between Gwendolen and Daniel at Leubronn, which I have barely sketched above, establish persistent connections between the characters and also among the strands of familial and national identity these characters are seeking to understand or change. The redeemed necklace, for instance, becomes a talisman to Gwendolen,

representative not of her father (or at least not for some time) but of Daniel's belief in her better nature, and she tries to wield it as a kind of weapon against Grandcourt's tyranny after their marriage. The relatively inexpensive turquoise-set piece also functions as the obverse of a ring Daniel wears, a diamond that we eventually learn belonged to his grandfather, and which is stolen by Mirah and Mordecai's gambler father near the end of the novel. I could not begin to unpack the many layers of significance in these symbolic jewels in this space (and I have not even mentioned Grandcourt's mother's diamonds, given at first to his children's mother and then to Gwendolen). My point is simply that the novel's deployment of entanglements like this function as ideological entanglements as well: Daniel's quest to become "less English" is permanently and profoundly entwined with Gwendolen's quest to be not marriageable, not the dutiful sister and niece advancing the family fortune, and to be instead a woman behaving (if not actually being, in an economic sense) independent.

Gwendolen's problem is that her own brief adventure out of England, like Hannah's emigration to France, makes her marriageable rather than not, accomplishing the transformation from unmarried adult sister into wife. Though "deposited as a *feme sole*" (210) at the London station upon her return from Leubronn, Gwendolen does not long remain so. As she confronts the economic realities of her mother's ruin, Gwendolen at first rejects the notion of becoming a governess—"I would rather emigrate," she proclaims (216)—only returning to this possibility after failing to gain a positive estimate of her chances on the stage from the eminent musician Klesmer. Though her primary wish is really a kind of easy independence for herself, Gwendolen does also think in terms of what she might do for her mother and sisters, promising to give all her governess's salary to her mother: "you will have all the eighty pounds. I don't know how far that will go in housekeeping; but you need not stitch your poor fingers to the bone, and stare away all the sight that tears have left in your dear eyes" (256). It is in the context of Gwendolen's inability to secure either her independence (on her terms, at least) or her family's prosperity that Grandcourt renews his suit. Gwendolen sets aside her scruples about his unmarried lover and illegitimate children, and accepts his proposal. As she says to her mother afterward, "Everything is settled. You are not going to Sawyer's Cottage, I am not going to be inspected my Mrs. Mompert, and everything is to be as I like" (282). Upon this latter point, of course, Gwendolen is deluded. The unmarried sister becomes a wife, and Grandcourt's tyrannical control provides thorough textual chastisement for her proud, if wholly naive, pretensions to independence.[19]

Though Gwendolyn's brief expatriation, like Hannah's in Craik's eponymous novel, seems to have made her marriageable, it does not realize any part of the ideality of corporate domesticity. Grandcourt never holds anything like a

brother relation to Gwendolen, and her new wealth, while indirectly enriching her family, does not form the basis of a corporate household. The Gascoignes' continuing assistance to her mother and sisters fulfills the old ideal, but it appears as the necessity of poverty rather than a deliberately chosen investment in mutual growth. Of the many unmarried sibling groups still living in their birth households in *Deronda*—the four Davilow sisters (Gwendolen's half sisters), the three Mallinger girls, the three Meyrick sisters, and the six Gascoigne siblings—none ever graduate into those multiply linked marriages of sibling pairs and cousins that are characteristic of corporate domesticity. In fact, at the end of the novel, none of these young unmarried siblings is married or has prospects of marriage, leaving the strange impression that their membership in a sibling group incapacitates them for marriage. With the exception of Mirah, whose brother dies within days of her marriage, the other successfully married characters are apparently without siblings: Klesmer (about whose family we know nothing except its ethnic heritages),[20] Catherine Arrowpoint, and Daniel are singletons. Gwendolen marries, of course, but has only half sisters—and that marriage ends fatally. And nowhere in the novel does that crucial figuration, the grown sibling laboring in a married sibling's household, ever appear. There are three instances of this situation imagined, and two in which unmarried siblings labor to support a household in which other unmarried siblings live. But these instances are either devalued as immature fantasies, or—in the case of Mirah and Mordecai's brief household idyll—closed by the laboring sister's marriage, followed by the unemployed, unmarried brother's death.

These three instances also demonstrate the interpenetration of the homely and national domestic, the familial and national identities, that is sustained through the novel. As Gwendolen's case suggests, in this novel expatriation is not a means through which to realize the ideals of corporate domesticity but a thorough alienation of the sibling from the spousal household. Notably, this seems to mean both the birth household—the departure from the parents' household and from one's sibling cohort—and the spousal household newly formed by two once-siblings. For brother and sister Rex and Anna Gascoigne, the whole project remains imaginary, while the Meyrick siblings, despite their actual collective labor, seem engaged in some sort of pleasant playacting. Whether partially realized or not, both of these efforts are marked as part of the personal and cultural past.

When, very early in the novel, Gwendolen rejects her cousin Rex Gascoigne's offer of marriage, Rex forms a vague scheme of going "to Canada, or somewhere of that sort" (76). Rex's sister Anna proposes to go with him as his housekeeper, a project she conceives as a childish idyll: "It would be nicer than anything—like playing at life over again, as we used to do when we made our tent with the drugget, and had our little plates and dishes" (77).[21] Anna is

not the only one to whom the scheme is reminiscent of childhood. When the siblings reveal their plan to their father, he "drew [Anna] on his knee and held her there, as if to put her gently out of the question while he spoke to Rex" (78). Even after he has convinced Rex to stay in England, Mr. Gascoigne "kept Anna, holding her fast, though she wanted to follow Rex" (79).

This seems not only an image of patriarchal control, though it is certainly that, but also a commentary on the immaturity of Anna and her notions of an idyllic sibling household. Anna's own thoughts, reported by the narrator, bear out the judgment: "she often afterwards went inwardly over the whole affair, saying to herself, 'I should have done with going out, and gloves, and crinoline, and having to talk when I am taken to dinner—and all that!'" (80) The narrator continues:

> I like to mark the time, and connect the course of individual lives with the "historic stream,'" for all classes of thinkers. This was the period when the broadening of gauge in crinolines seemed to demand an agitation for the general enlargement of churches, ballrooms, and vehicles. But Anna Gascoigne's figure would only allow the size of skirt manufactured for young ladies of fourteen. (80)

Although the narrator's interest in crinolines may seem primarily a vehicle for irony, these consecutive passages have several significant functions. First, the narrator's ironic tone devalues both Anna's explicit sense—that she will leave the society of marriageable (English middle-class) girls—and Anna's implicit longing for a situation like marriage that is not marriage, the situation of the adult unmarried sister in a corporate household. One need not go into society (Anna seems to assume that there will be no society in Canada), need not seek a husband through proper clothes and dinner conversation, since her domestic security and standing, her fulfillment of her affections, will depend on her standing as sister. Second, under cover of that same irony, the narrator makes the potentially serious suggestion that Anna's tiny figure means more than her personal youthfulness and unripened sexuality. Anna's clothing also does not match the "progressive" developments of her historical situation, in which the mature women about her need more and more room, changing the shape and capacity of the public institutions represented by "churches, ballrooms, and vehicles." The double edge of the narrator's irony calls the value of these changes into question, yet the flow of this "historical stream" is as relentless as that of the Floss. Because Anna herself figures her desire to be Rex's housekeeper in gloves and crinolines (standing in for societal expectation, obviously), her immaturity and retrograde standing are linked to corporate domesticity, to Anna's belief in the value of the corporate household

and of the unmarried sister's place in it. The narrator's commentary suggests that not only Anna but also Anna's society will grow away from the corporate household, maturing toward some new, "larger" configuration.

As Hannah and Bernard Rivers had to emigrate to France to marry, so Anna and Rex would have to leave England to live out the idyll of the sibling household. But the case is really quite different: in Craik's novel, the couple left modern England for modern France, for favorable French laws and customary ways of life well known to them. Within the frame of the novel, emigration is a realistic choice by adults who knew about (at least some) of the realities of the place where they would settle. Similarly, in *Mary Barton*, Jem Wilson's union with Mary depends on his leaving industrial England for a seemingly known Canada where he will have a lucrative job, and if the narrator describes their family dwelling place in suspiciously literary terms, we nonetheless "see" that place in the real time of the story. But Anna and Rex want to leave for "Canada, or somewhere like that"—an imaginary version of "the colonies" that Rex describes as a noble-savage sort of wilderness: "I should like to build a hut, and work hard at clearing, and have everything wild about me, and a great wide quiet" (77). (Apparently Rex has not read *Martin Chuzzlewit*, or he would know better.) In *Hannah*, the sister had to be converted to a wife, and the whole family expatriated, but the point of the departure is the fulfillment of the marriage to the deceased wife's sister, which realizes some part of the ideality of the corporate household. Anna and Rex's plans for a functional sibling household, in contrast, are as fantastic as the Canada to which they imagine emigrating, and are wholly unrealized.

The Meyrick family does achieve a mostly functional corporate household. Yet this sibling household is represented as an artifact from an earlier time, and here too the gestures toward a revitalizing foreign sojourn are without effect. Hans Meyrick, Deronda's university friend, plans to win high honors so that he can become what he imagines himself to be to his mothers and three unmarried sisters: "the pillar, or rather the knotted and twisted trunk, round which these feeble climbing plants must cling" (165). For the moment, though, his mother and sisters maintain themselves, adding to a "meager annuity" (165) with sewing (embroidery) and illustration commissions, refusing Hans's offers of further comforts for their small home (179–80). Lest we miss the point, the narrator notes that Hans "had come as an exhibitioner from Christ's Hospital, and had eccentricities enough for a Charles Lamb" (165). Though the Meyricks are better off than the Lambs, their eccentricities luckily not extending to murder and madness, the slant reference to this brother-sister household from an earlier era marks their household as odd and old-fashioned.

The darker aspects of the Lambs' family history are not totally without resonance here. Though the narrator says that Hans "could not be said to

have any one bad habit; yet at longer or shorter intervals he had fits of impish recklessness, and did things that would have made the worst habits" (165). In the grip of such a fit Hans temporarily injures his eyes, and Daniel, who has developed a "brotherly anxiety" about Hans's erratic ways, drops his own studies to read Hans through to his classical scholarship (166). This taint of illness and inability in the unmarried brother, compounded by the damage done to Daniel's own studies by his "brotherly" devotion to Hans, undermines the potential positive value of the adult siblings' mutually sustaining labors.

In some respects, the mother and sisters' household seems to avoid those dangers, despite the sisters' ubiquitous labors. Though "the house looked very narrow and shabby," the rooms inside are described as a haven of light and good taste tempered by austerity, with sufficient space for "a wide-glancing, nicely-select life, open to the highest things in music, painting, and poetry" (179 and 180). Yet a sense of constriction persists in the rhetorical conversion of the women into objects d' art. Mother and sisters "were all alike small, and so in due proportion with their miniature rooms" (180):

> Everything about [the sisters] was compact, from the firm coils of their hair, fastened back *a la Chinoise*, to their grey skirts in puritan nonconformity with the fashion, which at that time would have demanded that four feminine circumferences should fill all the free space in the front parlour. All four, if they had been wax-work, might have been packed easily in a fashionable lady's traveling trunk. (180–81)

The narrator prefaces these descriptions of the women's physical appearance with the remark that "seeing the group they made this evening, one could hardly wish them to change their way of life" (180). But the dynamics of the description suggest that this may not be a "way of life" at all. We are invited to view the women as a "group" that has been "made," and are directed to admire the congruence of their miniature figures with their miniature rooms. They are like the tasteful engravings, favorites of the dead Mr. Meyrick, that adorn their walls: composed, reduced, contained on or in narrow walls. Though delightful, there is something unreal about their appearance.

