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"THE SHAPE OF UNCLE'S": CAPITALISM, AFFECTION, AND THE CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE VICTORIAN FAMILY

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

"The Shape of Uncles": Capitalism, Affection, and the Cultural Construction of the Victorian Family

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Eileen Catherine Cleere

Although the father-centered family was a powerful instrument of social control in the Victorian period, and the father/child bond was presumed to be the natural prototype of all brands of civil interaction, I suggest that the gap between fathers and uncles, daughters and nieces is potentially wide enough to displace an entire system of cultural signification. My dissertation argues that a model of the extended family -- especially and most significantly a model of the avunculate -- was often implemented by Victorian writers to highlight the inadequacies of paternalistic and affective family paradigms. By examining the way that the paternal metaphor was used to neutralize the economic anxieties inherent in debates over domestic economy, social paternalism, penny-postage reform, and the usury laws, and by tracing these debates through works by Jane Austen, George Eliot, Anthony Trollope, and Margaret Oliphant, my project argues that "the shape of uncles" becomes a means of subverting this widespread privatization of the social world: a way of
dislocating the affective family values that had been imposed upon the economic face of nineteenth-century culture.

As questions about family structure are endemic to several different disciplinary arenas, my dissertation intervenes in both historical debates about the genesis of the nuclear family, and in feminist debates over the efficacy of father-centered literary criticism. Historical work on family development has begun to reassess the importance of extended kin in the formation and empowerment of the British middle class; likewise, feminist theorists are currently questioning the hegemony of oedipal thinking, and are beginning to problematize feminist reliance on the psychoanalytic model of family. Borrowing an anthropological model of the avunculate from Claude Lévi-Strauss, I insist upon a difference between fathers and uncles that psychoanalytic and feminist criticism normatively denies: if fathers are the benchmark of affective family models, uncles are a familial trope fundamental to narratives of social and economic exchange. Moreover, my dissertation concludes that extended kinship ties under industrial capitalism are not traces of what Lawrence Stone has termed "obsolete" family models, but emergent middle-class ideologies of work, production, and reproduction.
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INTRODUCTION

Life Without Father: Uncles in Theory and History

Who that cares much to know the history of man, and how the mysterious mixture behaves under the varying experiments of Time, has not dwelt, at least briefly, on the life of St. Theresa, has not smiled with some gentleness at the thought of the little girl walking forth one morning hand-in-hand with her still smaller brother, to go and seek martyrdom in the country of the Moors? Out they toddled from rugged Avila, wide-eyed and helpless-looking as two fawns, but with human hearts, already beating to a national ideal; until domestic reality met them in the shape of uncles, and turned them back from their great resolve.

George Eliot, *Middlemarch*

Although much of this dissertation is devoted to questioning seemingly straightforward narratives of historical progress, I feel compelled to give my project a possibly false teleology of its own, one that can simultaneously explain my debt to George Eliot and the significance of my title. Just as the above parable of St. Theresa serves as a Prelude to Eliot's *Middlemarch*, it also marks the beginning of my thinking about "the shape of uncles" in Victorian representations of the family. I was initially intrigued by Eliot's invocation of a specifically avuncular "shape," a patriarchal imperative that seemed to be something other than the psychoanalytic law of the father, and, in the case of *Middlemarch*, proliferated in a narrative setting strangely devoid of actual fathers. As I continued my research, I began to realize that the uncles thwarting Dorothea Brooke, Tertius Lydgate, and *Middlemarch*'s other latter-day St. Theresas were resonant figures that surfaced not only in the complicated genealogies of Victorian novels, but in such varied nineteenth-century
materials as temperance tracts, economic pamphlets, and political propaganda.

Yet finding a theoretical or a historical paradigm that could satisfactorily accommodate an avuncular model of the family proved to be difficult. Between Freud and Lawrence Stone,¹ the perimeters of nineteenth-century private life have been rigidly measured: "nuclear" in shape, "companionate" in disposition, "affective" in temperament, and of course, "patriarchal" in organization. If these terms are now more accurately recognized as ideological constructions rather than historical conditions, they still have the power to monopolize critical interest and theoretical regard, and consequently to enforce static impressions of the cultural work performed by familial tropes in the Victorian period. Given that any contemporary understanding of the nineteenth-century social world is already based upon assumptions about the doctrine of separate spheres, the cult of domesticity, and the "rise" of industrial capitalism, nuclear tropes and terminology seem the obvious and only way to make sense of the past. Add to this the fact that feminist and psychoanalytic critics rely heavily on a concept of patriarchy to explain both global and local forms of oppression, and the nuclear family becomes a practically impermeable axiom of Victorian culture.

In other words, although the Victorian family as a nuclear, father-centered unit is a recognized ideology, as an ideology it continues to

¹. See Stone's, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800 (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 4. While Stone has very little to say about post-1800 family types, his progress narrative of family development suggests that the importance of extended kinship ties had all but evaporated by the late eighteenth century, and that those remaining were vestiges of older family models.
maintain its cultural authority, tailoring even academic discussions of
teneteenth-century family life to the narrow contours of a nuclear unit. I
am not finding fault with Catherine Gallagher's claim that the father-
centered family was a powerful instrument of social control in the
Victorian period; indeed, her analysis of the nineteenth-century philosophy
of social paternalism cogently accounts for the extent to which the affective
family provided a "natural" prototype for all brands of civil interaction in
Victorian culture.² On the other hand, I would argue that when patriarchal
oppression is read only in terms of a mythic "law of the father," a
spectrum of other cultural imperatives that may or may not be styled
"patriarchal" or "paternal" are prematurely elided. It is my contention that
nineteenth-century ideologies of family life are more fractured and
contradictory than twentieth-century interpretive strategies have
traditionally assumed. The father-child bond may have been the dominant
metaphor of the Victorian social world, but its inadequacies or failures as a
universal metaphor were sometimes registered by alternative ideologies of
kinship: systems of signification that often exceed the theoretical
possibilities provided by nuclear family paradigms.

Historical assumptions about the development of the family are now
beginning to be interrogated and revised primarily because of Michel

². Catherine Gallagher, The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction, 1832-1867
Helps and other nineteenth-century social paternalists, society could be regenerated by
reduplicating the family's benevolent hierarchy: by acting out the roles assigned in a
metaphoric equation between society and the family, masters and workers could bring
themselves into a harmonious productive relationship. If employers would act like wise
fathers and workers like dutiful children, antagonistic class interests would disappear,
along with the extreme poverty and the class separation that accompanied early
industrialism" (117).
Foucault's poststructuralist analysis of "polymorphous techniques of power". Although Foucault doesn't directly critique the historical narrative which locates the genesis of the nuclear family at the end of the eighteenth century, he suggests that psychoanalysis intensified the notion of the nuclear unit by asserting "that one would find the parents-children relationship at the root of everyone's sexuality." Additionally, Foucault warns that any theoretical paradigm that enforces a notion of power that "has its central point in the enunciation of the law" obscures an entire network of power relations which emanate from a variety of partial and unstable sources. Foucault's impact on historians of the family can be imperfectly gauged by the way texts such as Leonore Davidoff's and Catherine Hall's *Family Fortunes* have offered compelling critiques of Stone's paradigm. Insisting that the boundaries of the middle class family were always porous, they conclude that "technical and organizational developments" of the late eighteenth century actually nurtured relationships among members of extended families: "Increasing literacy, the introduction of the postal service, fast and relatively cheap travel by coach, steamer and later railway, all encouraged family and friends to keep in touch." Even more interesting to me and useful to my project is the thesis

4. Ibid., 113.
5. Ibid., 90.
that organizes *Family Fortunes*: "If the focus shifts from individual nuclear families to the group as a whole, then it becomes evident how such patterns contributed to the survival and enhancement of the middle class, given the uncertain, even hostile economic and demographic environment."7 Davidoff and Hall insist that it was quite common for married couples to take in nieces or nephews to live with their families, although many aren't visible in census reports because they are listed by function: "apprentice, shopman, manager or some other occupational designation within the family enterprise."8

This invitation to speculate not only on a specifically avuncular household, but on an economically constituted version of kinship, begins to makes sense of the way that Dorothea's idealism is perpetually diminished by her apparently senile Uncle Brooke's appeals to political economy, "that never-explained science which was thrust as an extinguisher over all her lights,"9 and the fact that Lydgate's medical ambitions are paralyzed by his marriage to Rosamond Vincy, who loves him entirely for his rich, titled uncles (390). Moreover, when I discovered that "uncle" was a nickname for pawnbroker throughout the nineteenth century, the shape of uncles even embodied itself in the seedy Raffles, who blackmails Mr. Bulstrode, Rosamond's Uncle, with the knowledge that the Bulstrode fortune owes its origins to the enormous and illegally-gained profits of a large-scale London pawnshop (664). Yet while contemporary histories of the family

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7. Ibid., 224-25.
8. Ibid., 223.
have been useful to me, anthropological models of kinship, and especially feminist reinterpretations of the anthropological family, have given me access to a discourse of the avunculate that, in turn, allow me to speculate more broadly on how ideologies of the family took non-nuclear forms in the Victorian period.

In a short chapter of *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* entitled "Patriarchy, Kinship and Women as Exchange Objects," Juliet Mitchell invokes Claude Levi-Strauss in order to "make some tentative links between the myth that Freud has deduced from his analysis of the individual's unconscious and what we know from anthropological studies that confirms this."10 In trying to recuperate Freud for feminism, Mitchell attempts to show how Freud's theories do not discount the fact that individual, nuclear families are situated within larger social structures, social structures which are necessary on a practical level if the incest threat is ever to be deflected from the core family. Levi-Strauss's analysis of the exchange of women between men indicates that it is not the nuclear family that is the primary element of society; the law of exchange requires that we view not the terms themselves, but the relationship between the terms as the primary site of socialization.

In order to establish the socio-cultural break with the circularity of the biological given of two parents and their child, a fourth term must intervene. This is where the mother's brother comes in, and he

comes in with the very inauguration of society, he is essential to it.\textsuperscript{11}

Because he first exchanges his sister with his brother-in-law, and later mediates between the parents and their children, the mother's brother, for both Levi-Strauss and Mitchell, is the "true atom of kinship... Nothing can be conceived or given beyond the fundamental requirements of its structure, and, in addition, it is the sole building block of more complex systems."\textsuperscript{12} This theory of the avunculate serves Mitchell's purpose because it suggests that the Oedipus complex is not really "about the nuclear family but about the institution of culture within the kinship structure and the exchange relationship of exogamy,"\textsuperscript{13} and is not, therefore, limited to descriptions of the family under capitalism.