This sense of unreality is underscored by the women's heterogeneous identifications with various "foreign" or marginalized types. Mrs. Meyrick, "a lively little woman, half French, half Scotch," wearing "a quakerish net cap" and a dress "like a priest's cassock," is reading from "a French book"—in fact, a French historical novel (180, 181 n.3). Together with the description of the sisters' appearance, the multiplied identities include French, Scotch, Chinese, Quaker, Catholic, and Puritan—and if we read just a few lines further, we find

"Hafiz, the Persian cat" gracing the room with a different Oriental presence. But all except the mother's blood heritage are assumed or surface identities, fancies put on by themselves or the narrator. It is not hard to imagine these miniaturized, costumed creatures as "waxworks" that could be struck from the set and compressed into a trunk.

And there again is the reference to crinolines, that double-edged suggestion that fashion's follies may still represent the "historic stream" (80), in which these small women clearly do not live. Modern women need large spaces for their clothes, whether in the rooms they inhabit or the trunks with which they travel. But such fashionable skirts and trunks leave no space in the home for paid labor or the decorative arts. However charming the Meyrick household may look, however admirable the sisters' determination to maintain themselves, these things are part of the past, miniature spectacles to be enjoyed, not ideals to be emulated. Nor do their surface identifications with things foreign have any power to enrich their household—or, significantly, to get them married: at the end of the novel all the Meyrick siblings are still unmarried, their costumed imaginative forays into exile having had no effect on their irreconcilable status as unmarried sisters in the house.

Of all the (young) characters who have siblings, only Mirah marries, and her brother lives only a short time after her marriage to Daniel. Mirah too suffers from a good deal of miniaturization, as if we are viewing her through the wrong end of a telescope. Daniel's first views of her on the banks of the Thames, as she prepares to drown herself, are of "a girl hardly more than eighteen of low slim figure, with the most delicate little face" (171). Repeated references to her smallness, her childlike appearance and docility, in these first pages of description enforce the sense that Mirah is not yet a woman in either character or body. The characterization is repeated throughout the novel, culminating, perhaps, in Klesmer's estimate of her singing voice (she has trained in the theater) as suitable only for small spaces: "No high roofs. We are no skylarks […] I would not further your singing in any larger space than a private drawing room" (452–53). Mirah is able to earn some money singing, and she contributes this to a briefly achieved domestic idyll with Mordecai—that is nonetheless supported primarily by Daniel. When Daniel reunites Mordecai with Mirah at the house he has set up for them, Mirah describes their prospective life together:

> "I will love you and we will talk to each other […] I will tell you everything, and you will teach me:—you will teach me to be a good Jewess—what [their mother] would have liked me to be. I shall always be with you when I am not working. For I work now. I shall get money to keep us. Oh, I have had such good friends." (542)

There are several things of interest about this situation. One is that Mirah's dream of family has focused on finding her mother, not necessarily her brother whom she remembers (as Mrs. Meyrick wonderingly notes) not "'the least bit'" (343). When Daniel asks her "would it be a great grief to you now, if you were never to meet your mother?", Mirah answers that if her mother were dead, "I should long to know where she was buried; and to know whether my brother lives, so that we can remember her together" (342). Unlike Anna, she has not imagined a sibling household where she functions as a wife, keeping house for her brother. Rather she wants to find him so that they can recall their mother together. And when Daniel creates the brother-sister household, Mirah's anticipation of their life together does not include domestic labor. If the Meyricks, as the narrator suggests, may not have "had always a servant to light their fires and sweep their rooms" (180), it seems evident that Daniel has provided one for Mirah and Mordecai—and that neither Mirah nor Daniel thought of Mirah as the equivalent of a wife, a household manager and domestic laborer. (There is never any idea that Mordecai, who is in the last stages of consumption, will continue work at the bookstore or for the other Ezra in his shop.)

In Mirah's case, then, her smallness and childlike qualities have to do with a different immaturity: she still identifies herself as a child, estranged from her pandering father but seeking her other parent, her good parent, with whom she still associates her possible future. Her sister identity gains its importance from the common parents, not from the sibling tie, which in this case has not been like that of Anna and Rex, Tom and Maggie, or the siblings of the "Brother and Sister" sonnets, a long mutually remembered growth of common memories. Nor do Mirah and Daniel think of their relation as a sibling relation, which of course could be the natural prelude to their espousal. But then neither of them has really had a sibling, not in the sense that corporate domesticity celebrates, the early intertwining of affections and material experiences that teach siblings how to become spouses. The paradigm is simply absent in their case.

Rather, it is Daniel and Mordecai who experience a confluence of affection that both the narrator and Mordecai describe as a wedding of the souls predicated on a felt brotherhood—though not solely with each other. "Brother" in their case takes on fully the political and racial connotations derived from the familial, and these are made inseparable by the text. Here, too, though, we find an admixture of the parental relation that prefigures the eclipse of the brother relation by the spousal couple. After a first meeting marked by an inexplicable sense of connection on both sides, Daniel seeks out Mordecai, in part because he wants information about the other Ezra Cohen in the story, with whose family (naturally) Mordecai boards. They meet again on Blackfriars Bridge, a

spiritually portentous place for Mordecai, who already names Daniel "my new life—my new self—who will live when this breath is all breathed out" (461). Back in the bookstore where Mordecai works, "the two men, with as intense a consciousness as if they had been two undeclared lovers, felt themselves alone […] and turned face to face, each baring his head from an instinctive feeling that they wished to see each other fully" (462). The narrator, moving into first person, articulates an extended portrait of Mordecai, closing with a characterization of his expression as having "something of the slowly dying mother's look when her one loved son visits her bedside […] for the sense of spiritual perpetuation in another resembles that maternal transference of self" (462).

The typing of the relation is mixed here—self extensions, lovers, mothers, and sons—and these relations are located simultaneously beyond the body (Mordecai's apprehension of a spiritual heir) and dependent on it, instinctive or built into the flesh, needing transference from a dying body into a vigorous one. Mordecai has imagined his "new self" into existence over the years, longing for a spiritual heir who would also be physically strong and attractive, a new and elevating embodiment of the Jew, and Daniel matches his picture of what this spiritual heir must look like (see pp. 439–43). For Daniel the feeling is more responsive than imaginative, resting in his notion that "some relation must exist between me and this man, since he feels it strongly" (462).

Significantly, the specific term "brother"—which we might have expected instead of the other relational terms—has not yet been applied to the two men. Only after Daniel has revealed his Jewish parentage to Mirah and Mordecai does the word finally come into play, in Mordecai's explanation of how Daniel came at last to know who he was and to pledge himself to his Jewish people: "by performing the duties of brotherhood to my sister, and seeking out her brother in the flesh, your soul has been prepared to receive with gladness this message of the Eternal: 'behold the multitude of your brethren'" (697). Even here, Mordecai does not quite name Daniel his brother, or Mirah's. Daniel has "performed the duties of brotherhood," which by the end of the sentence we understand as having a broad human or racial, as well as familial, meaning. He has "sought out *her* brother in the flesh," and because of these loving acts (as Mordecai terms them) Daniel is now ready to recognize "the multitude of your brethren" (697; emphasis mine)—not the traditional cohort of blood and metaphorical brothers and sisters, though it will include these and more, but the spiritual and racial brethren of the Jews.[22]

As Mordecai goes on to describe his and Daniel's spiritual espousal, then, the brother relation upon which it is founded is compounded of familial brotherhood (Mordecai and Mirah, whom Daniel has reunited), and the religious/political/ethnic brotherhood of Jews: "It has begun already—the marriage of our souls. It waits but the passing away of this body, and then they who are

betrothed shall unite in a stricter bond, and what is mine shall be thine" (698). At this point "they who are betrothed" can mean only Daniel and Mordecai, since Daniel and Mirah have not yet declared their love to each other, and it is tempting to read this as an analogy of the expected developments of corporate domesticity, with the spousal relation growing out of the brotherly relation, only on a larger stage. But such a reading is complicated by the fact that in this novel there is no proper analogue, no successful sibling-based household in which we can observe the fruitful conflation of sibling and spousal relations. It seems to me rather that the narrator's and Mordecai's reliance on the terms of lovers, mothers, and spouses suggests the priority of the spousal relation, in political and spiritual identities as in familial, and its separation from the terms of sibling relationships.

So it stands as the plot of the novel draws to a close, although the movement toward the spousal household is not without significant complication. After Daniel and Mirah have agreed to marry, Daniel forms "a plan for taking Ezra [as he and Mirah now call Mordecai, the narrator following suit] and Mirah to a mild spot on the coast, while he prepared another home that Mirah might enter as his bride, and where they might unitedly watch over her brother. But Ezra begged not to be removed, unless it were to go with them to the East" (741). This, of course, never happens either. Though preparations for travel to "the East" begin immediately after Daniel and Mirah's wedding, Mordecai dies shortly thereafter. As in the other instances we have noted in the novel, despite efforts to establish a corporate household that is imagined as ideal, the practices of such a household are relegated to the past or reduced to a brief idyll (at least realized in this case). The short time that all three live together passes without narrative description or remark, except for Mordecai's death scene. As Mordecai expires in Mirah and Daniel's double embrace, it is tempting (once again) to read the image as a celebration of corporate domesticity, of sibling and spousal relations as mutually constitutive, embodied in the spousal pair's literal support of the brother. But Mordecai's last words (in English—he also utters a Hebrew prayer) invoke the biblical story of Ruth, prophesying both a personal and a political future in which spousal and parent-child relations take on a primary significance ratified by the sibling's deliberately chosen expatriation.

Just before he expires, the dying man echoes the well-known early passage from the Old Testament book in which Ruth swears fidelity to her mother-in-law: "Where thou goest, Daniel, I shall go […] We shall live together" (*Deronda* 754; cf. *Ruth* 1:16). The revised quotation, with its unexpected casting of Daniel as Naomi, seems to controvert the otherwise powerful image of Mordecai, Mirah, and Daniel physically entwined, converting three to two, and substituting a metaphorical mother-daughter (in-law) bond for the sibling

relations "actually" present in the death scene. The blood sister disappears into a biblical allegory that celebrates faithfulness to the spousal bond and the parent-child bond. Mordecai's invocation of the story excludes both himself (as a brother) and Mirah in favor of the two spousal bonds, the physical marriage between Daniel and Mirah, and the spiritual marriage between himself and Daniel.

Mordecai's revised quotation also casts Daniel (as Naomi) as the native returning to the land of his birth in Judah and to his material inheritance of lands and wealth, while Mordecai (as Ruth) is prepared to follow him into exile—exile from life itself, of course, but also somehow an exile from his "native" place.[23] In fact Mirah and Mordecai are already expatriates from their (ironically) native England, not only through sojourns abroad (Mordecai's chosen, Mirah's compelled), but also through their Jewish identity, which leaves them permanently without any national domestic space, without a physical location or political structure for their national identity. Each claims Jewishness as the essential identity, overriding the place of their birth and experiences of their youth. Mirah, whose father has tried to separate her from her Jewish heritage as he has from her mother, nonetheless tells Daniel at their first meeting, "I am English-born. But I am a Jewess" (177). Mordecai's parallel account to Daniel, not surprisingly, details the relationship between his physical and his intellectual identities: "ideas, beloved ideas, came to me, because I was a Jew […] English is my mother-tongue, England is the native land of this body, which is but as a breaking pot of earth around the fruit-bearing tree, whose seed might make the desert rejoice. But my true life was nourished in Holland, at the feet of my mother's brother, a Rabbi skilled in special learning" (463 and 464). Though Mordecai's figuration of the "native land of this body" suggests that he regards his bodily existence as negligible, his earlier reiteration of his Jewishness as the source of his ideas complicates that attempt to separate body and spirit: the ideas "were an inspiration, because I was a Jew, and felt the heart of my race beating within me […] I counted this heart, and this breath, and this right hand […] as but fuel to the divine flame" (463). The confusions among the heart that is spirit and the heart that is body, that one feels beating, suggests that separating the two is not so simple. Dismissive of the physical body as Mordecai would like to be, it is his blood identity, reestablished through his mother's brother's teaching, which he claims as essential.

Daniel's situation is the inverse of Mirah and Mordecai's in some respects, and yet proves identical in its resolution into a "true" Jewish identity that overrides the experiences and attachments, and much of the learning, of his childhood. When Mordecai first urges him to "take the sacred inheritance of the Jew" by carrying on Mordecai's ideas and writing (after Mordecai's death),

Daniel resists by invoking the primacy of his birth identity, which of course he still believes to be English:

> "What my birth was does not lie in my will […] My sense of claims on me cannot be independent of my knowledge there […] Feelings which have struck root through half my life may still hinder me from doing what I have never yet been able to do. Everything must be waited for. I must know more of the truth about my own life, and I must know more of what it would become if it were made a part of yours." (468)

Although Daniel refers to the feelings generated by his upbringing, which may yet prevent him from seeking and accepting the full history of his birth (or so I read this somewhat ambiguous phrasing), he also clearly regards his birth, that which "does not lie in my will," as "the truth of his life." The knowledge is not yet in his possession, but when it is, he implies, it must be decisive: his estimation of how much he might blend his life with Mordecai's depends on this.

Although Daniel later repeats his belief that he cannot eradicate the effects of his English, Christian training to the Alcharisi, and again to Kalonymous (his grandfather's friend, from whom Daniel retrieves his family papers), his shift to his birth identity, his Jewish heritage, is indeed decisive. To his mother, protesting that he will not become a Jew like his grandfather because of his upbringing, Daniel nonetheless continues, "'I consider it my duty—it is the impulse of my feeling—to identify myself, as far as possible with my hereditary people'" (616). Again, to Kalonymous, Daniel says, "'I shall call myself a Jew […] I hold that my first duty is to my own people, and if there is anything to be done towards restoring or perfecting their common life, I shall make that my vocation'" (673). To Mordecai and Mirah, just a short time later, his claim is unequivocal: "'I am a Jew'" (695).

The narrative continues to assure us that, as Daniel puts it to Kalonymous, he "'will not profess to believe exactly as my fathers have believed'" (673), that experience (the "suffering of young natures") will revise and even transform traditional beliefs and practices. Mrs. Meyrick, reasoning with Mirah about her Jewishness (which Mrs. Meyrick would like to be able to disregard), makes a similar point about her own heritage: "'one may honor one's parents, without following their notions exactly, any more than the exact cut of their clothing. My father was a Scotch Calvinist and my mother was a French Calvinist; I am neither quite Scotch, nor quite French, nor two Calvinists rolled into one, yet I honour my parents' memory." But Mirah responds, "But I could not make myself not a Jewess […] even if I changed my belief" (346–47). Oddly, the two "sides" of this argument are not different. Both assert the primacy of birth identity, the decisive force of the child's inheritance from her parents.

Mrs. Meyrick's identity comes not from a nation, nor from a religion, but from her parents, both of whom she "honours." If Mirah converted to Christianity she still "could not make myself not a Jewess," because Judaism is her blood identity, unattached to either nation or religion. This is why, in the terms of the narrative, Mirah and Mordecai are not English, though they were born in England and spoke English as a first language. The political boundaries and chronicled practices of nations, the traditional beliefs and practices of religion, are as inessential as "the exact cut of clothing." But one's parents are one's parents, the unalterable fountain of original identity. Mirah, Mordecai, and Daniel are Jewish because their parents were.[24]

The significance of Eliot's reliance on the figure of the Jew, the permanently expatriated wanderer who belongs to no national "house," now seems evident: in order to fully vest essential identity in the individual psyche, that psyche must be represented as something apart from custom, from place—as the figure of the Jew perforce is set apart from the material sources of its identity, from its historical origins and political identities and even, as individuals may strive to disappear into their surroundings, their customary religious and cultural practices. Family names may be altered, "Cohen" replaced by "Lapidoth," as Mirah and Mordecai's father does, or family itself discarded so far as possible, as the Alcharisi strives to do, and yet the essential identity (so the novel argues) remains intact. This is the point at which the construction turns back in on itself like a Möbius strip, for that essential identity originates in the spousal household, in the parents whose blood heritage dictates the "true life" of their child. And here again the permanently expatriated, the figure of the Jew, assists in the enclosure of this household: no parent may remain in its own parents' household, but must go abroad to seek its mate, an unrelated being. No vestige of the birth household, save the individual's own blood identity, may remain; no blood or even metaphorical sibling may be housed with the new couple, but each must seek its own expatriation in marriage, or in solitude. "Family" must mean vertical blood inheritance alone, the necessary generation of the individual by its parents—or alternatively the largest possible notion of "kinship," of "brethren" in the sense of national consciousness, a kinship that can never be "housed" together except in a "homeland," a national domestic space in which (according to Mordecai's and Daniel Charisi's visions) blood identity can become concentrated and conscious. Again the figure of the Jew provides the template for the paradoxical assertion that essential identity, determined by blood heritage and generated in the spousal household, must depart from the birth house: scattered as they are at this time, all Jews have to leave the place of their birth to retrieve their true identity in a new national domestic space of their own making.

The Alcharisi's story demonstrates that, in this novel's terms, the return to blood identity is inevitable whether one seeks it or not. Although she has spent her adult life straining to eradicate her Jewish heritage, the Alcharisi is finally driven by her body's pain and imminent death back into inescapable recollections of her childhood, and forward to the grudging transmission of a heritage she hates to a son she has effectively disowned. Like Gwendolen, she marries Daniel's father to escape circumstances that seem to imprison her, in this case her father's domination. Unlike Gwendolen, the Alcharisi achieves some measure of independence: extracting a promise from her future husband that he will not stop her from pursuing her singing and acting, she achieves great public success even before her husband's death. She apparently escapes the bondage of her identity as obedient Jewish woman and her identity as mother, giving Daniel to Sir Hugo with instructions to bring him up as an English gentleman. But some years later, when her singing voice temporarily gives way and she faces the loss of her position in the theater, she marries a Russian nobleman, putting a permanent (and, as it turns out, unnecessary) end to her years of independence. When she sends for Daniel, the Alcharisi has entered her final illness:

> [M]y mind has gone back, more than a year ago it began […] Sometimes I am in an agony of pain—I daresay I shall be tonight. Then it is as if all the life I have chosen to live, all thoughts, all will, forsook me and left me alone in spots of memory, and I can't get away […] My childhood— my girlhood—the day of my marriage—the day of my father's death— there seems to be nothing since. (592–93)

In the throes of this involuntary return to childhood and to her identity as her parents' child, the Alcharisi determines to reveal herself to Daniel and to pass on his grandfather's intellectual legacy, the papers long preserved by Kalonymous, closing the loop of essential blood heritage she has long sought to break.

Although the Alcharisi's case makes it startlingly clear, the necessity of this return to individuated psyche and to blood heritage is enacted in some way by every major character in the novel. Before Daniel knows about his "true life," he becomes increasingly passive, receptive to the point of inaction. Once he knows, and turns toward rather than away from that knowledge, his life's purpose is set, his ideological and personal aspirations alike emanating from his Jewish identity. Mordecai is continually turning back, continually engaged in the pursuit of his "true life," in which Daniel rightly sees that Mordecai's faithfulness to his mother has overridden even his properly high ambitions (and has

sealed his fate: he becomes ill while traveling back through cold weather to his mother after Mirah is taken).

Nor is this trajectory ascribed to characters only. The narrator tells us clearly that the great movements of political history may be traced to the private feelings of individuals, to histories of subjectivity seated in blood heritage. Musing on Gwendolen's half-conscious emotional response to Grandcourt's first advances, the narrator digresses at some length:

> Could there be a slenderer, more insignificant thread in human history than this consciousness of a girl, busy with her small inferences of the way in which she could make her life pleasant?—in a time, too, when ideas were with fresh vigour making armies of themselves, and the universal kinship was declaring itself fiercely: when women on the other side of the world would not mourn for the husbands and sons who died bravely in a common cause, and men stinted of bread on our side of the world heard of that willing loss and were patient; a time when the soul of man was waking to pulses which has for centuries been beating in him unfelt, until their full sum made a new life of terror or of joy.
>
> What in the midst of that mighty drama are girls and their blind visions? They are the Yea or Nay of that good for which men are enduring and fighting. In these delicate vessels is borne onward through the ages the treasure of human affections. (109)

The veiled historical references in this passage are to the American Civil War and the willingness of laborers in British cotton mills to stand the effects of the North's blockade on their livelihood. But the proposal is obviously larger. However impoverished Gwendolen's understanding may be, the narrator asserts, her "blind visions" are not "insignificant" but fundamental, part of "the treasure of human affections" that constitute "that good for which men are enduring and fighting." And these affections do not fly about in the correspondent breeze of the mind, but are carried in "delicate vessels," the physical bodies of girls through whom blood identity, and with it national identity, flows. The American Civil War, to which the narrator alludes several times in the novel, is of course all about the definition of the American nation and of its citizens, about the meaning of presumably legible bodies and bloodlines in the American polity. *Deronda*'s narrator retracts this violent convulsion of a body politic, this massive confrontation of the potential meanings of race and blood heritage, into the narrow compass of a single person's body and feelings. Or, to put the case generally, the narrator retracts large political histories into the singular bodies and feelings of any and all individuals, locating the very impetus of large historical change in individual subjective existence.

The retraction, we note, is immediately effective: in classroom and scholarly editions, footnotes must be added so that we can "see" the Civil War and the cotton mills that would otherwise vanish into the narrator's compellingly generalized language.

Eliot's novelistic history of the English family, naturalizing the progressive ascent of industrial domesticity, demonstrates how corporate domesticity became, and then remained, "invisible" to scholars of nineteenth-century literature and culture. Retracting material, economic, and legal histories into histories of subjectivity effaces the corporate household's alternative domesticity by obscuring its core values. If individuated feeling, emanating from one's vertical blood heritage, fundamentally defines "family" and "household," and if these affective and blood ties are the fount of individual and familial identity, then all else becomes secondary—or valueless. The possibility of imbricated material and affective economies, of mutually constitutive spousal and sibling relations, and of domestic spaces enriched by collective material and emotional labors, simply vanishes: one of the elements in each set is already devalued or set aside. Yet Eliot's novelistic history also demonstrates the ongoing presence of just such a domestic ideal, contested, complexly mixed with its counterpart, arguably fading—but operative still, an ideological presence of ongoing significance.

As is so often the case, the clue to one cultural disappearance, one misunderstanding, lies within another. The seemingly inexplicable duration and intensity of the Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister controversy points us toward it: there she stands, the sister in the house, powerful, provocative, disputed, dangerous—and essential. Retrieving the adult unmarried sister's legal and economic identity as *feme sole*, and the consequent cultural necessity of her conversion to *feme covert*, brings her potential as a primary member of "family" and "household" into view. It also allows us to perceive that central ideological mechanism of corporate domesticity, the imagining of sister as "wife," as positive and enriching, rather than merely compensatory. With this alternative domesticity in view again, we can read "family" in nineteenth-century English literature with greater, and different, understanding.

NOTES

Introduction

1   Also worthy of mention is the 1993 essay collection *The Significance of Sibling Relationships in Literature*, edited by JoAnna Stephens Mink and Janet Doubler Ward, which collects 13 essays on the subject. I do not include this volume with the other four because, far from seeking to historicize our readings of sibling relations, Mink and Ward hew to the modern psychological analysis of such relations as universally human and primarily affective, describing the desired effect of their collection as "provid[ing] a continuing dialogue on the importance of birth order and the significance of sibling relationships in the formation of the individual" (4). Still, the collection is unique, so far as I know, in being devoted entirely to interpretations of the sibling relation in literature.

2   See Perry 108 n.1 for the source of her quotation.

3   The configuration I call "corporate domesticity" derives from Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's term "family enterprise" (*Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850*, 1987). Although my conclusions differ from theirs in laying heavier emphasis on the value of the sibling relation, their evidence for such family models is the most comprehensive of the many histories of family in which such alternatives to the "nuclear family" can be traced.

4   The idea of such gradual ideological fluctuations, responsive to particular contexts, comes of course from Mary Poovey, whose 1988 *Uneven Developments* specifically examined *The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*.