Mitchell's appropriation of Levi-Strauss is pregnant with possibilities -- possibilities which remain dormant within the scope of her project because she still wants to view the Oedipus complex as an universal paradigm that became visible with the onslaught of industrialization. Nevertheless, Mitchell connects the avuncular function with exchange, a link that is especially provocative within the rich and contradictory Victorian discourse of family life under capitalism. Mitchell's chapter on Levi-Strauss is cited with great frequency in various types of feminist analysis; however, the avuncular term is usually avoided.\textsuperscript{14} To my knowledge,

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 375.
\textsuperscript{13} Mitchell, 377.
Craig Owens is the first critic to explore the ramifications of Mitchell's suggestive analysis, as the uncle interestingly resurfaces in his 1987 article on gay men in feminism.\textsuperscript{15} Owens has two tentative paragraphs about what theorizing the avunculate might mean for gay studies, an aspect of Levi-Strauss's theory that Mitchell certainly does not address:

Although the role of the maternal uncle varies from society to society, it appears to be especially important in groups which practice institutional or ritual forms of "homosexuality." In New Guinea, for example, where initiation into manhood often requires the ingestion of sperm from adult males, the most important relationship is that between a boy and his mentor--ideally, \textit{his mother's brother}.\textsuperscript{16}

By suggesting that uncles are positive alternatives to the compulsory heterosexuality demanded by fathers within traditional oedipal models, Owens argues that avuncular relationships might provide anti-homophobic paradigms of social development for queer theory.

This is a line of reasoning that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has followed while discussing Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest" in her most recent book \textit{Tendencies}. Sedgwick's summons to "Forget the Name of the Father" as well as the deeply laid psychoanalytic consciousness that the phrase immediately and necessarily invokes, indicates that it might be something more than a matter of semantics to address the differences between daughters and nieces, fathers and uncles as crucial to our

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 227.
understanding of the social development of the family. 17 "Think about your Uncles and Aunts," Sedgwick advises, arguing that a more inclusive definition of the family would redress both contemporary social and legal limitations placed on kinship, and historical assumptions about the past that define the family in the narrowest sense:

The easiest path of argument from some of my starting points here would be advocacy of a more elastic, inclusive definition of "family," beginning with a relegitimation of the avunculate: an advocacy that would appeal backward to precapitalist models of kinship organization, or the supposed early-capitalist extended family, in order to project into the future a vision of 'family' elastic enough to do justice to the depth and sometimes durability of nonmarital and/or nonprocreative bonds, same-sex bonds, nondyadic bonds, bonds not defined by genitality, "step"-bonds, adult sibling bonds, nonbiological bonds across generations, etc.18

This expansive assessment of the use value of avuncular reading has the potential to dislocate or at the very least disrupt the nuclear family paradigm wherever it has been naturalized. From a contemporary perspective, it is important to question any narrative that privileges a nuclear family at the expense of other family types. From a sociocultural angle, moreover, it becomes possible to view the extended family as a site of material changes in nineteenth-century discourses of individualism, productivity, and value.

18. Ibid., 71.
Yet while Sedgwick's work on the avunculate provides an empowering developmental model for gay male identity, her celebratory equation of avuncular behavior with "kindness" may be dangerous to feminist studies. If queer theory can afford to imagine uncles as benign, less oppressive alternatives to fathers, feminist theory should not passively accept Sedgwick's suggestion that patriarchy itself is now an anachronism. At the close of her argument Sedgwick writes:

You will have noticed a certain impatience in this reading of Earnest, with the concept of the Name of the Father. That is partly because I see what may have been the precapitalist or early-capitalist functions of the Name of the Father as having been substantially superceded, in a process accelerating over the last century and a half, very specifically by what might be termed the Name of the Family -- that is, the name Family. (Within this family, the position of any father is by no means a given; there are important purposes, including feminist ones, for which the term "familialism" may now usefully be substituted for "patriarchy.")

Sedgwick's parenthetical diminishment of the value of "patriarchy" as a theoretical term is, on the one hand, well-taken: as Sheila Rowbotham pointed out more than a decade ago, the word "returns us to biology -- and thus it obscures the need to recognize not only biological differences, but the multiplicities of ways in which societies have defined gender." While "patriarchy" has come to signify an institutionalized form of gender

19. Ibid., 72.
oppression that exceeds the boundaries of the family, it maintains a father of mythic proportions at its center of power and obscures the particular agents of its aggression.

Unlike Sedgwick, however, I feel that the local forces of patriarchy are not necessarily rendered benign just because they are diminished in size or in discursive power. Although my interrogation of the avunculate provides a fundamental challenge to the rhetorical and actual hegemony of the nuclear family, it does not ignore the gendered imperatives that have been central to feminist work on patriarchy. In exploring specifically nineteenth-century models of the avunculate I have found that uncles are, at best, ambivalently situated within debates of ideology versus resistance. By asking questions about sites of male empowerment that are not coterminous with the authority of fathers, I am participating in a project that has been outlined by feminist critics such as Patricia Yaeger and Beth Kowaleski-Wallace in order to dislocate the ubiquitous position that the figure of the father seems to occupy in most work on the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century family.

The problem, as we see it, is not simply to change our focus from father-as-center to mother-as-center but to reinvent the discourse of the father altogether, to move outside an oedipal dialectic that insists upon revealing the father as law, as the gaze, as bodiliness, or as the symbolic, and to develop a new dialectic that refuses to describe the father function as if it were univocal and ahistorical.21

Their anthology, *Refiguring the Father*, calls our attention to types of fathering that exceed familiar models: fathering that is problematized by issues of race, class, sexuality, and nationality, and cannot be completely absorbed within hegemonic representations of biological or psychoanalytic patriarchy.

While my dissertation does not attempt to reconceptualize fathering, it is obviously situated within these debates about brands of patriarchy that are historically and culturally specific. Even recent anthropological studies have suggested that the avunculate is a kinship unit that alters in function and temperament under different historical conditions. Robin Fox explains that in cultures and historical periods where paternity cannot be proven, the maternal uncle

crops up like other atavistic memories, sometimes friendly, sometimes frightening, but always a powerful potential lurking behind our rational calculations and cultural certainties. In cultures that turn him into an authority figure, he can even be hated; in those where he is not, he is the refuge from paternal hates. But he is always there, if only in the shadowy background, waiting to step forward when social systems decay and we are forced back to those primitive equations of kinship that are as much our creators as our creations.  

Although most anthropological models of kinship tend to produce ahistorical metanarratives of a culturally ubiquitous family, Fox's work on the avunculate opens up a space for studying historical interventions and

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ideological shifts: moments when the shape of uncles is thrown into relief by the disorder or erosion of a father-centered society. Likewise, for me, the psychoanalytic possibilities for the avunculate that motivate Mitchell, Owens, and Sedgwick are less compelling than Levi-Strauss's assertion that the place of the uncle is at the mainsprings of exchange, at the threshold of an economically-driven social order. By proposing that "the shape of uncles" in *Middlemarch* and other Victorian texts carries this economic valence, I am positing a difference between fathers and uncles that psychoanalytic and feminist criticism normatively denies: if fathers are the benchmark of affective family models, uncles are a familial trope fundamental to narratives of social and economic exchange.

Given that this reading of the avunculate becomes an effective strategy for interrogating the material underpinnings of family life, my project obviously shares some objectives with Marxist criticism. The distinction between exchange and use value, for example, has provided an essential tool for understanding the economic distinctions between daughters and nieces in representations of the working-class household. On the other hand, because Marxist-feminist work on the family tends to rely too heavily upon the equation of the rise of the nuclear family with the rise of industrial capitalism, it fails to account for the way that the extended family often takes part in rhetorical scenarios of production and consumption. It is my contention that a concept of the avunculate -- by granting wider theoretical latitude to the literal and metaphoric significance of the extended family under industrial capitalism, but also patriarchal imperatives that are not coterminous with the "law of the father" -- has the
capacity to dislodge the normalizing dialectic of the nuclear family that has been produced and reproduced by theoretical models of kinship.

Returning now to Victorian culture and contexts, it is clear that an image of the so-called nuclear family was as fundamental to nineteenth-century ideologies of private and public life as it is today. Although the father-centered family was a powerful instrument of social control in the Victorian period, and the concept of "family affection" was frequently deployed in the service of a variety of political and economic programs, I suggest that the gap between fathers and uncles, daughters and nieces is potentially wide enough to displace an entire system of cultural signification. My dissertation argues that a model of the extended family -- especially and most significantly a model of the avunculate -- was often implemented by Victorian writers to highlight the inadequacies of paternalistic and affective family paradigms. By examining the way that the paternal metaphor was used to neutralize the economic anxieties inherent in debates over domestic economy, social paternalism, penny-postage reform, and the usury laws, and by tracing these debates through novels by Jane Austen, George Eliot, Anthony Trollope, and Margaret Oliphant, my project argues that "the shape of uncles" becomes a means of subverting this widespread privatization of the social world: a way of dislocating the affective family values that had been imposed upon the economic face of nineteenth-century culture.

My dissertation obviously participates in the battle that is currently being waged between history and theory under the banner of New
Historicism, a methodology that prides itself on lack of methodology, or in the words of H. Aram Veeser, on the premise that autonomous self and text are mere holograms, effects that intersecting institutions produce; that selves and texts are defined by their relation to hostile others . . . and disciplinary power; that critics hoping to unlock the worship of culture should be less concerned to construct a holistic master story of large-scale structural elements directing a whole society than to perform a different analysis of the local conflicts engendered in individual authors and local discourses.  

This individualized, localized method of doing history would seem to paralyze and delegitimize any attempt to theorize about the past; after all, you cannot have history and theory together according to Stanley Fish, who insists that if there is "no destabilizing act that does not leave more in place that it disturbs -- the effects of your practice will be internal to that practice and will only impinge on larger structures in an indirect and etiolated way."  

Given the choice between saying very little or possibly saying too much, I have opted for greater latitude in this dissertation, interrogating the shape of uncles within Victorian literature and culture not as a family configuration that gives us greater access to the "real," but as a set of discursive practices that exposes the complicated negotiations between family and society in the nineteenth century. By reintroducing the contradictory discourses and ideologies of Victorian family life to

embattled anthropological narratives of kinship, I am using history to expand and revitalize the rigid paradigms of contemporary theoretical models, and using theory to hopefully enrich a set of historical practices that has come to distrust the very possibility of cultural studies.

Within the context of *Middlemarch*, the conjoining of theory and history bears compelling fruit, especially in relation to Bulstrode, the one-time pawnbroker. Over the years, Bulstrode has striven to launder his ill-gotten fortune by investing in legitimate and even charitable concerns: for example, he has established a fever hospital in Middlemarch for the treatment of the coming cholera epidemic. Yet as cholera and Raffles make their simultaneous appearance in the community, Bulstrode becomes increasingly worried about both his bodily and social health, and withdraws his financial support from the "cleansing" apparatus represented by the hospital in preparation for a quick departure from town.

Cholera made an appearance in England in the 1830s (the time frame of *Middlemarch*) and in the 1860s (*Middlemarch* was published in 1871), and as one historian of pawnbroking notes, during this second wave of the epidemic, it was discovered that the circulation of infected clothing and bedding through pawnshops was causing the disease to spread more rapidly in poorer areas of the country. In this way, the social disease represented by the pawnshop in Middlemarch, the illness that ultimately infects everyone associated with Bulstrode -- from the orphan Will Ladislaw who discovers he is the grandson of Bulstrode's business partner, "a thieving Jew pawnbroker" (829), to Dr. Lydgate whose desperate acceptance of Bulstrode's money looks like a bribe to keep silent about Raffles -- is at the
root of the literal disease that endangers the entire community. Not only is Bulstrode's construction of the fever hospital more directly related to the cleansing of the pawnshop from his past than he realizes, the problem with Raffles is that he brings otherwise repressed bonds of kinship to the attention of Middlemarch's citizens, while forcing the family relationships between individuals and institutions to the surface of the text.

I take up the connection between pawnbrokers and uncles more thoroughly in my third chapter, but the avuncular nexus of *Middlemarch* provides a useful preface for the theoretical and historical objectives of my project. The shape of uncles makes alternative models of kinship visible, family relationships that are economically rather than affectively maintained. The first two chapters of my dissertation argue that extended kinship ties under industrial capitalism are not traces of what Lawrence Stone has termed "obsolete" family models, but emergent middle-class ideologies of work, production and reproduction. The trope of avuncular exchange is central to Chapter One, as it reads Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* against domestic economy tracts such as Sarah Stickney Ellis's *The Women of England* in order to foreground the way the hyper-affective ritual of cousin-marriage is underwritten by a discourse of commodification, waste, and excess. Most critical work on *Mansfield Park* has limited discussions of incest to presumptions about affect, and has consequently elided the socioeconomic factors that condition family development. By focussing on the economics of family aggrandizement, this chapter argues that endogamy itself becomes an economic strategy in *Mansfield Park*, a strategy that borrows its idiom from Aunt Norris's
zealous domestic regulations. In other words, if domestic economy involves making the most of the family's resources, of meeting the basic needs of the household by using and reusing materials that the family already possesses, then incest has its own status as a principle of waste-prevention. Sir Thomas finally discovers that Fanny Price is more economical than a daughter because she is the compromise of exogamy and incest: the sexual commodity that can circulate both within the family and outside of it.

While Chapter One upsets the affective veneer of nineteenth- and twentieth-century discursive constructions of incest, Chapter Two argues that George Eliot's *Adam Bede* privileges an avuncular model of family interaction in order to disrupt an idiom nearly ubiquitous to novels of industrial development: the rhetorical program of social paternalism. By foregrounding the extended Poyser family at the onslaught of industrial capitalism -- the transition between the eighteenth and nineteenth century -- Eliot's narrative of extended family development is mapped out against a working-class crisis of economic individualism that ostensibly forced a fledgling middle class into existence. By focussing on the figure of the niece, and especially on the way this figure is located at the fringes of the traditional affective family, I argue that Hetty Sorrel's illegitimate and invisible pregnancy becomes an emblem of economic and familial crisis in *Adam Bede*: an emblem that registers thematically and metaphorically as a failure of ownership. The text's preoccupation with female "fat" provides the linchpin between economic concerns and familial tropes, as the bloated, distended, fat female body perpetually insists upon comparisons between
nieces and daughters, economic production and female sexual appetite, conspicuous consumption and maternity. Furthermore, Thomas Malthus's 1798 *First Essay on Population* furnishes a cultural and historical backdrop for my reading of the mathematical (and misogynous) rhetoric of population, production and labor that shapes the economic program of *Adam Bede*.

The thematics of circulation are also at stake in Chapter Three, as I isolate a particular node of Victorian culture at which the familial shape of uncles intersects with an economic and social menace: the malignant figure of the pawnbroker. Mid-century economic tracts and essays such as T. Turner's *The Three Gilt Balls: My Uncle's Stock-in-Trade and Customers* (1864), James Greenwood's "An Evening with my Uncle" (1867) and Dickens's "My Uncle" (1851) suggest that "Uncle" epitomized a new kind of commercial patriarchy that was steadily replacing the feudal, paternalistic culture of pre-industrial England. Because proponents of social paternalism such as John Ruskin and Arthur Helps insisted that business relationships be modeled on parent-child relationships, the pawnbroker's usurious commercial pursuits made him an unfit parent, incapable of affective family attachments. In the context of these Victorian debates over pawnbroking, moneylending, and usury, Chapter Three argues that *Daniel Deronda* situates the figure of the pawnbroker as a culturally resonant metaphor for the way that modern capitalism has been converting the affective law of the father into the political economy of uncles, severing children from their parents by dissolving the links between past and future, origin and outcome, cause and effect. Throughout *Daniel*
Deronda we are reminded that the process of "brokering" does not distinguish between economic and affective value, and that even moral virtues such as family sentiment, religious faith, and paternal duty can be effectively commodified by the mercantilistic impulses of the nineteenth-century social world.

Finally, the fourth chapter explores a site of Victorian social reform that has been virtually ignored by historians and literary critics: the 1837-1840 agitation for penny-postage. Rowland Hill published Post Office Reform: Its Importance and Practicability in 1837, a tract which identified high postal rates as a grievous obstruction to not only the social and intellectual improvement of mankind, but to the affectionate and morally uplifting intercourse between parent and child. Hill's idea of penny-postage was almost universally received as a relatively simple solution to many of the social and economic problems caused by rapid industrialization, especially the break-up of the working-class family caused by migratory employment. By stemming the perceived tide of "disaffection" that was spreading between working-class family members, reformers also hoped to prevent "revolutionary" hostilities from eroding the hierarchical, paternalistic design of the social order. Ironically, however, the rapid circulation and diffusion of business correspondence, scientific information, and general "knowledge" contributed to the revolutionary atmosphere of the 1840s rather than otherwise: even the repeal of the Corn Laws, for example, was attributed to the salutary effects of penny-postage on social activism. In this way, the post office became a simultaneous emblem of the newly regenerated affective family, and of the
waxing demands of a commercial world that was seen as inherently anti-family. Novels such as Trollope's *He Knew He Was Right*, *The Claverings*, and *John Caldigate*, as well as Margaret Oliphant's *The House on the Moor*, reflect this conflicted perception of the post office as a vehicle for the unmediated circulation of affect among family members, while foregrounding the epistolary machinations of the extended family -- uncles, aunts, stepmothers, brothers-in-law -- to problematize the apparently anti-revolutionary, apolitical, and non-commercial goals of postal reform.
CHAPTER ONE

Reinvesting Nieces:
Mansfield Park and the Economics of Endogamy

Encouraged perhaps by Sir Thomas Bertram's belated discovery that his niece Fanny is "indeed the daughter that he wanted,"¹ most critical work on Mansfield Park has depended upon the primacy of the nuclear family and the metaphorical power of nuclear family terminology to account for Fanny Price's rise to power. Avrom Fleishman's influential book-length study of the novel, for example, suggests that "the structure in that part of the plot which has to do with Sir Thomas Bertram's choice of a new daughter" resembles King Lear's attempt to choose "one daughter among three" (62). In a similar manner, David Kaufman insists that Austen intended to draw a parallel between the initial "account of the three sisters, the Misses Ward," and the concluding "history of the next generation, centering on, again, three sisters (in fact, if not legally)."² While Kaufman repeatedly acknowledges that Sir Thomas is indeed Fanny's uncle, he still cannot resist slipping into the idiom of fathers and daughters, and ultimately ends up likening Sir Thomas to a feudal patriarch who attempts to exert the power of a "father-figure" over his "vulnerable daughter" Fanny.³ The "vulnerable daughter" is again the central figure in Paula Marantz Cohen's The Daughter's Dilemma, and Fanny is among her examples of nineteenth-century heroines that function in "the regulatory

¹. Jane Austen, Mansfield Park (1814; reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 431. All further references to this edition will be made within the text.
³. Ibid., 223-24.
role of psychosomatic daughters, who, through their symptoms, help to establish equilibrium and closure for their families. 4

Just as Fanny's shift from niece to daughter has occasioned a considerable amount of speculation about nuclear family relationships in *Mansfield Park*, her contingent move from cousin to sister to wife in relation to Edmund has generated a large body of criticism about sibling incest. By using Lawrence Stone's history of family development as a backdrop for her daughter-centered reading of *Mansfield Park*, Cohen argues that the novel's endogamous marriage plot reflects "a new affective order for the family in which a marriage between cousins will perform a much-needed structural role." 5 While Cohen challenges Freud's nuclear family model, she does so only to posit Fanny as a "developing daughter" who fractures the father-son Oedipal dynamic. Glenda A. Hudson similarly concludes that because Fanny and Edmund "have been raised as brother and sister under the same roof . . . their endogamous union preserves the inviolability of Mansfield and excludes risks attendant on marriage outside the family -- to the Crawfords, for example." 6 A more romanticized Fanny "yearns in isolation for a brother-mate, repelling the Crawfords above all because they are so different as to constitute virtually another species" in Nina Auerbach's work, 7 and Ruth Bernard Yeazell concludes her article on the spatial and temporal boundaries of *Mansfield*

5. Ibid., 63.
Park by neutrally observing, "It is not surprising that the final marriage at Mansfield Park should assume [the brother-sister] form. Edmund Bertram brings back to Mansfield 'my only sister -- my only comfort now.'”