5   See Perry's citation of the case of Richard and Frances Gilbert, a brother and sister who inherited a house in joint tenancy. Richard married and willed his half of the house to his wife, Jane. But when Frances contested the will in Chancery (in 1757), the courts upheld her superior right to the property. While I understand Perry's point about this case demonstrating "the competing claims of blood kin and conjugal kin," to me the more significant point is the court's recognition of the claims of a *feme sole*, an unmarried woman with economic rights like those of a man, over those of a *feme covert* whose rights depended on those of her (now dead) husband. Even as a widow the former wife's claim was inferior (126).

6   Eliot's narrator treats Priscilla with condescension, producing rather a caricature of a spinster sister, but also credits her with "common sense" for her acceptance of this position (93). If stereotypically framed, Priscilla's dismissal of marriage is telling in its foregrounding of autonomy and prosperity as the crucial issues: "'it's a folly no woman need be guilty of, if she's got a good father and a good home: let her leave it to them as have got no fortin, and can't help themselves. As I say, Mr. Have-your-own-way is the best husband, and the only one I'd ever promise to obey […] thank God! my father's a sober man and likely to live; and if you've got a man by the chimney-corner,

it doesn't matter if he's childish—the business needn't be broke up'" (91–92). It is also clear that Priscilla's notions of management extend to nurturing her sister's potential children. Near the end of the novel, having managed the family lands for some time, Priscilla remarks that she wishes "'Nancy had had the luck to find a child like [Eppie] and bring her up […] I should ha' had something young to think of then, besides the lambs and the calves'" (175). The novel's relentlessly ironic treatment of Priscilla's views is consistent with Eliot's ongoing consignment of the ideals of corporate domesticity to the past, a process I detail in Chapter 4.

1 Alternative Domesticities: Revaluing the Sibling in the House

1   See Aaron, especially chapters 1 and 2; Marrs's introduction to his edition of the Lambs' *Letters*; and Susan Sage Heinzelman.

2   See Aaron 6–10 for an account of the Victorian reception of Lamb and his works, and of the backlash both in his own time and in the early twentieth century.

3   See Aaron 94–96.

4   The household was not without its complicated emotional currents, specifically a long-standing mutual dislike between Sarah and her "gentlewomanly" sister-in-law, who found Sarah rude and ill-tempered. Marrs, though, also describes a close affinity between Charles and his aunt: their "profoundly harmonious natures" allowed Charles to express his own tendency to worry and depression (Marrs I.xxvii). Marrs notes, as do other accounts, the easing of this rift through the combined efforts of Charles and Mary, who "brought them finally into concord" (I.xxvii). Despite their dislike for each other, neither wife nor grown sister decamped to a different household, doubtless in part for economic reasons, but also perhaps because of the more positive emotional relationship between nephew and aunt, and Mary and Charles's success in fostering greater household harmony. So Marrs's account may be read as consistent with positive expectations for the sibling bond's continuing value to spousal pairs and their children in a household encompassing all of these relations.

5   While it is still some years until Lord Lyndhurst's bill propels the Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister debates into full voice, the legal uncertainty about what is "really so much brother and sister" as to create questions of propriety was a question long before Austen's time.

6   If there were a marriage contract that secured a portion of Emma's private fortune to her, she would retain the option of bequeathing portions of that wealth to her nephews and nieces, with the latter the most likely beneficiaries. There might also be some provision for the inheritance of Hartfield, if it is not entailed. It is rather interesting that this particular novel is silent on these possible details, which often hold a good deal of interest for Austen.

7   Most sociologists treat "family" and "household" as distinct terms, emphasizing different denotative meanings that they consider crucial to clear description and analysis. But as Raymond Williams's etymology of "family" in *Keywords* demonstrates, the relations between the terms shift over time. Naomi Tadmor, for instance, convincingly argues for what she calls the "household-family, headed by a householder and populated by related and non-related dependents" as a common eighteenth-century English referent of the term "family" (25). Even where scholars retain the twentieth-century social science distinction, their studies may emphasize the interactions

between household, family, and kinship, suggesting various points of overlap and congruence in these categorical distinctions. Because my readings insist on the discursive simultaneity of feeling and materiality, of biological and metaphorical relations, in the alternative family model I propose, rather than regard this bright line distinction, I have used the two terms as they seem to make immediate sense to my argument.

8   The *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (2nd ed., 1982) lists a 1941 article in *Sociometry* by G. P. Murdock as its second source example for "nuclear family," supplanting the OED's earlier identification (in *Supplement to the OED*, vol. II, 1976) of Murdock's 1949 *Social Structure* as its first source example. Although Murdock himself cites a few earlier studies that argue for such a family structure as fundamental, Murdock's specific formulations of this "first and most basic […] *nuclear family*," a "universal human grouping," as constituting human societies "like atoms in a molecule" (*Social Structure* 1, emphasis original) suggests the new rhetorical power that such a term would have carried by the late 1940s.

9   Throughout this study I have often identified "economies" as "material"—production, wealth, inheritance, money—"affective" or "emotional," by which I mean the exchanges of feeling through family relationships. The reasons for my regular modification of "economy" are that this term was also in flux across the period I am studying. "Economy" derives from the Greek word for "steward," and as it entered English in the fifteenth century it carried primary meanings of management in general and, in specific, "household management" (*OED Online*, Draft Revision June 2008). The modern references of "economy" to public, usually large-scale monetary economies, and specifically not to household economies, began to adhere in the mid-eighteenth century, at roughly the same time when "political economy" appeared. The original OED's last usage example for "political economy" is 1868, suggesting that our current usage was well established by the latter half of the nineteenth century. As the freestanding term "economy" moved toward the meanings once marked specially as "political economy," the compound term "domestic economy" came into wider use, appearing as early as 1778. My usage is meant to avoid replicating the ongoing, contested separation of material labor and production from domesticity—a separation eventually so successful that the two terms had to be explicitly coupled in order to indicate the material labors of housekeeping.

10 For instance, when she truncates Charles's "wedded to the fortunes" quotation late in her argument, Aaron is making a point about how Charles's decision violates Hegel's ideal construction of the brother-sister bond as superior to the conjugal in its opportunity for ethical engagement: "Instead of adopting the prescribed brother's role of dominance within the relationship, and dissociating the more significant part of his life from domestic ties, thus providing a route towards universality for his sister as well as himself, he rather chose to identify himself with her fate" (170). The possibility of a highly valued domestic relationship does not appear to Aaron or, by her account, to Hegel: the value of the sibling relation lies entirely in the realm of psychic development.

11 In *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987), Armstrong claims that the Brontës' fiction establishes the rhetorical strategies that close off the private self from its own discursive history. Arguing that the Brontës "perfected tropes to distinguish fiction from historically bound writing," tropes that "translated all kinds of political information into psychological terms" (186), Armstrong finds that "literary criticism has compulsively read these novels according to the same psychologizing tropes [the novels]

formulated […] So powerful is the hermeneutic circle that makes their language of the self into its own basis for meaning that the noblest efforts to evade this trap are ensnared themselves as critics inevitably adopt a modern psychological vocabulary to interpret the Brontes' fiction" (187). For an interesting critique of Armstrong's argument, see Leila Silvana May's "The Strong-Arming of Desire: A Reconsideration of Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction*" (2001).

12   J. H. Bernardin de St-Pierre's *Paul and Virginia* (1789) provides a proximate example: as Jonathan Wordsworth explains in his introduction to the 1989 Woodstock Books facsimile of the novel, William purchased the 1796 English translation by Helen Maria Williams in the year of its publication. William's choice was not idiosyncratic. *Paul and Virginia* was "a best-seller in many languages," going through 60 English editions alone by 1900 (J. Wordsworth), and Shaver and Shaver record additional copies in Wordsworth's library in Italian, French, and Spanish. See also Gittings and Manton (101) and Fay (throughout, but especially 53–55) on Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's novel and the trope of brother-sister sentiment. For detailed accounts of similar rhetorical conflations of the sibling and spousal relation in eighteenth-century English literature (though interpreted differently than I do), see Ruth Perry's *Novel Relations* (2004), especially the chapters on "Sister-Right and the Bonds of Consanguinity" and "Brotherly Love in Life and Literature." Any of the recent books on sibling relations in literature will also provide abundant examples of the nineteenth-century celebration of sibling affection and domestic relations.

13   All quotations from the Grasmere journals are from Pamela Woof's 1993 edition, and are indicated in my text by page number. In her note to the passage, Woof describes the once-obscured sentences as "heavily scored through" (249), while Moorman's footnote to the passage in her 1971 Oxford "second" edition describes them as "erased" (154 n. 2). Basing her assessment on the type of ink used in the scoring, Woof speculates that Dorothy herself scored through the sentences because she later regarded them as overly intense and private. There is, of course, no evidence beyond the ink being "iron-based," as Dorothy's was, about either the person who did the "erasing" or that person's motives.

14   Helen Darbishire, Ernest de Selincourt, and Mary Moorman represented the first position during the early twentieth century, characterizing the siblings' relation as one of intense but wholly domesticated emotion, expressed in caresses and passionate words marking the unusual depth of their love, but innocent of sexual content. For later examples of similar readings, see Woof's note for October 4, 1802 (249–50) and Gittings and Manton's *Dorothy Wordsworth* (138–139). Levin, seeing the Grasmere journals in their entirety "as a story—the story of William Wordsworth's courtship and marriage," argues that Dorothy "provides a noncenter" to this story by eliding "what ought to be the climax of such a narrative, the wedding ceremony" (30, quotations out of original order). For psychoanalytic readings variously founded in Freud and Lacan, see: Donald H. Reiman, "Poetry of Familiarity: Wordsworth, Dorothy, and Mary Hutchinson" (142–49); Anita Hemphill McCormick, " 'I shall be beloved—I want no more': Dorothy Wordsworth's Rhetoric and the Appeal to Feeling in *The Grasmere Journals*" (esp. 485–87); and Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (165–66).

15   Woof notes that " 'parted from her Brothers,' '& Sisters,' [are] added in an insertion," marking Dorothy's deliberate choice here (250).

16   This is Kurt Heinzelman's perception, although he explicitly notices this process only at the end of the journal entry: "For Dorothy, such pairings tend to go on

reproducing themselves as new pairings or as triplings or as any other mathematical combination and permutation that is necessary to keep the household as a unit of work-engendering value intact […] These different pairings, different three-somes, emblematically expand the household into a polis of many simultaneously possible households" (73). I am elaborating on Heinzelman in what follows.

17   See also the story of two poor boys "obliged to fetch their father from the town to help them" with a heavy log, a sight Dorothy frames as a recollection of a previous walk (128), and the description of the chapel with paintings of Moses and Aaron flanking the altar (132).

18   For my discussion of how the Wordsworths constructed walking as poetic labor, see chapter 3 of *Walking, Literature, and English Culture: The Origins and Uses of Peripatetic in the Nineteenth Century*. A detailed discussion of "When first I journeyed hither," the John's Grove poem, can be found on 130–33.

19   See John Worthen's group biography, *The Gang: Coleridge, the Hutchinsons and the Wordsworth's in 1802* for the origin of the phrase (16) and for an extensive history, gleaned from their papers and other sources, of the group's collective life.

20   Entries of particular interest in Coleridge's notebooks are "Texts" I.576, 830, 980, 1162, 1163, 1242, 1333, 1415, 1575, and II.2001, 2517, 2527, 2389, 2397, 2427, 2429, 2531, 2623–24, 2628, 2861. Also of considerable interest is Mary Hutchinson's autobiographical memorandum and its expansion in Dove Cottage MS 167, the content and structure of which confirm her family's reliance on siblings for material and emotional support. My thanks to the Wordsworth Library for the opportunity to examine these manuscripts in summer 1992.

21   See, of course, the first entry of the Grasmere journal, and William's "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*, especially the extended defense of pleasure as the one necessary product of poetry (256–60).

22   In her 2003 essay "'More than Half a Poet': Vocational Philanthropy and Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journals*," Patricia Comitini argues that Dorothy's journals select from "the 'real' of her life" to "produce 'Dorothy Wordsworth'—the benevolent, domestic model of womanhood who is the ideal collaborator for William": "both domestic supervision and philanthropic work have become discursive work and are seen as the domain of the feminine. These are considered 'labors of love' rather than labors necessary to ensure the material survival of the family. Thus, Dorothy Wordsworth's discursive work is positioned against the material work of the laboring classes and, conversely, the 'professional' or aesthetic work of her brother's literary endeavors" (308). Although I understand Comitini's point about philanthropy and agree about its class implications, I would point out that the journals also repeatedly represent "Dorothy Wordsworth" as doing significant, material, essential household labor.

23   I am grateful to Marjorie Stone for pointing out that "worked at my shifts in the orchard" might mean "took my turn [shift] working in the orchard." While this is certainly possible and would have other interesting connotations, I take the last phrase, "continued my work in the house," to mean "continued sewing my shifts in the house," perhaps by firelight. In the nineteenth century, the unmodified term "work," when applied to women's labor, usually meant "sewing."

24   The extent to which these difficulties can intervene in otherwise thoughtful criticism can be seen in Alan Liu's 1984 discussion of the relations among writing, walking, and various domestic labors in the Grasmere journals. Liu's connection of the

"thoroughly repetitive" and "ultimately sterile" plot of laundering, with his calculation of Dorothy's menstrual cycles from her notation of headaches, in a reading of the journals as "purgation-story" suggests that unrecognized physical motivations drive her composition in trivial directions (124, 130, and 133).

25   Heinzelman speaks of Dorothy's vow to keep writing as one she "was not able to keep" (74). This remark reflects a feeling many readers have about the Grasmere journals, which is that their end seems to mark a limitation in Dorothy's literary enterprise enforced by the growing pressures of household duties. Yet, as Susan Levin reminds us, Dorothy "wrote throughout her life" (1): the earlier Alfoxden journal and the journal of the German trip from 1798; *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* (1805), published in 1874; *Excursion on the Banks of Ullswater* (1805) and *Excursion up Scawfell Pike* (1818), parts of which were revised and interpolated into William's *Guide to the Lakes*; journals of her 1820 continental tour, of the second Scottish tour in 1822, and of the Isle of Man tour in 1828; *A Narrative Concerning George and Sarah Green*; the Rydal Mount journals of 1824–35; and poems, ranging in probable composition date from 1805 to 1840, which Levin points out "she took particular pleasure in reciting and copying" even in the last years of her life (2).

26   In *The Imaginary Puritan* (1992), Armstrong and Tennenhouse analyze how these particular areas of significance are continually regenerated, using classic studies by Lawrence Stone and Peter Laslett to exemplify a common ahistorical "logic of emotions" (84) in modern British histories of the family. Despite their different judgments about when and how the affective nuclear family emerged during the early modern period, Armstrong and Tennenhouse argue, Laslett and Stone both work through "a set of modern metaphors" through which diverse historical materials "are distilled down to signs of the presence or absence of the emotions that bind individuals voluntarily to their mates and to their immediate offspring" (Armstrong and Tennenhouse 83). Historical differences appear as transient elaborations on certain "self-evident truths of human nature": that positive affective bonds develop in private households; that sexuality naturally expresses itself as heterosexual exogamy; that mothers nurture and fathers command, and that both are essential to the family; and that these normative relationships reproduce themselves outside of the individual's birth family (Armstrong and Tennenhouse 84). Whatever the apparent debates among British historians of the family, Armstrong and Tennenhouse contend, this "single political fantasy" (77) forms an unacknowledged ground of agreement.

27   This paragraph by no means provides a comprehensive survey of scholars holding such positions, but merely an exemplary sampling.

28   As discussed in my introduction, this is what happens to Mary Jean Corbett in her 2008 *Family Likeness*: she identifies and works to counter these problems, but is hampered in her efforts by her continuing focus on the familial structures granted primary, generative status in industrial domesticity.

29   The parenthetical phrase almost certainly belongs after "other inmates," not after "siblings."

30   *Family Fortunes* certainly provides plenty of evidence of women's, and under that rubric, sisters', contributions to the family enterprise. Their account of "the largest single occupation of middle-class women earning their livelihood in their own right as well as assisting their male relatives," trade, includes among its varied examples "two sisters employing six living-in assistants and their mother living on an annuity," and another pair of sisters who "ran the bookselling and publishing business they

inherited from their father" (302 and 303). A long section on women's "hidden invest-ment" in family enterprises includes the full range of contributions—labor, capital, contacts, loans, education of nephews or younger brothers by teaching or paying for schooling, the copying of legal correspondence, production and sale of dairy goods, and so forth—with frequent examples of unmarried sisters or aunts as contributors (280–88). This array of contributions is somewhat differently inflected for brothers, whose investments in the enterprise tended to be more visible, but the evidence of their importance as brothers is as great and as thoroughly distributed through *Family Fortunes*.

31 Readers will recognize these patterns in Dorothy Wordsworth's journals, in the back pages of which the fair copy of a poem might appear beside an accounting of the cost of William's shirts or a recipe to quiet coughs. Dove Cottage, of course, was a public house before it was their home, and became the site of their mutual literary production.

32 Adult unmarried women, *feme sole* in legal terminology, could not vote, attend uni-versity, hold office, or become priests, significant curtailments of their power on the larger stage of national politics. But for family business purposes they were in no way legally disqualified unless restrained by some special arrangement through a will or similar legal document: they could own property, earn and retain wages, contract, and bequeath.

33 Specific historical examples of partnerships secured in this way and of other more complex roles for adult siblings in the house, ranging from multiple sibling marriages to women's ownership and management of business, are sprinkled throughout *Family Fortunes*, though concentrated in part 2, "Economic Structure and Opportunity." See, for instance, examples on pages 214–16, 218–19, 221, 280–88, and 314–15. This is not a comprehensive list. See also Davidoff's "Where the Stranger Begins: The Question of Siblings in Historical Analysis" (*Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class*), esp. pp. 213–16).

34 Tadmor's most extended consideration of siblings takes place under the heading "related friends," a usage that included various kin. Tadmor's point is about the usage of "friends," and she elsewhere briefly notes the plurality of uses of "sister," "sister in law," "my wife's sister," etc. But once again there is no sense that "sister" or "brother" might be crucial or even contested terms in the language of "family." See Tadmor's index for many brief references to the sibling relation.

35 I searched *Journal of Marriage and Family* from 1998 through 2008, and found 14 articles with "sibling" as a descriptor that actually focused on sibling relations (rather than, for instance, using sibling groups as control populations to study other things). One article discussed how socioeconomic inequalities later in life affected adult sibling re-lations; three explored how sibling birth order or other features of development affect educational attainment. Ten of the 14 studied some aspect of sibling psychological/emotional development and relation, including the effect of differentials in caregiving for aging parents, the effect of birth order on relationships, the interactions of gender and sibling emotional relations, and so forth. This is a rough measure, admittedly, but if the proportional attention of scholars published in this leading journal is an indicator, then Davidoff's approach holds true for the heavy majority of sociological studies. I am grateful to my colleague David Demo for suggesting such a survey to me, and for his other helpful suggestions and comments in our conversation about socio-logical histories of the family.

36   See note 14 above. The original fount of Freudian readings of Dorothy and William's literary relationship, of course, is F. W. Bates.

37   For recent examples of critics proliferating types of selves without questioning the emanation of literary identities from "self," see: Sara Crangle's 2004 "'Regularly Irregular … Dashing Waters': Navigating the Stream of Consciousness in Wordsworth's *The Grasmere Journals*," which postulates Dorothy's psyche as a protomodernist self realized in stream-of-consciousness narrative; Jill Ehnnen's 1999 "Writing Against, Writing Through: Subjectivity, Vocation, and Authorship in the Work of Dorothy Wordsworth," which reads the journals as producing "embedded subjectivities within the Grasmere community of writers" (87), a "strategically negotiated stance" through which Dorothy "gains ground for herself as a woman within a specific community" (because Dorothy presciently realizes, with poststructuralist clarity, that she "cannot exist outside of text") (86); Lucy Newlyn's 2007 "Dorothy Wordsworth's Experimental Style," which straightforwardly seeks "Dorothy's voice or personality or 'character'" in the ideas and formal composition of her writings; and Heidi Thompson's 2001 "'We Are Two': The Address to Dorothy in 'Tintern Abbey,'" which (as the title indicates) presents William and Dorothy as a "twinned" or doubled subjectivity.

38   See, for instance, Fay 137 and 131. Interestingly, in the latter passage, Fay identifies William as putting "his house in order" by imposing the hierarchy of a "pastoral sibling life," while Dorothy intervenes with "motherly discourse."

2 "Out into the Orchard": The Departure of the Sibling in the House

1   Mark L. Reed's chronology of the Wordsworths notes this letter from *Early Years*: "A door is built from the stairway into the orchard at Dove Cottage, perhaps following the advice, or even at the expense of Catherine Clarkson and her sister" (qtd. in Reed 257). Reed records no other reference to the door, and does not interpret this addition as the Cottage's guide did.

2   All quotations from *Home at Grasmere* are from Beth Darlington's Cornell edition; line numbers of in-text citations are all MS.B. See note 3 below for details of the problems in dating the manuscripts.

3   It is hardly possible to read any part of *Home at Grasmere* without stumbling on a dating problem. Darlington believes that now lost manuscripts from 1800 must have been nearly final drafts of MS.B's lines 1–457 and 859–74 (see esp. Darlington 13). Darlington also singles out some of these lines as particularly likely to have been written in early 1800, including two of the most important passages to my argument: the swan comparison at 322–57, and the "happy band" passage at 859–74. The "Prospectus," the most difficult portion of the poem to date and also one of some importance to my argument, she sets at "the period between spring, 1800, and early spring, 1802," with lines 1002–14 (the "spousal verses" passage) added sometime in 1805 or 1806 (22). She takes Finch's evidence, however, as indicating that MS.B was complete in 1806.

4   Kenneth Johnston regards this passage as the rock upon which William's early conceptions of the poem founders, and which ultimately prevents William from developing a version satisfactory enough to publish. Characterizing the swan story as "a ridiculous literalism," Johnston explicates the difficulty it raises: "If the swans are gone, just like that, with no explanation or meaning, what does it signify for the

fate of another 'solitary pair' coming into the valley?" (*Wordsworth and the Recluse* 91). For Johnston, the elaborated structure of community that follows is a purely defensive reaction, one that stopped the (1800) composition of the poem cold for some time and remains unconvincing. Referring to the "happy band" passage (MS.B. 859–74), Johnston argues that "the necessary social dimension which has been raised in 'Home at Grasmere' [the possibility that the dalesman has killed the swans] by Wordsworth's fantastically literal effort to save his own unifying symbols, the two swans, is finally put in terms of an extended family. This is as far as Wordsworth's social vision could extend with confidence in 1800" (93). I differ from Johnston in regarding the structuring of Grasmere Vale as a great household not as something artificially applied after a traumatic compositional experience, but as a pervading principle of the poem, developed in multiple variations precisely because it is foundational.

5   Quotations from "Michael" are from the Cornell edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, edited by James Butler and Karen Green, and are indicated by line numbers in my text.

6   I am going to perpetuate what I regard as a critical error by not reading "Michael" with its companion poem, "The Brothers." Also completed in 1800 and cited by William in his January 14, 1801, letter to Charles James Fox as discussing the same themes, "The Brothers" both confirms and extends the observations I make about "Michael."

7   See Heinzelman's summary of the historical situation (60).

8   See my more extended discussion of this development in "'Nor in Fading Silks Compose': Sewing, Walking, and Poetic Labor in *Aurora Leigh*," 231–33.