Austen's critics are finally as invested as Sir Thomas is in the neat closure supplied by nuclear family discourse. By reducing all of the intensity and perversity of family interaction to a nuclear core, daughter-centered criticism tends to obscure the socioeconomic factors that condition family development, and to limit discussions of incest to presumptions about affect. Psychoanalytic paradigms (like Freud's) and historical narratives (like Lawrence Stone's) have mutually reinforced the hegemony of the nuclear family within literary criticism, and have been especially effective at naturalizing the shifting significance of kinship at its intersection with the more material claims of domestic history and social class. This is an oversight that feminist critics such as Jane Gallop and Helena Michie have attempted to address. In The Daughter's Seduction for example, Gallop insists that "the closed, cellular model of the family used in psychoanalytic thinking is an idealization, a secondary revision of the family." Gallop's own search for a "seducer" within the family is not complete until the nuclear unit itself is fractured, forced to reveal its element of dissonance in the lower-class figure of the governess/nurse/maid. Her governess is a "threshold figure": a presence that haunts the interstices of the "inside" and the "outside" of the family.

Although psychoanalysis would subsume the presence of the governess under the category of "mother-figure" to reassert the hegemony of the closed nuclear cell, the economic difference between the two figures cannot finally be ignored.

While the rapid deployment of domestic ideology in the final pages of *Mansfield Park* has all the revisionary power of psychoanalysis, daughter-figures, like mother-figures, cannot finally be assimilated by nuclear family paradigms. Like Gallop's governess, Fanny is indelibly marked by an economic history that relegates her to the threshold of the Bertram house, and prevents her smooth absorption into what is traditionally and biologically the daughter's space. Although my own reading of *Mansfield Park* is invested in exploring the way that Austen reconstructs the Bertram family through a manipulation of incest tropes, I am convinced that more flexible models of family are needed to interrogate the manner in which endogamy itself becomes an economic strategy, a mode of circulation that differentiates between daughters and nieces on the principles of utility. First introduced into the family as an indigent niece and a financial liability, Fanny's transformation into a daughter is a renegotiation of economic value that makes her the touchstone of Sir Thomas's family holdings: "His charitable kindness had been rearing a prime comfort for himself. His liberality had rich repayment, and the general goodness of his intentions by her, deserved it" (431). If Fanny has been converted into a daughter by the end of the *Mansfield Park*, the daughter's role has, in turn, been converted into a product of capitalism rather than affection.
Fanny's move from niece to daughter is Sir Thomas's final attempt to rewrite her economic history as an affective, domestic history -- a gesture that elides the material imperatives always already in place in domestic narrative. Like most economic histories, Fanny's story is punctuated not only by affect but by the laws of supply and demand. Marked as waste or excess at the beginning of the novel, Fanny eventually represents savings to Sir Thomas; in a time of dwindled resources, of banished and devalued daughters and sisters, Fanny is the family member who finally cannot be thrown away. Indeed, the definitive economic lesson of the novel may well be administered by atrocious Aunt Norris, whose perverse delight in the regulatory device of domestic economy expresses itself as an hysterical desire to prevent "waste" within the Bertram family, and to always "mak[e] the most of things" (128). While Nancy Armstrong points out that the nineteenth-century domestic woman's most important qualities included this ability to oversee and regulate household expenditure (80), Aunt Norris is eventually expelled from the family because she is guilty of "mismanaging" another domestic commodity: her nieces. If she has failed to "make the most" of Maria and Julia Bertram, she has also failed to capitalize upon Fanny's hidden value; after repeatedly refusing to "claim her share in their niece" (20), she cannot reap the same "rich repayment" that is Sir Thomas's final reward. Fanny's economic use is fully realized by her union with her cousin: as Joseph Litvak points out, by marrying Edmund instead of Henry Crawford, "Fanny . . . helps Sir
Thomas to consolidate his empire and to protect his property from
dispersion at the hands of outsiders."

By focussing here on the economics of family aggrandizement, and
on the material factors that underwrite the seemingly affective space of the
family, this chapter argues that endogamy itself becomes an economic
strategy in *Mansfield Park*, a strategy that borrows its idiom from Aunt
Norris's zealous domestic regulations. Anticipating the flood of mid-
Victorian conduct books that explicitly denounce wastefulness as the
cardinal crime of inexperienced households, *Mansfield Park* punctuates its
story of family formation with the very economic principles codified by
later texts such as Sarah Stickney Ellis's *The Daughters of England*. "The
absolute waste of material," writes Ellis, "in whatever is manufactured,
prepared or produced, is an evil of a distinct nature, and can never be
allowed to any extent, where it is possible to be avoided, without a
deficiency of common sense, or of moral rectitude." In keeping with the
ideological work performed by such conduct manuals, *Mansfield Park*
identifies the daughters of England themselves as sites of potential spoilage,
and in the process of mingling Bertrams and Prices puts forth a narrative
of endogamy similarly concerned with the evils of waste. That is, if
domestic economy involves making the most of the family's resources, of
meeting the basic needs of the household by using and reusing materials
that the family already possesses, then incest at Mansfield Park will gain its
own status as a principle of waste-prevention.

In arguing for a more material understanding of the ways incest tropes are deployed in a novel such as *Mansfield Park*, I do not want to dismiss the thematic centrality of concepts such as affect or family feeling. On the other hand, the hegemony of these terms tends to hoodwink discussions of family formation before the economic facets of proto-capitalist endogamy can be sufficiently interrogated. Sir Thomas ultimately concludes that Fanny is the daughter he always wanted because she is *more economical* than a daughter: as a commodity invested with both exogamous and endogamous sexual value, Fanny can be exchanged and retained simultaneously. Accordingly, while the first part of this chapter will examine the economics of sexual difference within an extended family unit, the second half will be more concerned with the idiom of iterability that finally permits nieces to function as potential and perennial figures of family replacement.

Initially, of course, endogamy is not an economic strategy Sir Thomas is over-willing to practice, and he abhors the thought that Fanny's entrance into his family will resemble a premature marriage transaction. Yet when Aunt Norris first announces her plan to "adopt" one of Sister Price's ten children, Sir Thomas's semi-articulated anxieties about "cousins in love" are quelled by his sister-in-law's assertion that cousins who are raised as siblings are morally incapable of forming incestuous attachments:

Suppose her a pretty girl, and seen by Tom or Edmund for the first time seven years hence, and I dare say there would be mischief. The very idea of her having been suffered to grow up at a distance from us all in poverty and neglect, would be enough to make either of the
dear sweet-tempered boys in love with her. But breed her up with
them from this time, and suppose her to have the beauty of an angel,
and she will never be more to either than a sister. (4-5)

Aunt Norris's reasoning here would seem less faulty if Sir Thomas actually
intended to raise Fanny as a daughter. On the contrary, Fanny's admittance
into the Bertram family is contingent upon a collective recognition of her
inferior social status, and her own daily consciousness that "she is not a
Miss Bertram" (8). Sir Thomas is resolute about the class division that
must be erected and maintained between Fanny and her cousins, and his
vanity prevents him from realizing that these intentions would seem negate
the conditions of his sister-in-law's prior argument: "I should wish to see
them very good friends, and would, on no account, authorize in my girls
the smallest degree of arrogance towards their relation; but still they
cannot be equals. Their rank, fortune, rights and expectations, will always
be different" (8).

If we return for a moment to Gallop's non-nuclear family romance,
Sir Thomas's anxious need for a discernable "difference" between his
daughters and his niece becomes more provocative. In fact, the different
"rank, fortune, rights, and expectations" granted to Fanny as a niece in the
Bertram's home is perpetually assimilated to the economic and sexual
difference usually reserved for the governess. It is easy to forget the
unobtrusive Miss Lee while she is an inmate of Mansfield Park, but once
the governess has departed the house she becomes a haunting emblem of
Fanny's awkward status within her uncle's home. At Aunt Norris's
suggestion, ten year-old Fanny had been given "the little white attic, near
the old nurseries" (7) for a bedroom, a space that is both perpetually infantilizing, and is connected -- geographically and socially -- with the rooms occupied by Miss Lee and the housemaids. As an adult Fanny is granted access to another room, "more spacious and more meet for walking about in, and thinking" (135), and this new chamber continues to link her with the phantom governess:

It had been their school-room; so called till the Miss Bertrams would not allow it to be called so any longer, and inhabited as such to a much later period. There Miss Lee had lived, and there they had read and written, and talked and laughed, till within the last three years, when she had quitted them. -- The room had then become useless, and for some time was quite deserted, except by Fanny, when she visited her plants, or wanted one of the books, which she was still glad to keep there, from deficiency of space and accommodation in her little chamber above; -- but gradually, as her value for the comforts of it increased, she had added to her possessions, and spent more of her time there; and having nothing to oppose her, had so naturally and so artlessly worked herself into it, that it was now generally admitted to be hers. (135-36)

Not only does Fanny's gradual appropriation of an otherwise "useless" space, a room "nobody else wanted" (136), reinforce her identification with waste and excess, her "natural" incursion into the governess's room as she approaches adulthood confirms her social displacement within the Bertram family: if Fanny does not have children to educate, she is still required to fill Miss Lee's place as a companion to her indolent aunt,
"naturally bec[oming] every thing to Lady Bertram during the night of a ball or a party" (30). Even the role that temporarily falls to Fanny in the Mansfield production of "Lovers' Vows," was to have been played by the governess at Ecclesford, and Mr. Yates explains that the Ecclesford company "all agreed that it could not be offered to anyone else" (121).

With Fanny's difference from Maria and Julia Bertram understood as the socioeconomic liminality of a Miss Lee, Fanny's family value is increasingly derived from her utility as a form of domestic labor. The accumulated "possessions" in Fanny's sitting room include a "table between the windows . . . covered with work-boxes and netting-boxes" (138), the unnecessary redundancy of the items forming a veritable shrine to unpaid and unappreciated female work, as well as serving as a constant reminder of the "amount of debt" (138) Fanny is somehow under obligation to repay. Fanny works out this debt in the service of her aunts, sitting "at home all day with one aunt, or walk[ing] beyond her strength at the instigation of the other" (31), in addition to all the stooping, cutting, stitching and message-carrying she is forced to do during her tenure as a niece. Yet Fanny's role is not the only one at Mansfield Park that carries an economic valence: if nieces are emblems of household utility, daughters are the promise of family aggrandizement through exchange. Although Sir Thomas is made uneasy by the "extravagance" of his eldest son, his "daughters he felt, while they retained the name of Bertram, must be giving it new grace, and in quitting it he trusted would extend its respectable alliances" (17).