9   Levinson, saying the narrator "is Luke" (74), argues that Wordsworth then projects himself inside the role of the Son. Reeve Parker, taking the contrary path but still working with, connects Michael and the narrator "partly by pointing to the identity of their purposeful discourse" (56). William Galperin draws the reader into a fascinating series of transformations of first and second selves, fathers and sons, that resolve toward a "transformed paternity," a permanent hierarchy in which authority appears to arise from "an already begotten son," whose perennially secondary status prevents him from ever having been 'father of the man'" (137 and 138). Closest to my own thoughts on this matter is Don H. Bialostosky, who comments that the narrator "minds his trade better than Wordsworth's other narrators and makes a produce he can offer for his readers' pleasure' (98). Other important studies include Jonathan Wordsworth's *The Music of Humanity* and Peter Manning's "'Michael,' Luke, and Wordsworth."

10   See, Mary Poovey's 1980s work on gender, Elizabeth Langland's *Nobody's Angels* (1995), and the many other critical and historical studies that engage "the domestic ideology" for critical accounts of married women's work as managerial and (ideally) contained in the private enclave of the home.

11   The novel does not treat Esther's and Mary's common dream of becoming a lady as entirely unrealistic: as Harry Carson himself tells us, Mrs. Carson "was but a factory girl" (118). Although Mrs. Carson's character is not much developed, Gaskell takes this idea into a different register in *North and South*'s hardworking, ambitious Mrs. Thornton.

12   Another illustration of Esther's lost potential can be found in the scenes of Mary's anguish and self-blame just after she has learned of Jem's arrest for Harry Carson's murder. Finally falling asleep, Mary dreams of her mother and her childhood, and then waking at "some noise," finds Esther at the door. Mary mistakes Esther's voice, and then her face and form, for the dead sister: "'Oh! mother! mother! You are come

at last?'" (194–95). What Esther brings, of course, is the evidence that she thinks would condemn Jem (to give it into Mary's safekeeping), but which actually proves John Barton's guilt. Both Esther's potential role as her sister's "replacement," and the disasters that trail behind Esther's departure from the married sister's home, are encompassed in what otherwise might be read as a conventional sentimental scene.

13   As we know from Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, £25 (with room and board) was a governess's pay at that period. While not a freestanding sufficiency, such a sum would hedge against the destroying depth of poverty that the two women might have otherwise faced.

14   Miss Simmonds, however, wants Mary to come back to work (as Sally Leadbitter tells Mary) "'by way of tempting people to come to her shop. They'd come from Salford to have a peep at you, for six months at least'" (297). Jem is right about Mary becoming a "show" but wrong about the timing and the cause: she is already, and because of his trial rather than John Barton's guilt.

3 The Problem of the Sister in the House

1   The difference between Fanny's comings and goings, and Gaskell's exile of Mary and Jem, and Margaret and Will, to Canada at the end of *Mary Barton* seems to lie in Fanny's repeated returns: the "dead-end" emigrations in *Mary Barton* foreclose the restoration of an English corporate household. This is the same foreclosure enacted in Craik's *Hannah*, discussed at the end of this chapter.

2   In Mary Jean Corbett's discussion of "'Cousins in Love, &c.' in Jane Austen," she quotes Ruth Perry's view: "'that Fanny and Edmund are maternal cousins means that no material advantage will accrue from the marriage—such as keeping a title or estate in the family'" (Perry qtd. in Corbett 50). Corbett goes on to point out "the position Fanny occupies as the medium of conserving the Mansfield family, even before her marriage," a position that has little to do with patrilineal inheritance: "Fanny installs at the heart of the Bertram household—and at the heart of the nineteenth-century novelistic tradition—a resistance to 'exogamous' exchange that also functions to increase her own agency" (50). Corbett's following discussion engages the ahistoricity of terms like "exogamous," concluding that "alternative formulations of marriage [like Fanny's with Edmund] had to be crowded out […] exogamy and endogamy had to be invented and have to be understood as having a history, one that begins around Austen's moment" (55). What Corbett seems not to consider here is the possibility of a family, an ideal domesticity, not defined solely or primarily by marital configurations—and, I would argue, predating Austen's cultural moment.

3   Of course in the wealthy Bertram household, where Lady Bertram's primary need is someone to be bored alongside her, there is a good deal of irony in the idea of Susan being "needed." But we have only to look at the Portsmouth episode to see a situation where such need is material and pressing—though interestingly neither Fanny nor Susan stays to provide domestic support.

4   For a summary of the differences between *feme covert* and *feme sole* in common and equity law, see Joan Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England* (10–19). Other useful sources on the laws governing married women's (lack of) legal status include Lee Holcombe, *Wives and Property: Reform of the Married Women's Property Law in Nineteenth-Century England*; Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England*; and Susan Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660–1833*.

5   Davidoff and Hall take the main title of their sixth chapter, "'The Hidden Investment,'" from a 1980 sociological study (Davidoff and Hall 279 n. 33). Their analytical emphasis in this chapter falls on the increasing invisibility of women's labor and capital as the nineteenth century proceeds, and they do not single out sisters in particular. But their evidence demonstrates the extensive, visible economic position of middle-class women in the development and maintenance of family wealth well into the nineteenth century, and their examples indicate the prominence of sisters in these substantial efforts. Of particular interest is the subsection on "Women's contributions to the enterprise" (179–89), but the whole chapter is useful. See also a brief discussion of the significance of family for factory workers, including the contributions of siblings to parents and each other, in the early nineteenth century in Deborah Valenze's *The First Industrial Woman* (105–6). Finally, Langland, though assuming the wife as domestic manager, lays out the managerial expectations for a middle-class household as defined by conduct and household management books of the time (45–57).

6   See S. Heinzelman 96–99. See also Aaron on contemporary laws about lunacy (99–114).

7   See especially 215–22.

8   Davidoff and Hall survey these conventional expectations (348–53), as does Sanders in her introduction (11–31). The sister's submission is such a well-worn idea that similar discussions appear in almost all the critical literature on the brother-sister relation. My revision of such discussions understands these expectations of submission as part of a figuration of sister as "wife," a figuration that runs counter to the sister's actual legal condition.

9   Davidoff and Hall discuss the difficulties women faced in consolidating wealth, and also provide some limited evidence of aunts' contributions to their nieces and nephews (275–78 and 353–56).

10   Even Elizabeth Langland, whose *Nobody's Angels* (1995) effectively complicates "one of criticism's most stable identities[,] that of the domestic woman" (21) by explicating the managerial work of middle-class wives, focuses on the discursive separation of management from labor. Langland's insistence that we attend to class as well as gender in our discussions of domesticity illuminates important discontinuities in what has too often been written as a seamless narrative. But, as her identification of domestic managers as wives suggests, Langland's own narrative assumes the stability of industrial domesticities, and does not examine the positive valuations of visible domestic labor within the corporate household or its characteristic reliance on sisters as managers.

11   Fanny's "expatriation" is limited to England, but there is a striking complication: Sir Thomas's change in attitude toward Fanny and increased attention to her emotional, as well as material, needs date from his return from Antigua. Although the scene in which he calls for "my little Fanny" with new tenderness quickly refocuses on her "improved" appearance (208), Fanny perceives the increased tenderness before he remarks on her new beauty. In that same scene, Fanny notices Sir Thomas's changed appearance—a diminishment, rather than an improvement—and experiences a corresponding increase of "tender feeling" (209). Their new warmer relationship precipitates the ball in Fanny's honor and Sir Thomas's championing of Henry Crawford's suit, which in turn lead to Sir Thomas's sending Fanny to Portsmouth. Sir Thomas's discourse about what happened in Antigua—an episode notoriously invisible to readers—and about the slave trade is the object of Fanny's enthusiastic interest, as Edmund notices (230–31). In this case, not only the figurative sister but

also her uncle, the family patriarch, must depart and return; and the location of his temporary "exile" must raise significant questions about the relationship between the Bertram household and the Antiguan estates. If the term "improvement" suggests that Sir Thomas now sees Fanny as a valuable property, then it would appear that he has learned that the value of dependents who are "property" cannot be sustained by material support alone. See George E. Boulukos, "The Politics of Silence: Mansfield Park and the Amelioration of Slavery" (2006), for interesting historical context.

12 My reading text is an 1872 American edition from Harper and Brothers. I have found no indication that this edition is revised from the 1871 English edition. My thanks to Duke University's Special Collections, where I read the now rare novel.

13 See Joyce 554–60 for a legal history of voidable marriage in post-Reformation England. Essentially, common law left the voiding of marriages within the prohibited degrees to ecclesiastical courts. There was, in fact, no positive civil criminal law against even the nearest consanguineous marriages—to parent, sibling, etc.—until the 1908 Punishment of Incest Act.

14 With apologies to my British and Canadian colleagues, to whom this is no doubt commonplace, I should explain to unschooled readers like myself that "Hansard" is the shorthand term for the official reports of the parliamentary debates. Apparently they were not, especially early on, verbatim transcriptions, but the language in many sections suggest that texts of speeches were made available to the compilers of the report. In subsequent in-text citations I will abbreviate the references to this form: (Hansard 3 xxviii 204–5 1835).

15 Gruner states that "the addendum nullifying later marriages was inserted to placate the bishops in the House of Lords and was widely expected to be revoked the following year" (526). Gruner cites no sources for her account of these expectations, expectations that would certainly make the longevity of the debates that much more interesting. Behrman, whose prime interest in the controversy is its impact on the relations of church and civil authorities, makes no mention of a presumption that the bill's voiding of all subsequent marriages would soon be revoked. But Gullette confirms that "influential Church Lords, while yielding [to the legalization of the earlier marriage], added the sad verbs of futurity" that voided all subsequent marriages (152). Passing near the end of a long session, with little discussion, the statute's passage was, Gullette says, "in some sense an accident" (152). Still, in the early debates the importance of consistently making all marriages outside of the prohibited degrees void after a certain date is regularly mentioned. If the absolute approach of Lord Lyndhurst's bill was meant as a temporary measure, or was simply an accident, its permanence was quickly rationalized. See Hansard 3 xxviii 203–7 1835 (which covers the introduction of the bill) and, for instance, Hansard 3 xxx, 795 and 950 1835.

16 The five topical novels of which I am aware are Felicia Skene's *The Inheritance of Evil; or, The Consequences of Marrying a Deceased Wife's Sister* (1849), Joseph Middleton's *Love Versus Law or Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister* (1855), Dinah Mulock Craik's *Hannah* (1871), William Clark Russell's *The Deceased Wife's Sister* (1874), and M. E. Braddon's *The Fatal Three* (1888). Gullette offers a strong reading of Craik; Corbett takes Skene as one of her principal texts in the third chapter of *Family Likeness*; Gruner reads all but the Middleton novel; and only Brown seems to have seen the Middleton, for which I have not yet been able to find a location (she does not locate it in her notes). Behrman cites Kathleen Tillotson's *Novels of the Eighteen Forties* as her source for Skene's *The Inheritance of Evil*, which Tillotson mistakenly attributes to "Harriet Frewin" (Behrman [8] n.16,

Tillotson 15). How this error occurred I have been unable to tell: "Frewin" does not seem to have been a pseudonym of Skene's, nor have I found another novelist named Frewin.

17 An 11-page chapter in Sarah Annes Brown's *Devoted Sisters* (2003) treats MDWS in conventionally Freudian terms. There are also five brief references to MDWS amounting to about a page of text in Leila Silvana May's *Disorderly Sisters* (2001); and four references, only three noted in the index, totaling perhaps four pages of text in Ruth Perry's *Novel Relations* (2004). Valerie Sanders's *Brother-Sister Culture in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (2002) makes no mention of the MDWS debates or of its topical novels.

18 In this Nancy F. Anderson is joined by Sarah Annes Brown, whose initial judgment that "no displaced lust for a true sister seems to be implied" in the MWDS debates gives way to a conviction that Anderson has connected with at least one source of the controversy's "strange hold over the Victorian imagination" (Brown 111 and 103). Rapidly adducing examples of "the absent presence of brother-sister incest" (117) in five topical novels (all covered within seven pages of Brown's text), Brown concludes that "the curious presence of cousin incest," together with the "disquieting implications of the triangle formed by two sisters and one man" (119), constitute clear evidence that the MWDS controversy is driven primarily by repressed anxiety about brother-sister incest.

19 The embedded quotation precedes the main quotation in Gruner's text.

20 Gruner's brief is to trace what she sees as an opposition between constructivist and essentialist rhetorical strategies on the two sides of the debate, and to indict, in the victor's naturalizing ideology, the seeds of our own continuing valorization of the heterosexual nuclear family. While I do not find the same simple opposition between the opponents' reliance on notions of a constructed family and the supporters' natur-alization of the family (I think both sides used both strategies), Gruner's evaluation of our own present ideological difficulties resonates with mine.

21 Chase and Levenson's hypothetical "deeper fantasy" of "two wives" is expanded in Corbett's analysis of the MDWS controversy as stemming from "two desires that tra-verse the second family," the wife's desire to retain her sister while gaining a husband, and the husband's "wish for 'two sisters'" (Corbett 74). Corbett advances toward a recognition that "we too readily accept the naturalness of the competitive structure between women implied by both sides in the MDWS debate" (74), while remaining firmly grounded in the assumed primacy of universalizing theories of desire (sexual and otherwise). My own point would be that the possibility of "consider[ing] sor-oral ties as promoting intimacy" (74) need not be referred only to the queer criticism Corbett cites, but also may be found in the MDWS debates themselves.

22 The referent of "this strange incident" is somewhat unclear, but it does not seem to be a literary incident: the concluding section of the chapter discusses several texts and episodes in them, so this reference seems to be to the whole subject of MWDS. That Chase and Levenson label it as "strange" (if this is in fact what they mean here) once again marks the idea of a sister in the house as peculiar.

23 See, for instance, Stuart Wortley's cryptic comments on marriage to a deceased husband's brother as "tend[ing] to the introduction of immorality in a family," remarks he offers in the course of introducing his bill in Commons legalizing MDWS (Hansard 3 cii 1114 1849). Wortley remarks on current instances of marriage to a wife's niece in the same place, having earlier linked this case with that of MDWS (Hansard 3 cii

1104–5 1849). For examples of the ongoing discussion of first-cousin marriages in the period from 1839 through 1875, both in connection with the MDWS controversy and as a separate issue, see *Summary of Objections to the Doctrine …*, *On the Present State of the Law as to Marriage Abroad …*, Hansard 3 ccii 817 1870, Hansard 3 ccii 1006–1010 1870, and George Darwin. William Adam's general discussion of "Consanguinity in Marriage" is also of interest.

24 The point is no doubt obvious: if Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon, his dead brother Arthur's wife, was legitimate, then the entire succession to the present day is called into question. See Gullette 151 for a brief commentary. Interestingly, Braddon's *The Fatal Three* alludes to this problem in a major character, Cancellor, a fanatical High Anglican priest who "'look[s] upon Henry VIII as the arch-enemy of the one vital Church'" (104) and regards MDWS as "unholy and abominable" (101).

25 See especially A. J. Beresford-Hope's *Report of Her Majesty's Commission on the Laws of Marriage, Relative to Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister, Examined in a Letter to Sir Robert Harry Inglis* (1849), which mounts a sustained attack on the *First Report*. See also Hansard 3 cii 1116–1125 1849 and Hansard [3] civ 1164–69 1849. Beresford-Hope's *Report … Examined* expands on his remarks in the first of these debates, and ran to several editions in 1849. On the other side, see Stuart Wortley's extrapolations from the survey's numbers at Hansard 3 xcii 747 1847 and 3 cii 1111 1849. In the latter, as he presents a deceased wife's sister bill in Commons in February 1849, he estimates 13,000 such marriages affecting 40,000 children throughout England.

26 The meaning of Cockburn's remark about the law is obscure to me. I have found no indication that there was any legal recognition of a maternal role for an aunt.

27 See also the testimonies of the *First Report*, for instance at 74, 88, 142, and 143.

28 Blackstone distinguishes civil from ecclesiastical law, but his description of husband and wife as "one person" echoes the Scriptural phrase "one flesh." See Blackstone, book 1, chapter 15 ("Of Husband and Wife"), sections 1 and 3.

29 Behrman, N. Anderson, Gullette, and Gruner all analyze various aspects of the debates. For full-scale treatments of the scriptural and canonical injunctions against MWDS, see, for instance, E. B. Pusey's full testimony to the Commission (*First Report* 36–59), or the remarks of Roundell Palmer in the May 3, 1849, Commons debate (Hansard 3 civ 1208–1238 1849). Pamphlets outlining these arguments were numerous. See, for instance, "A Clergyman," *A Scripture Argument Against Permitting Marriage with a Wife's Sister* (1849) and William Page Wood, *A Vindication of the Law Prohibiting Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister* (1861).

30 My text is the King James Version.

31 N. Anderson cites a 1905 *Saturday Review* article that opposed MDWS in part by defending a theory, in Anderson's words, "that sexual intercourse causes an actual physiological change in the marriage partners that makes them blood relations" (75). This particularly literal notion, although an extreme case, was current within two years of the legalization of MDWS. The often surprising materialism of the opponents' arguments is one of the reasons that I disagree with Gruner's sharp distinction between the opponents' constructivism and the supporters' naturalism. Clearly a "flesh of my flesh" argument seeks to establish a "natural" relation, seated in blood and body, between the husband and his wife's blood relations.

32 For an extended example of such framing, see "B.A.W.," *The Woman's Question and the Man's Answer*, 3–4.

33 For examples of the supporters' arguments on scripture, church history, and pro-
    hibited degrees of affinity, see: Crowder, *Letters of Several Distinguished Members of the
    Bench of Bishops*; "A Barrister," *Remarks on a Late Tract by the Rev. John Keble*, esp. 1–24;
    Lord Bramwell, "Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister" 405–10; Stuart Wortley
    in Hansard 3 cii 1105–9 1849; Mr. Cockburn in Hansard 3 civ 1197–1200 1849;
    Viscount Gage in Hansard 3 cciv 1875–76 1873.

34 See especially *First Report* 63–72 and 79–83, for the testimony of mostly anonymous
    men who married or wished to marry their deceased wife's sister.

35 Besides Prichard below, see, for instance: Lord Bramwell 404–5; Stuart Wortley in
    Hansard 3 cii 1112–13 1849; Cockburn in Hansard 3 civ 1207–8 1849; the Earl of
    Crewe in Hansard 4 clxxxi 417–18 1907; and "B.A.W.," *The Woman's Question*.

36 See also Lord Heneage in Hansard 4 clxxxi 402–3 1907. Gruner's analysis of the
    phrase "deceased wife's sister" suggests that this differentiates her from other sisters-
    in-law, but does so by "obscuring the constructed nature of the relationship" as it
    foregrounds the biological relation to the sister (424–25). Gruner's point here is some-
    what confused by her claim, less than a page later, that the deceased wife's sister's
    "originary, defining relationship to her sister is lost in the shuffle" of multiple roles
    that seem to be demanded of her in the MWDS debates (425). In this latter remark, it
    seems that Gruner, too, writes the biological relation to the sister as primary.

37 Only Peggotty, still called by her birth name but having passed through the cultural
    salvation of marriage, remains in England as David and Agnes's housekeeper. Martha,
    Emily's prostitute friend, marries abroad, and even Mrs. Gummidge receives an offer.
    Mr. Peggotty, of course, is in need of no restraining marriage, and he is the only one
    of the emigrants who returns briefly to England to visit David.

38 See Skene's and Braddon's novels, which respectively oppose and support MWDS.
    See also Corbett's reading of Skene (9–12).

39 See, for instance, in the summary *Report* the Commissioners' enumeration of laws
    permitting MDWS in "nearly all the Continental States of Europe" and the United
    States (vi–vii). The full transcripts of evidence include discussions of these laws and
    also scattered individual testimony about marrying the deceased wife's sister and
    living abroad (for instance, in the anonymous testimony on pages 69–71).

40 Disagreeing with Gullette about *Hannah* as an example of the English invention of a
    "later-adult sexuality" characterized by "moderate physicality" (Gullette 158), Gruner
    argues that Hannah's mother instinct, in particular, enforces our perception of her
    as asexual. Gullette, too, remarks that Hannah's character at first is that of "the vir-
    ginal sister longing originally merely for the chance to raise a child" (147). I agree
    with Gullette that *Hannah* includes scenes of genuine, if restrained, physical attraction
    between the lovers, but I think that Hannah's maternal longings do not preclude but
    prefigure her (restrained) sexuality. It seems to me a prejudice of our own time to per-
    ceive Victorian ideals of motherhood as wholly asexual, an idea that sorts oddly with
    the commonplace images of wholesome mothers surrounded by "blooming" children.
    Widowed mothers, of course, were another story.

41 In one rather extraordinary incident in Braddon's *The Fatal Three*, a sister's labor and
    a sister's inclusion in a household are represented as literally fatal. Lola, George and
    Mildred's only child, is killed by typhoid fever spread by milk from their own dairy.
    Although George, a model landlord who has studied sanitation, has supplied the dairy
    with a safe new artesian well, his dairywoman, Mrs. Wadman, uses water from the old
    well when the new pipes break down. The local physician explains that the old well

has been contaminated not only by "filtration of manure through a gravelly soil—inevitable," but also because Mrs. Wadman "had her sister here from Salisbury—six weeks ago—down with typhoid fever three days after she came—brought it from Salisbury" (43). Seven deaths, including Lola's, are the result of the tainted sister's visit and the working sister's labor in the dairy. My reading, of course, is that it is the eruption of labor and monetary economy into the privatized household that shapes these sisters as tainted and tainting. The narrative makes this point through a barely veiled allusion to *Bleak House* (Dickens's novel is mentioned elsewhere in Braddon's): "Nothing in a London slum could have been worse than this evil which had come about in a gentleman's ornamental dairy, upon premises where money had been lavished to secure the perfection of scientific sanitation" (45).

42   Gullette notes that "the plot does not punish [Hannah and Bernard] much for defying the 'spirit' of English law by becoming not-English" (149).

4 George Eliot's Natural History of the English Family

1   Although I will not discuss them here, *Martin Chuzzlewit*'s Pecksniff sisters, Mercy and Charity, provide another case in point. Mercy's tale is especially disturbing: after marrying her brutal cousin Jonas Chuzzlewit, she is thoroughly subdued, apparently by beatings, to his will—and so becomes a sympathetic character, eventually gifted with relative freedom (through Jonas's death) and the protection of the elder Martin. Charity keeps a firm hand on her intended and a cynical eye on her own fortune, but is jilted at the altar. As in *Copperfield*, the autonomous sister's subjection appears preferable to her potential appropriation of cultural power.

2   See Lynn M. Alexander's introduction to the Broadview Press edition of *Halifax* for some specific markers of the novel's popularity (23–24).

3   For a very different reading of Tom than mine, see Chase and Levenson's fourth chapter, "Tom's Pinch: The Sexual Serpent beside the Dickensian Fireside" (86–101). Emphasizing Dickens's openly salacious punning on Tom's "organ," their reading assumes a natural opposition of the sibling relation to romantic conjugality, postulating Tom's presence in the Westlock household at the novel's end as necessary to "break the close circuit of romantic love," and so "enact the sublimation of sexuality" that they argue was congenial to Dickens's readers (95). Interestingly, Chase and Levenson understand these readers as seeking "a <u>household</u>" even "more than a marriage" and finding the three-person configuration desirable for that reason (94, underlining original; I have reversed the order of these two clauses).

4   There is no scholarly standard edition of Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman*: despite its popularity and continuing print presence, the novel's scholarly visibility and Craik's reputation have evidently not been high enough to lead to such a production. I have chosen to quote from Lynn M. Alexander's Broadview Press edition, which is based on an 1897 American edition from Thomas Y. Crowell & Company.

5   A singular exception to John's otherwise continuous appearance of good health is his mysterious and nearly fatal "love-sickness," brought on by his inability to marry the heiress Ursula March, and cured by her appearance at his bedside. This episode, though, seems unconnected to the later hidden illness, and appears more as a sign of John's capacity for the "soft emotions"—of which more below. See chapter 18 passim.