As commodities, women draw their value from the "cult of the father," to use Luce Irigaray's phrase, and can be measured as a form of
wealth as long as their use value is subordinated to their market value.12 She writes:

*Women-as-commodities are thus subject to a schism* that divides them into the categories of usefulness and exchange value; into matter-body and an envelope that is precious but impenetrable, ungraspable, and not susceptible to appropriation by women themselves; into private use and social use.13

Likewise, in *Mansfield Park*, the difference between daughters and nieces begins as a "schism" between the social use to which Sir Thomas can put his daughters, and the private use to which he relegates his niece. Even though Fanny seems to have already entered circulation in her move from the Price's home to the Bertram's, the symbolic power of the Name of the Father has invested Fanny, ironically, with no Price at all. Fanny's own mother is "surprised that a girl should be fixed on, when she had so many fine boys" (9), and Aunt Bertram soothes Sir Thomas's difficulties with her plan by insisting that there can be "no difference" between two girls in the family and three (7). Although all of the Price children fall under the heading of "superfluity" (3), daughters represent negative value, a form of waste that the Portsmouth family can give up without much regret.

At Mansfield Park, however, the value of daughters is significantly higher, and when Sir Thomas finds it financially necessary to make an extended visit to his plantation in Antigua, he regrets leaving "his daughters to the direction of others at their present most interesting time of life"

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13. Ibid., 176.
(28). Maria and Julia are both emblems of their father's economic worth and important extensions of his power, and at eighteen and seventeen respectively, they are "most interesting" because they are at the threshold of marriageability: the moment at which their value as exchangeable commodities will demand the most interest. Fanny's value is, conversely, confined to the schoolroom: she is deliberately denied passage into the realm of exchange and prevented from becoming as interesting as her cousins. Unfortunately, while attending to the possible mismanagements of his colonial holdings, Sir Thomas's domestic holdings are exposed to similar forms of misuse, beginning with the way that Maria and Julia feel that they are "at their own disposal" (28) in their father's absence. Already noted for their habit of "wasting gold paper" (11) as children, Maria and Julia's newly burgeoning independence again taps into the idiom of economic depletion, and although it is their appointed guardian's self-proclaimed duty to prevent waste and to "make the most of things" (128), Aunt Norris proves a faulty economist when it comes to her nieces.

Interestingly, Aunt Norris's animated turn for domestic economy is attributed to her having married on a small income, and "what had begun as a matter of prudence, soon grew into a matter of choice, as an object of that needful solicitude, which there were no children to supply" (6). Frugality, in other words, is a sublimation of maternity that becomes more insistent and "infatuating" with each "yearly addition to an income which [the Norrises] had never lived up to" (6). In fact, the accumulation of money is further linked with the production of children by the way that Aunt Norris's parsimonious need to "lay by a little at the end of the year"
(26), is an idiomatic reminder of her sister Price's nearly annual "lying-in" (3). By the time Fanny is adopted by the Bertrams, Aunt Norris is as skilled at saving her own resources as she is at spending her friends', and her sister's child becomes another unit of value to appropriate and control without any expense to herself. All of her nieces, in fact, become commodities for Aunt Norris to use or exchange in the name of Sir Thomas, and if she has employed Fanny to be an instrument of domestic drudgery, she is just as committed to "promoting gaieties for her (other) nieces, assisting their toilettes, displaying their accomplishments, and looking about for their future husbands" (30).

Aunt Norris's endeavors pay off, of course, in the form of Maria Bertram's engagement to the wealthy but insipid Mr. Rushworth: "a connection exactly of the right sort" (35) for Sir Thomas. Directly following Mr Rushworth's proposal, however, Mary and Henry Crawford arrive at Mansfield parsonage on a visit to their half-sister Mrs Grant, and the stage is set for Aunt Norris's economic acumen to be severely disgraced. Although "Miss Bertram's engagement made him in equity the property of Julia," Henry Crawford is "the most agreeable young man the sisters had ever known" (39), and Maria does not see the impropriety of allowing his attentions. Identical in their childhood pursuits, their dislike of their father, and in their general abuse of Fanny, Maria and Julia are also represented as having identical desires, and their mutual ambition to play Agatha in the Mansfield production of "Lovers Vows," has everything

to do with their mutual desire for Henry Crawford. Henry's ongoing flirtation with both sisters enhances the lack of differentiation that early on makes each sister seem like a dim reflection of the other -- redundant female figures that problematically diffuse and duplicate each other's social value.

As readers of *Pride and Prejudice* understand, female iteribility is very much an economic problem. Not only does the presence of several marriageable daughters in the family at one time place a heavy burden on the family's financial resources, it introduces a level of competition amongst sisters for husbands that can only be characterized as uneconomical. We may remember Lady Catherine De Borough's shock when she learns from Elizabeth that the five Bennet sisters have had no governess, and that they are all "out" simultaneously: "All! -- What, all five at once? Very odd! -- And you only the second. -- The younger ones out before the elder are married!"  

15 Back in the realm of *Mansfield Park*, the problem of female superfluity announces itself as early in the novel as the opening description of the three Ward sisters, and the narrator's infamous observation that "there are not so many men of large fortune in the world, as there are pretty women to deserve them" (1). This ratio of men to women introduces an economy of female circulation into the text that resurfaces when the number of aspiring actresses in the Mansfield company exceeds the number of significant female roles in "Lover's Vows," and it becomes clear that one woman's talents must inevitably go to waste. The part of Amelia falls "naturally" to Mary Crawford -- "Amelia

should be a small, light, girlish, skipping figure" in Tom Bertram's opinion (122) -- but Maria and Julia's qualities are so identical that Tom carelessly assigns the role of Agatha to "one or other of my sisters" (120).

When Henry chooses Maria to play Agatha to his Frederick however, he disrupts the redundancy of the sisters so effectively that even Tom is convinced of Julia's unfitness for the part: "She has not the look of it. Her features are not tragic features, and she walks too quick, and speaks too quick, and would not keep her countenance. She had better do the old countrywoman; the Cottager's wife; you had, indeed, Julia"(121). At the moment of taking on the effects of female difference, Julia is offered the Ecclesford governess's role -- the substandard part that will eventually, momentarily, fall to Fanny. Female difference can only be articulated in *Mansfield Park* through the ideologically complex figure of the governess, and although the rest of the company denounces Tom's insensitive type-casting, Julia is still stigmatized by her association with Fanny's brand of excess and her assimilation to waste. In this way, it is *Julia* rather than Fanny who at first seems destined to play the figure of perennial redundancy within the Bertram family, as the moment she ceases to double for her sister, she begins to temporarily double for her governess-like cousin. Julia becomes Fanny's fellow "sufferer" (143), a spectator rather than a participant in the rehearsals of "Lovers' Vows," and this similarity remains intact until Maria's marriage to Rushworth, when the sisters are oddly assimilable once again.

More peripheral stories of female circulation and exchange provide a thematic backdrop for Maria and Julia's sisterly redundancies: the two
Miss Sneyds, for example, are used by Tom Bertram to illustrate his experiences of female sameness to Mary Crawford. They looked just the same; both well dressed, with veils and parasols like other girls; but I afterwards found that I had been giving all my attention to the youngest, who was not *out*, and had most excessively offended the eldest. Miss Augusta ought not to have been noticed for the next six months, and Miss Sneyd, I believe, has never forgiven me. (45)

The Sneyds' redundancy is a bad economic strategy in two ways: not only does the value of the unmarried elder sister decrease when a younger, more vivacious versions of herself is introduced into the marketplace, female iteribility is also, according to Tom, a waste of male sexual energy. Interestingly, Mary Crawford's remedy for female redundancy throws us once again into the familiar ideological space of female difference: "Miss Augusta should have been with her governess. Such half and half doings never prosper" (45-46). If the sexual latency of girls who are "in" is italicized by the presence of the governess, a more "prosperous" form of sisterly difference can be enforced along the lines of availability. Of course, Tom and Mary's conversation about the "outs and not outs" (43) of female sexual development takes place under the rubric of a discussion of *Fanny*’s difference, as Mary cannot initially understand if Fanny is "in" or "out." Edmund's response that Fanny is "grown up" (43) is not particularly helpful to Mary, and she only concludes that "Miss Price is *not* out" when Edmund admits that Fanny does not circulate as an exogamous sexual commodity in the same way that his sisters do: "My mother seldom
goes into company herself . . . and Fanny stays at home with her" (46). Fanny's adult sexuality hits no social register; like the governess, her value is supplementary rather than primary, and coded as use rather than exchange.

Yet even after the sign of the governess has effectively imposed a form of difference between Maria and Julia, the Bertram family continues to have a problem with waste. The Mansfield theatricals prove to be a more expensive undertaking than anyone had foreseen, not only in the cost of constructing a theater and outfitting the players with appropriate costumes, but in the way that playacting rehearses female desire and circulates female value within false or faulty economies of exchange. Maria's overpracticed scenes with Henry Crawford assume a disturbing degree of realism in Fanny's opinion (148), and her cousin's sexuality appears to exceed the permissible nexus of monogamy. Furthermore, Julia's jealousy of her sister inspires an unwise flirtation with the financially undesirable Mr. Yates. As usual, Aunt Norris is too occupied by the bustle and importance of domestic expenditure to pay much mind to more serious forms of waste:

too busy in contriving and directing the general little matters of the company, superintending their various dresses with economical expedient, for which nobody thanked her, and saving, with delighted integrity, half-a-crown here and there to the absent Sir Thomas, to have leisure for watching the behaviour, or guarding the happiness of his daughters. (146)
By the time "Lovers' Vows" is agreed upon by the players, the theatrical props are already under construction, and Edmund's objection to the impropriety of the choice is dismissed by Aunt Norris on the grounds of potential waste: "the preparations will be all so much money thrown away -- and I'm sure that would be a discredit to us all" (127). In Aunt Norris's lexicon of value, wasted property takes precedence over squandered propriety, and her nieces are indiscriminately left "at their own disposal."

At last even Edmund's discomfort with the "excessive intimacy" (138) of the theatricals is forced to give way to his aunt's discourse of savings, and he agrees to take part in the performance in order to "spare" Mary Crawford the humiliation of acting love scenes with a stranger. Like Aunt Norris, Edmund finally sees his participation in the theatricals as a form of economy, a sacrifice that will secure "material gain" in the long run: "If I can be the means of restraining the publicity of the business, of limiting the exhibition, of concentrating our folly, I shall be well repaid" (139, emphasis added).

Ironically, when the Mansfield rehearsals of "Lovers' Vows" are prematurely cancelled due to the unexpected arrival of Sir Thomas from Antigua, the props, the playbooks and the costumes are immediately scrapped. What appears to be wastefulness in Aunt Norris's understanding is actually a form of savings to Sir Thomas: his destruction of the theater and its accoutrements is an attempt to conserve the reputation of his family and the exchange value of his daughters. While Fanny was the only family member who did not take part in the theatricals by choice, she belies her anti-theatrical stance by "appearing before her uncle" precisely on cue,
entering the drawing-room at the very moment Sir Thomas is "looking round him, and saying 'But where is Fanny? -- Why do I not see my little Fanny?" (159). In the words of Henry Crawford, the desire to act is a desire to "be any thing or every thing" (111), and this is precisely the impulse that brings Fanny to the center-stage of the Bertram household by the end of the novel. If theatricality is the dominant metaphor in Mansfield Park, then Fanny is the family understudy: her years of existence in the wings of the Bertram household give her the unique ability to learn every part by heart, as she did during the rehearsals of "Lovers Vows."

As a spare daughter, a figure of family replacement, Fanny clearly represents a unit of value that draws worth from redundancy. By occupying an inherently amorphous role within the household, the niece is the ultimate domestic resource, as she is invested with limitless powers of replication, and can be easily converted, in times of family crisis, from poor relation (a status dangerously close to Gallop's governess) to daughter, sister or possibly, wife. When the Bertram family closes ranks, Fanny is called upon to fill several roles simultaneously, and her status as a stand-in daughter makes her equally useful as a stand-in sister for Edmund ("My Fanny -- my only sister -- my only comfort now" [405] ), and finally, after his disappointment in Mary Crawford, his only resource for a wife. Yet the kind of iteribility that Fanny represents to the Bertram family is markedly different from Julia's brand of imitation: while iteribility between sisters results in the uneconomical duplication of exogamous desire, Fanny's eventual ability to refashion herself in the guise of a daughter while still claiming the status of a niece allows her to have both
exogamous and endogamous sexual value. Because Fanny is simultaneously inside and outside of the family, Sir Thomas can potentially exchange her in either direction.

Returning now to Irigaray's description of use value versus social value, it is important to remember that women's "development' lies in their passage from one to the other."16 Within the economic idiom of Mansfield Park, this passage from utility to exchange is referred to as "improvement," and is thereby naturalized as a form of development that resides solely in the female body. When Sir Thomas returns from Antigua he surprises his niece by treating her with a loving regard he has never shown in the past, and by joyfully celebrating what he perceives to be Fanny's "equal improvement in health and beauty"(160). Edmund attempts to explain his father's seemingly inexplicable change in behavior to Fanny:

... the truth is, that your uncle never did admire you till now -- and now he does. Your complexion is so improved! -- and you have gained so much countenance! -- and your figure -- Nay, Fanny, do not turn away about it -- it is but an uncle. If you cannot bear an uncle's admiration what is to become of you? (178)

Of course, Sir Thomas's sudden praise of his niece's improved body and health can be somewhat explained by his prolonged absence in Antigua. The serious financial losses suffered by Sir Thomas's West Indian estate is, as both Avrom Fleishman and Moira Ferguson have pointed out, historically simultaneous with the 1807 Act for the Abolition of the Slave

16. Irigaray, 185.
Trade, and the journey to Antigua reflects a measure that many absentee landowners actually undertook at the time.\textsuperscript{17} According to Fleishman, "conditions of life and work [in the British West Indies] were so bad that the slaves failed to reproduce and survive in sufficient numbers to provide an adequate, stable labor force"; consequently, "on these sound economic grounds," a plantation owner's task would have been to institute measures of humanitarian reform in order to secure the good health and fair treatment of his slaves.\textsuperscript{18}

If humanitarianism and economic productivity go hand in hand in Antigua, it is likely that the same combination will work miracles at Mansfield Park. With the "improvement" of his property at stake, Sir Thomas's concern about his slaves and their bodies generates a new level of avuncular interest in his niece, and a change of heart that seems like moral regeneration until its economic implications are revealed. Colonialism's economic lessons are introduced within the structure of the Bertram family, and Sir Thomas's East Indian interests transfer themselves to the East room of Mansfield Park. If Sir Thomas sees Fanny's body differently after his return from Antigua, it is because he has finally learned to view his niece not as a drain on the economic and sexual strength of his family, but as a site of potential productivity that must be nourished, protected, improved. Fanny becomes a sign of strength rather than weakness because she represents yet another way that the Bertram family can potentially "reproduce and survive in sufficient numbers."

\textsuperscript{18} Fleishman, 37-38.
It is also the case that the rhetoric of improvement links Sir Thomas's avuncular interest in his niece's rising value to Mr. Rushworth's earlier desire to renovate his extensive Sotherton property: "He had been visiting a friend in a neighboring county, and that friend having recently had his grounds laid out by an improver, Mr. Rushworth was returned with his head full of the subject, and very eager to be improving his own place in the same way" (46). Rushworth's "best friend upon such an occasion" (47) is landscape designer, Humphry Repton, an improver whose philosophy of renovation is based upon the primary importance of making one's "property seem larger, more valuable" than it actually is:

The pleasure of appropriation is gratified in viewing a landscape which cannot be injured by the malice or bad taste of a neighboring intruder. . . an ugly barn, a ploughed field, or any obtrusive object which disgraces the scenery of a park, looks as if it belonged to another, and therefore robs the mind of the pleasure derived from appropriation, or the unity and continuity of unmixed property.\(^{19}\)

Just as Repton's project of "improvement" is the task of removing or disguising the intrusive signs of functionality that ruin "the scenery of a park," Sir Thomas's promotion of Fanny to the status of a daughter will take an object "that looks like it belonged to another" and create an illusory "continuity of unmixed property." While this is a form of improvement that will benefit Fanny in the long run, she is herself no great fan of Repton's work. Her abiding desire to remain behind the scenes of family interaction is implicitly threatened by the landscaper's favorite hobby of

"breaking an avenue": thinning a "curtain" of trees in order to reveal glimpses of the "infinitely more interesting" scenery behind. But when Maria's marriage removes her from Mansfield Park, and Julia chooses to accompany her on the honeymoon, a similar thinning of Sir Thomas's family circle finally brings Fanny's latent points of interest to the very center of household attention:

Becoming as she then did, the only young woman in the drawing-room, the only occupier of that interesting division of a family in which she had hitherto held so humble a third, it was impossible for her not to be more looked at, more thought of and attended to, than she had ever been before; and 'where is Fanny?' became no uncommon question, even without her being wanted for any one's convenience. (184)

In light of the sudden shortage in marriageable daughters at Mansfield Park, Fanny is finally allowed to leave the schoolroom and take on a displaced form of worth unrelated to her utility. As the "only occupier of that interesting division" of the Bertram family, Fanny must now both bear the interest and attendance of the Bertrams, and bear interest as a commodity within the social circuit of the drawing room.

Accordingly, without Maria or Julia to occupy his flirtatious attentions, Henry Crawford is also struck by the miraculous "improvement" in Fanny Price's appearance, as he explains to his sister, Mary.

20. Ibid., 63.
You see her every day, and therefore do not notice it, but I assure you, she is quite a different creature from what she was in the autumn. She was then merely a quiet, modest, not plain looking girl, but she is now absolutely pretty... her air, her manner, her tout ensemble is so indescribably improved! (207)

Linked by their shared perception of Fanny's "improvement," Sir Thomas and Henry Crawford can be situated along the continuum of male iteribility in *Mansfield Park*, a continuum that is as necessary as female iteribility in the perpetuation of capitalist patriarchy. Irigaray explains that "in order for a product -- a woman? -- to have value, two men, at least, have to invest (in) her."{21} In this case, there is a triptych of male interest to increase Fanny's price in the social marketplace, as Fanny's brother William arrives at Mansfield Park in time to raise Henry's idle attraction to Fanny into a more serious form of desire. As Henry watches "with lively admiration, the glow of Fanny's cheek, the brightness of her eye, the deep interest, the absorbed attention, while her brother was describing any of the imminent hazards, or terrific scenes, which such a period, at sea, must supply... Fanny's attractions increased -- increased twofold" (212). If William's interest in Fanny excites Henry, William and Henry's combined interest doubly excites Sir Thomas, and the frenetic circulation of male desire around Fanny conspires to raise the stakes by repeatedly displaying and assessing Fanny's sexual value. William's favorite activity, it seems, is dancing, and his favorite wish is to be able to see his sister dance. When Sir Thomas is unable to answer his questions about the quality of Fanny's

dancing, Henry intervenes: "I have had the opportunity of seeing your sister dance, Mr. Price,' said Henry Crawford, leaning forward, 'and will engage to answer every inquiry which you can make of the subject to your entire satisfaction" (226). Sir Thomas is finally pleased to "gratify so amiable a feeling -- to gratify any body else who might wish to see Fanny dance" (228), and the end result is an impromptu ball in honor of Fanny.

The pooled investments of Sir Thomas, Henry Crawford and William Price convert Fanny into an exchangeable commodity by circulating her drawing-room value within the wider social economy of the ball room. Furthermore, their synchronized objectification of Fanny's body marks a homosocial negotiation of her sexual worth. The narrator suggests that Sir Thomas is only thinking of his niece's health when, in the early hours of the morning, he advises Fanny "to go immediately to bed" (254) and she complies. Yet on the other hand, "he might mean to recommend her as a wife by shewing her persuadableness" (255). Here too, Sir Thomas's machinations take on a sinister kind of theatricality, as by "displaying Fanny in the role of the obedient young woman, Sir Thomas in effect concocts, for Henry's benefit, a preview and an invitation to the marriage he seeks to bring about."22 By showing Henry how his niece's docility can be erotically deployed, Sir Thomas converts his theater into a peep show, and stages Fanny as a sexual spectacle. Once again, performativity signals an unsavory and uneconomical circulation of female value into potentially wasteful hands -- after Henry's adulterous elopement.

22 . Litvak, 22.
with Maria Rushworth, Mary Crawford will regret that her brother has "thrown away . . . such a woman as he will never see again" (415).

Ignorant of his daughters' past flirtations with Henry Crawford, however, Sir Thomas thinks that it is Fanny who needs to learn an economic lesson after she refuses to accept his marriage proposals. He decides to send her on an extended visit to Portsmouth:

It was a medicinal project upon his niece's understanding, which he must at present consider diseased. A residence of eight or nine years in the abode of wealth and plenty had a little disordered her powers of comparing and judging. Her Father's house would, in all probability, teach her the value of a good income; and he trusted that she would be the wiser and happier woman all her life, for the experiment he had devised. (335)

In other words, Fanny must take her medicine at Portsmouth in order to properly value the financial investment that her potential marriage to Henry represents. Indeed, her visit to her father's house teaches her important lessons about supply and demand, and she successfully intervenes in a longstanding domestic squabble between her two sisters over the ownership of a silver knife by purchasing a second knife. Furthermore, Fanny joins a lending library during her stay in Portsmouth: "She became a subscriber -- amazed at being anything in propia persona, amazed at her own doings in every way; to be a renter, a chooser of books!" (363). By making her feel like a participant in the enterprises of capitalism rather than an object of exchange, Fanny's small-scale consumer powers belie the way that she herself is being consumed by her uncle's economic project,
"starved, both body and mind, into a much juster value for Mr. Crawford's good company and good fortune" (376).