6   For varied instances of Phineas's casting as the woman of the pair, including his sense
     that he is displaced from his primary place in John's affections by Ursula, see pages
     51, 79–80, 146, 215–18, and 238–39. In the latter passage Phineas's sense of sepa-
     ration from the married couple suggests further slippage in the ideals of corporate
     domesticity.

7   The particulars of these exiles seem to prefigure the French plot of *Hannah*, but with
     an additional inclination toward revolutionary governments: the entanglement of
     both Edwin and Guy with the Jacobin's daughter is most explicit, but Guy is also
     guilty of killing someone in Paris, and both he and Ravenal (and through the latter,
     Maud) spend some time in that other revolutionary country, the United States. It is
     also worth noting that John Halifax, who is born in the last year of the Terror, dies on
     the day that British slaves are emancipated.

8   For most of the novel, we know the blood siblings as "Mirah Lapidoth" and "Mordecai
     Cohen." "Lapidoth" is the name assumed by their father when he steals Mirah, and
     despite her fear and dislike of the father she continues to carry that name rather than
     her birth name, "Mirah Cohen." Mordecai's full name is "Ezra Mordecai Cohen";
     his sister remembers him by "Ezra," which is a source of considerable confusion for
     Daniel when he finds Mordecai in the shop and house of an Ezra Cohen unrelated
     by blood to Mordecai and Mirah (though Daniel frequents the place believing this
     other Ezra may be Mirah's brother). After Mordecai is reunited with Mirah, Daniel
     and the narrator both begin to call him "Ezra." I mention these complications here
     mostly so that I can leave them alone hereafter: I will speak of the siblings as "Mirah"
     and "Mordecai" throughout my reading of *Deronda*. But I also mention them because
     of their suggestion of confusion in the line of inheritance, ultimately corrected by
     Mordecai's death and Mirah's marriage.

9   This parallel is enforced in some detail: Massey adopts Vixen after he rescues her from
     drowning, as Hetty thinks of drowning herself in the pool when her child is born.

10   In 1807, the setting time at the end of *Adam Bede*, marriage with a deceased wife's sister
     was itself not void but only "voidable." More to the point, though, marriage with a
     deceased brother's wife was not prohibited by Lord Lyndhurst's 1835 bill, nor was this
     kind of marriage addressed in the debates that ensued. The historical reasons for such
     a silence, it seems clear, rest in the damage such a ruling or even debate might inflict
     on the legitimacy of the British succession.

11   Elizabeth K. Helsinger argues that Adam's character serves contradictory functions,
     helping produce "a peculiar tension in the novel's simultaneous celebration of an
     unchanging past and narration of how that past became the present" (223). But the
     representations of the sibling's role in the family, with their mixed and shifting char-
     acter, suggest to me not a contradiction between the definitive past and the present, or
     between a nostalgic ideal and a present traceable through changes from the past, but
     a simultaneity of ideological positions in the ongoing present. Interestingly, though
     her emphasis falls on representations of gender and resistant memory, Helsinger also
     chooses *Mill* and *Deronda* as the necessary companions of *Bede* in Eliot's history of
     England.

12   Joseph A. Boone and Deborah E. Nord deserve credit for seeking to add historical
     specificity to their analysis of sibling relations in *Mill* in their 1992 article "Brother
     and Sister: The Seductions of Siblinghood in Dickens, Eliot, and Bronte." But they
     too almost immediately fall back into the usual privileging of affective and sexual
     meaning, treating Maggie's and Tom's deaths as a psychological event: "Maggie's

death fulfills not only her desire for Tom but her always frustrated need to merge wit a maternal or primary presence […] The desire answered in the flood is born out of repression—repression of Maggie's need for recognition and liberty" (180). A common strategy for introducing historical matter that nonetheless reverts to the history of the individual psyche is the equation of Maggie with Eliot herself. Margaret Homans and Julia Waddell both use this direct comparison to critique the position of the nineteenth-century woman writer as a "little sister" in need of instruction, though Homans fruitfully complicates her analysis with discussions of Wordsworth's influence on the novel and on Eliot (Homans, "Eliot, Wordsworth, and the Scenes of the Sister's Instruction," *Bearing the Word* 120–52; Waddell, "Woman Writers as Little Sisters in Victorian Society: *The Mill on the Floss* and the Case of George Eliot," in Mink and Ward 47–57).

13   All quotations from the sonnet sequence are drawn from *The Complete Shorter Poetry of George Eliot*, ed. Antonie Gerard van den Broek, and are identified by sonnet number in my text.

14   In *Rural Scenes and National Representation: Britain, 1815–1850* (1997), Helsinger takes an interestingly related tack, understanding Eliot's novelistic history as compounded of "two kinds of historical consciousness": "The first is embodied in individual histories, like that of Adam Bede, that can stand for social transformation. The narration of such histories constructs a coherent past continuous with the present of Eliot's English readers and thus offers fictions of homogenous identity across time of an English nation. The second […] is located in the 'memory world,'" where identity is founded in the memory of places and also in the memory of one's alienation from them ("I am not who I was") (222). Helsinger characterizes the relationship between these two constructed forms of historical consciousness as "the resistance of memory to a totalizing history," "a competition that reposes the question of gender apparently settled at the level of a unitary history" (221 and 222). Her argument is compelling in its opposition of the master histories based on men's lives and the resistant histories represented as women's memories (heroines here including Daniel Deronda as well as Gwendolyn Harleth), and her location of the trope of alienation in women's histories parallels my own thoughts. But where Helsinger sees a conflict between two different kinds of individuated histories, one rendered (more) metaphorical, and ruptured along gender lines, I see the collapse of all other histories into the individuated.

15   See the beginning of book 7, chapter 5, which foregrounds the cyclical history of the Floss's floods.

16   Bernard Semmel develops a similar line of thought in *George Eliot and the Politics of National Inheritance* (1994), arguing that Eliot's "novels discussed inheritance in two principal forms […] the passing on of goods and property to heirs, which she saw as emblematic of family affections and obligations, a tie binding parents and children […] [and] the second more metaphoric form, namely the inheritance of the nation's culture and historical traditions" (6). Semmel reads the persistent coupling of these two forms as "Eliot's insistence on the national inheritance, its distinctive ethos and network of traditions, as an heirloom that could not be forsaken by a person of principle" (6). Semmel's wording in the last passage is particularly evocative, embodying national inheritance as something like Daniel Deronda's grandfather's ring or (since the ring is stolen from him) his grandfather's papers. But the two forms do remain separate for Semmel, possibly because he turns, with what now seems to me to be

stunning inevitability, toward the historical Eliot in order to "connect these views [of national inheritance] with the events of her own life" (7). See, nonetheless, his interesting chapter on "The Disinherited Races" and his discussion of *Deronda*'s relationship to contemporary treatments of Judaism.

17 See the letters to Mrs. William Cross, 25 September 1872, and to John Blackwood, 4 October 1872 (Haight, *Selections* 405–6 and 407). Though Haight does not mention having added letters to his original nine-volume collection of *The George Eliot Letters* (1954–78), these two letters are not included in that collection.

18 In acquiescing, Sir Hugo offers perhaps the most memorable advice since Polonius to Laertes, telling Daniel, "for God's sake, keep an English cut, and don't become indifferent to bad tobacco!" (168).

19 Grandcourt's desire "to be completely master of this creature" (279) is fully authorized by his legal status as her husband. The narrator, though, also characterizes it in terms of geopolitical power, once again entwining the homely and the national domestic: "If this white-handed man with the perpendicular profile had been sent to govern a difficult colony, he might have won reputation among his contemporaries" (552). The chilling reference recalls Governor Eyre of Jamaica (whose bloody repression of a slave uprising in 1865 is contemporary with the novel's setting), suggesting the extremity of anxieties about the potential legal autonomy of women in and out of wedlock. See also an early conversation between Daniel and Grandcourt about the "Jamaican negro," in which Grandcourt calls the slaves "a beastly sort of baptist Caliban," while Daniel claims a sympathy with Caliban, "who naturally had his own point of view and could sing a good song" (303–4).

20 Although Klesmer is given a composite national identity—the narrator calls him "a felicitous combination of the German, the Sclave [sic], and the Semite" (41)—his name lays the greatest stress on the Jewish aspect of his ancestry. As Terence Cave points out in the notes to his 1995 Penguin Classics edition of the novel, *klesmer* is Yiddish for "musician (often an itinerant village musician)" (816 n. 8). Klesmer himself, retorting to a fellow diner's remark that Klesmer must be a "Panslavist," marks his particular affinities: "No; my name is Elijah. I am the wandering Jew" (224). Though he makes this comment in a semidefensive, humorous mood, he deliberately foregrounds the Jewishness and itinerancy predicated by his name. Known to be modeled in part on Anton Rubinstein (Cave refers to a letter from Lewes making the connection), Klesmer is compared to Liszt and Mendelssohn by the narrator—and by Catherine.

21 See also Anna's earlier musing, provoked by the realization that Rex has fallen in love with Gwendolen, that "she […] had thought that it would be years and years before anything of that sort came, and that she would be Rex's housekeeper ever so long" (59).

22 Daniel Novak argues that Eliot's characterization of Daniel, which other critics have described as spectral (Levine) and "fleshless" (Knoepflmacher), deliberately produces an ideal national type rather than an individual racial body: "even if a particularized racial body seems to underwrite Eliot's model of cultural likeness, the outlines of 'peculiar' bodies fade in order to form a more perfect body of ideal nationalism and national inheritance. Through the mechanics of 'likeness,' Eliot hopes to replace an all-too-visible racial body with a not-yet-visible national body" (62). Novak's context for this reading is the composite photography of Francis Galton, which aimed, by creating composites of individual portraits, to produce

"'an imaginary figure possessing the average features of any given group of men'" (Galton qtd. in Novak 58). Most famous among these efforts were the composite images of "the Jew" produced in the 1880s, and Novak compelling recreates the complex ties among Eliot and *Deronda*, social scientist Joseph Jacobs, and Galton that Novak believes indicate that Eliot's novel "made these composites possible" (60). For Eliot, Novak argues, "the Jewish body can only be seen as a not-yet-visible Jewish national body—a specter of a past inheritance and an inheritance to come," and this not-yet body is Daniel, whose being prophesies the future, ideal existence of a Jewish nation bound by inherited ideas and feelings rather than by physical descent (84). While there is no question that Mordecai stresses the spiritual and ideological unity of the Jews, and works to discount the body as any important source of identity, my reading suggests that the plot's structural reliance on family relations— in this novel, relations most strongly defined by blood—and its characters' ultimate (often forced) recurrence to their blood, rather than their experiential or chosen identities, counters this textual effort to make the turn to a yet-to-be-realized nation of ideas or sympathies.

23   In *Ruth*, Naomi's kinsman, Boaz (in whose fields Ruth gleans after their return to Judah), purchases all the land owned by Naomi's husband and two sons from Naomi, purchasing also Ruth as his wife. When Ruth bears their first child, a son, she gives it to Naomi: "And Naomi took the child and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name O'bed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David" (KJB, *Ruth* 4:16–17). The restoration of the patriarchal bloodline, which turns out to be that of Jewish kings, depends on the possession of the faithful but alien wife Ruth by the blood kinsman Boaz and then the gift of their son to Naomi. The transplantation comes to fruition over several generations, and the full application of the story to Daniel's case suggests this same potential for gradual ascendance from a temporarily threatened bloodline (that of Daniel's father and grandfather) to political power (the Jewish homeland foreseen and sought by Mordecai).

24   For a different version of this same somewhat paradoxical claim, see the narrator's very early meditation on Gwendolen's not being "well rooted in some spot of native land," an "early home" that continues to provide in memory a "familiar unmistakable difference amidst the future widening of knowledge" (18). In this passage, the narrator foresees that adults may become "citizens of the world […] to soar above preference into impartiality," but that as they do they need these early memories for comparison's sake (18). This seems to foreshadow Mordecai's arguments for the establishment of a Jewish homeland, but those arguments (as we shall see) rely on an inborn sense of identity that merely needs a physical location or collection point to be brought to fruition.

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