Thematically, however, Sir Thomas's "experiment" realigns more than Fanny's economic appreciations, as her movement from Mansfield to Portsmouth reflects a broader cultural displacement -- the ideological deflection of incest from the culturally sanctioned realm of the middle-class family to the expected place of family contamination: the lower classes. Although concern about incest increased throughout the nineteenth century, the primary locus of anxiety was the working-class family. Middle-class philanthropists and social reformers uniformly blamed incestuous behavior upon overcrowded homes, and upon the accidental circumstance of mixed-sex sleeping arrangements. Accordingly, when Fanny re-enters the home of her biological parents and is immediately stunned by the way that "[t]he smallness of the house, and thinness of the walls, brought everything so close to her" (347-8), she is describing the Price household as a culturally recognized place of sexual danger. As opposed to the "propriety, regularity, harmony," of Mansfield Park, Portsmouth is "the abode of noise, disorder, and impropriety. Nobody was in their right place, nothing was done as it ought" (354). Sir Thomas's skill at "keeping everybody in their right place" (145) now appears as an unironic measure of prevention, rather than an insidious form of hierarchism, and his rigid but genteel treatment of his niece can only seem preferable to the way Fanny's drunken father "scarcely ever noticed her, but to make her the object of a coarse

joke" (354). In altering his niece's "understanding," Sir Thomas alters narrative understanding as well, and Mansfield Park is steadily cleansed of the family irregularities and sexual idiosyncrasies that are instead projected upon Fanny's "Father's house."

Just as Portsmouth absorbs the stigma of improper sexual circulation, it also takes on the dangers associated with female waste and spoilage. Brought up in the midst of "half-cleaned plates, and not half-cleaned forks and knives" (376), the Price girls have been left at their own disposal in more immediately apparent ways than the Bertram sisters, and we learn for the first time that one daughter is already dead, and that Betsey, the youngest, is a "spoilt child" (356). However, Mrs. Price has taken a page out of Aunt Norris's book, and considers the death of little Mary in the light of savings. "Well, she was taken away from evil to come" (352), moralizes Mrs. Price, echoing what Fanny will remember as her aunt's domestic "cant": "Three or four Prices might have been swept away," and Aunt Norris would have considered it "a very happy thing, and a great blessing to their poor dear sister Price to have then so well provided for" (390). With death characterized as the best "provision" for the Price children, Fanny's eagerness to return to Mansfield Park is alloyed by the "material drawback in leaving middle sister Susan behind. That a girl capable of being made, every thing good, should be left in such hands, distressed her more and more" (382). Ironically, when Portsmouth becomes the place of female waste, Mansfield Park becomes the site of potential savings: the place where nieces are spared, cultivated, and made into "every thing good."
Yet Mansfield Park insists upon another series of deflections and relocations before the avuncular space can be freely celebrated as a site of female savings and improvement. Even though the father's house has been converted into a place of contamination and excess, the more threatening aspects of female spoilage must be projected upon an avuncular domicile unvisited by the events of the narrative: the home of Henry and Mary's uncle, Admiral Crawford. Like Fanny, the Crawfords have been raised by an aunt and uncle, and all of their adult sins and moral failures are blamed on the way they have been "spoiled" by the Admiral's "lessons" (38). Mary's move to Mansfield Parsonage after the death of her aunt is in fact motivated by her uncle's increasingly public licentiousness; as we are told, "Admiral Crawford was a man of vicious conduct, who chose, instead of retaining his niece, to bring his mistress under his own roof" (36). Although nieces and governesses have had a history of assimilation at Mansfield Park, it is far more insidious that Uncle Crawford finds a degree of equivalence between nieces and mistresses. Furthermore, Mary's unseemly pun on admirals and anal sex suggests, despite her disclaimer, that her avuncular lessons have not even contained themselves to heterosexuality: "Certainly, my home at my uncle's brought me acquainted with a circle of admirals. Of Rears, and Vices, I saw enough. Now, do not be suspecting me of a pun, I entreat" (54). In light of Uncle Crawford's apparently bisexual misconduct, Sir Thomas's crimes against his niece lose resonance, and Mary replaces Fanny in the novel's metanarrative of avuncular abuse.
Although Mary Crawford feels that her brother has thrown Fanny away, it is not Fanny who is finally marked as refuse after the Bertram family's disastrous clash with exogamy. In order for Fanny to represent savings, another woman must be rescripted as excess, recast as the dangerous interloper who threatens the sanctity of the family with incest. Accordingly, when the news of Henry and Maria's adultery reaches Portsmouth, Fanny is quick to rewrite the crime in a different sexual idiom:

The event was so shocking, that there were moments even when her heart revolted from it as impossible -- when she thought it could not be. A woman married only six months ago, a man professing himself devoted, even engaged, to another -- that other her near relation -- the whole family, both families connected as they were by tie upon tie, all friends, all intimate together! -- it was too horrible a confusion of guilt, too gross a complication of evil, for human nature, not in a state of utter barbarism, to be capable of! -- yet her judgment told her it was so. (402)

If the construction of Portsmouth as incestuous has allowed for the deflection of sexual impropriety from Mansfield Park, the construction of adultery as incest -- "too gross a complication of evil, for human nature to be capable of" -- will permit endogamy to pass for normative heterosexuality when Fanny finally marries Edmund. The incest potential that has always been in the Bertram family is ultimately naturalized by this conversion of adultery into a "family-misery which must envelope all" (403, emphasis added).
Despite the way that incest is steadily transvalued in the course of the novel, it is important to remember that endogamy is a form of family aggrandizement Sir Thomas has always valued. After his disappointment in Rushworth as a future son-in-law, he comforted himself with the thought that "a well-disposed young woman who did not marry for love, was in general but the more attached to her own family" (181). Sir Thomas, in other words, realizes that the ability to exchange Maria while simultaneously reincorporating her within the family would be the most advantageous form of domestic economy after all. It is this economic plan that he finally adopts with Fanny, and her marriage to Edmund is simply the touchstone of a larger family incorporation. While Fanny replaces Maria as the emblem of family value, Maria takes Fanny's place as a form of waste that requires management; it is fitting that Aunt Norris is sent to be perpetual governess to this commodity that will never re-enter an economy of exchange. Mary Crawford, as well, is cast aside by Edmund's definitive evaluation, "Spoilt, spoilt!" Faring slightly better in the text's economy of waste, Julia's copycat elopement with Mr. Yates is finally made the most of by Sir Thomas, who is happy to discover Yates's "estate rather more, and his debts much less, than he had feared" (421).

While daughter-centered readings of *Mansfield Park* enable us to speculate on an intensely affective model of the rising nineteenth-century family, they have limited the text's provocative discourse of family interaction to the naturalized space of the cellular unit. To accept Cohen's assertion that "the closing vision of the Bertram family is what the nuclear
family aspires to be,"24 is to elide the fact that the revised family at Mansfield is an economic unit connected not by biology or affect, but by a collective sense of debt and repayment. When Fanny and Edmund settle at the parsonage, well "within the view and patronage of Mansfield Park" (432), Susan Price, Fanny's younger sister, replaces Fanny as "the stationary niece" (431) to be improved in Sir Thomas's home. More importantly, Sir Thomas's congratulates himself on the patronage he has extended to his nieces and nephews, and sees "repeated and for ever repeated reason to rejoice in what he had done for them all" (431-32). By "doing credit to his countenance and his aid" (431), his nieces and nephews extend the perimeters of his avuncular authority, and by collectively "assisting to advance each other" (431), the Bertrams and Prices have become an economic network closely resembling what Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall have termed a middle-class familial "labour pool."25 Fanny's brother William has even extended Sir Thomas's influence into an occupational realm that aristocratic "interest" had been previously unable to reach: the British Navy. And if a nephew increases avuncular power in the public world of money and business, a niece proves to be the necessary appendage to private family interaction, the perennial figure of comfort and stability, the prerequisite of middle-class domestic life.

Austen's critics have too often been complicit in Sir Thomas's revisionist finale, and have allowed the affective power of nuclear family terminology to obscure the more radical redistribution of female value that is at stake in Mansfield Park. Fanny Price is ultimately more economical

than a daughter because she is the compromise of exogamy and incest, the
sexual commodity that can be either exchanged outside of the family, or
"made the most of" within the family. And if endogamy is the prescribed
manner of heterosexual coupling in *Mansfield Park*, it also represents the
most economical way to reproduce. The fact that Fanny and Edmund's
"acquisition of Mansfield living . . . occurred just after they had been
married long enough to begin to want an increase of income" (432),
implies that the reproduction of family is coterminous with economic
expansion. Rather than linking the rise of industrial capitalism with the
rise of the affective nuclear unit, *Mansfield Park* ultimately puts forth a
model of family development that sees the transformation and reinvestment
of the extended family as a primary source of middle-class empowerment.
CHAPTER TWO

"Reproduction and Malthusian Economics:  
Fat, Fertility, and Family Planning in Adam Bede"

Most critics have tended to read the sexual, social, and moral teleology of George Eliot's Adam Bede against the perpetual juxtaposition of Hetty Sorrel and Dinah Morris, the principal female protagonists. As exemplified by the foundational work of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, the ideological program of Adam Bede is saliently "dedicated to dramatizing the discrepancy between the antithetical faces of Eve," by providing "subversive evidence that the fallen murderess is inalterably linked to the angelic Madonna."¹ Moreover, any uncomfortable similarities between Hetty and Dinah are summarily neutralized when the murderess is banished and the Madonna becomes the cynosure of a newly-emerging nuclear family, a family framed, significantly, by the historical backdrop of Adam Bede -- the dawn of industrial capitalism. In this way, Eliot's manipulation of female sameness and difference is not limited to seemingly transhistorical categories of "fallenness" and "purity": if Dinah's "purity" becomes a signifier of a particularly middle-class brand of domesticity, the idiom of female difference in Adam Bede is fundamentally economic. It is also the case that differences between and among women in Adam Bede are not always played out by the overdetermined pairing of

Hetty and Dinah. Within the boundaries of the working-class Poyser family, for example, female difference is an inevitable result of the economic shape of the household, a shape casually exposed by the Poyser's utilitarian motives for adopting their orphaned niece Hetty, and their sanguine views about her potential marriage to Adam Bede:

though she and her husband might have viewed the subject
differently if Hetty had been a daughter of their own, it was clear
that they would have welcomed the match with Adam for a penniless
niece. For what could Hetty have been but a servant elsewhere, if
her uncle had not taken her in and brought her up as a domestic help
to her aunt, whose health since the birth of Totty had not been equal
to more positive labour than the superintendence of servants and
children?²

With this unidealized outline of the social heterogeneity of the Poyser household, the narrator reveals the affective space of the family to be organized around an unarticulated principle of difference between nieces and daughters -- a facet of Poyser family life that is easily obscured by the more evident comparisons fostered between Hetty and Dinah. The Poyser's consciousness that Hetty could only have been a "servant elsewhere" lends her position within the family a distinct liminality: as a "penniless niece," Hetty's family title is also her economic title, and if she is not exactly a servant at Hall Farm, the Poyser's home, she is still a "domestic help to her Aunt" rather than one of the children.

². George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (New York: Penguin, 1985), 143. All further references to this edition will be made within the text.
In *Adam Bede* the depiction of the extended family under industrial capitalism is intensified by both the historical period it spans -- the transition between the eighteenth and the nineteenth century -- and by the way this narrative of extended family development is mapped out against a working-class crisis of economic individualism that ostensibly forced a fledgling middle class into existence. By focussing here on the figure of the niece, and specifically on the way that this figure is located at the fringes of the traditional affective family, I argue that Hetty Sorrel's illegitimate and invisible pregnancy becomes an emblem of both economic and familial crisis in *Adam Bede*: an emblem that registers thematically and metaphorically as a failure of ownership. The text's preoccupation with female "fat" provides the linchpin between economic concerns and familial tropes, as the bloated, distended, fat female body perpetually insists upon comparisons between nieces and daughters, economic production and female sexual appetite, conspicuous consumption and maternity. The rhetoric of fat is also central to the final sections of my essay, as I suggest that a distinctly Malthusian understanding of population, production, and labor interpolates *Adam Bede*, filtering the text's economic discourse through a mathematical (and misogynous) understanding of sex and marriage, and repeated images of fertility that are finally, inevitably barren.³

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3. By "Malthusian" I refer to economic theories put forth by Thomas Malthus's "principles of population," rather than to any debates surrounding contraception or abortion that Malthus's work has spawned. In this paper I have chosen to use Malthus's first *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) as a theoretical touchstone rather than any of the revised editions primarily because *Adam Bede*, although first published in 1859, attempts to account for economic and social changes occurring at the turn of the century -- more specifically, between 1799 and 1807. Rather than asserting that Malthus is the definitive
I. Family Economies

Of course, in privileging what may be called an avuncular model over a paternal paradigm, and in telling a story of nieces rather than a story of daughters, Eliot's novel disrupts an idiom that Catherine Gallagher has identified as nearly ubiquitous to novels of industrial development: the rhetorical program of social paternalism, and the "tropes of reconciliation" between parent and child that provide the closing tableaux for novels ranging from Gaskell's *Mary Barton* to Disraeli's *Sybil*. Arthur Helps's *The Claims of Labour* was probably the most influential doctrine of paternalist philosophy written in the 1840s, and its thesis that "the parental relation will be found the best model on which to form the duties of the employer to the employed" found a receptive audience among social philanthropists, novelists, and a segment of society that J. S. Mill snidely identified as "the more favored classes." In Mill's opinion, the affective metaphor of paternity obscured the fact that any relationship between employer and employed cannot exist without "a countervailing element, absolute power, or something approaching to it, in those who are bound to

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afford this support, over those entitled to receive it".\textsuperscript{6} Furthermore, Mill pointed out that it would be ultimately impossible for modern industrial society to disguise its economic objectives, and fend off a revolution of the class system with the antiquated "claims of labour": "The age that produces railroads . . . is not an age in which a man can feel loyal and dutiful to another because he has been born on his estate."\textsuperscript{7}

In \textit{Adam Bede} class rivalry between owners and workers is neatly rescripted as sexual rivalry between Arthur Donnithorne and Adam, with Hetty Sorrel serving as the index and icon of both brands of exploitation. Rather than reifying the social paternalist project with a hyper-affective tableau of "reconciliation," Eliot brings Arthur and Adam to blows over Hetty in order to diminish the class difference that informs their connection: Adam's patience and subservience only give way because he has decided that "in this thing we're man and man" (354) rather than owner and worker. While Margaret Homans has pointed out that Adam's egalitarian epiphany privileges "shared gender" over "class difference," it is crucial to recognize that gender sameness is only allowed to transcend class rivalry when both Arthur and Adam share a desire for Hetty Sorrel.\textsuperscript{8} If the alienation of capital is an intangible, vague concept for Adam and the other precapitalist inhabitants of Hayslope, the alienation of women is the condition under which economic power is visible and recognizable: the site at which the paternalist metaphor begins to erode. Deliberately confusing the linearity of the paternal bond through such devices as the "coming-of-

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Mill, "The Claims of Labour," 374.
\item Ibid., 379.
\item Margaret Homans, "Dinah's Blush, Maggie's Arm: Class, Gender, and Sexuality in George Eliot's Early Novels," \textit{Victorian Studies} 36 (Winter 1993): 161.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
age" party for the young Squire, and Arthur's memories of learning carpentry--the Bede family trade--from working-class Adam, Eliot drives home the fact that paternalism is an inadequate recipe for making sense of social and economic inequities.

Furthermore, by perpetually denying an affective parent-child relationship thematic centrality in Adam Bede, and by rescripting the normatively affective space of the family as an economic network regulated by the principles of production and consumption, Eliot problematizes the paternalist notion that bonds of sympathy and understanding should "naturally" transcend both the economic rivalry between classes, and the material conditions of family life. As we will see, tensions between production and consumption, supply and demand, will infect even the expected sanctity of the mother-child bond, in that Hetty's act of infanticide is pointedly described as an assertion of economic autonomy: a choice to nourish her own body at the expense of her child's. Likewise, Adam's perpetual struggle to make up for the loss of income caused by his father's slack work habits and alcoholism makes it impossible for him achieve economic independence or even marry until Thias Bede accidentally drowns on his way home from the pub.

Although Adam's problems with his father are conveniently swept away in the early pages of the novel, it is repeatedly made clear that even the most affective sites of family interaction in Adam Bede are rhetorically marked by more material claims of paternity. For example, Adam's adult dealings with his father are painfully contrasted with his happier memories of a vibrant, productive man, and by the way his childhood identity was
entirely constituted by being known as "Thias Bede's lad" (92). Given the fact that other families in the Hayslope community are attracted to similar modes of identification, and that two female cousins who share the name of Bess are distinguished from each other by the names of their respective fathers (either "Chad's Bess" or "Timothy's Bess"), it is quite evident that this language of ownership translates the law of the father into a linguistic dominion, one that confers identity as it simultaneously circumscribes individuality. These patronymic chains even extend to Timothy's grandson, who goes by the "notorious" name of "Timothy's Bess's Ben" (65). Such paternal "narcissicism," as explained by Luce Irigaray, is the benchmark of patriarchal authority: "Commodities [that] share in the cult of the father, . . . never stop striving to resemble, to copy, the one who is his representative."9

Yet it is also the case that the idiom of ownership in the working-class community of Adam Bede is perpetually deflected from the commercial sphere where possession is impossible, to discursive signs of paternity. Even the more gentile domestic interiors of Adam Bede, spaces that are far removed from working-class occupations and concerns, assert the claims of paternity through a discourse of commodification and possession. The "handsome, generous-blooded clergyman, the Rev. Adolphous Irwine" (111), is introduced under the unfortunate status of perpetual bachelor: a man who would have lived a very different sort of life if he had not the heavy financial responsibility of a widowed mother and two spinster sisters, and "would have had tall sons and blooming

9. Irigaray, This Sex Which is Not One, 178.
daughters—such possessions, in short, as men commonly think will repay them for all the labour they take under the sun" (111). With sons and daughters figured as units of value that reward both paternal "labour" and the failure to possess within the commercial sphere, the previously addressed distinction between daughters and nieces will begin to take shape over the discourse of commodification. Avuncular patronage is radically different from paternal possession in Adam Bede, and measures female value by the principles of utility rather than the compensatory pride of ownership, or to use Irigaray's term, "accumulation." This double standard resembles what Irigaray has recognized as a "schism" in the women-as-commodities system that is the bedrock of capitalist patriarchy, a system that determines wealth on the basis of accumulation rather than use-value:

Women-as-commodities are thus subject to a schism that divides them into the categories of usefulness and exchange value; into matter-body and an envelope that is precious but impenetrable, ungraspable, and not susceptible to appropriation by women themselves; into private use and social use.10

While "private use" implies both the hidden domestic labor of women and their ability to reproduce, and social use denotes exchange value, Irigaray attributes both brands of female utility to the symbolic system represented by the name of the father.11 The smooth operation of this social order depends upon women's transition from usefulness to exchange, a "passage that never takes place simply" in Irigaray's opinion.12

10. Ibid., 176.
11. Ibid., 173.
12. Ibid., 185.
In the case of *Adam Bede*, the circulation of women is threatened by the fact that nieces are not authorized by the name of the father—not appropriated by the idiom of paternal possession—and cannot be seamlessly accumulated for circulation within the social order. While it is evident that the set of cousins who share the same name are meant to mirror a more central pair of female cousins (the modest maternity of one "Bess" significantly contrasted with the easy virtue, gaudy dress and large earrings of the other), it is also clear that the name of the father is the immediate factor separating Dinah and Hetty from their counterparts. While we know very little about Dinah's parentage, we do learn that Hetty's father, "that good-for-naught" Sorrel, married Hetty's mother against the wishes of her family, the Poyser clan, and soon brought his own household to financial ruin (383). Hetty's paternal heritage is a history of economic distress, of failed accumulation, and her body itself is tainted by the fact that she has "Sorrel's blood in her veins" (383). Given that Hetty's body circulates the faulty authority of the father, it seems inevitable that it should eventually become -- as it does -- both an icon of paternal failures and an index of paternalistic exploitations. Uncle Poyser's attempt to use his niece and accumulate her too -- to retain the utility of Hetty's private labor while placing her within the social economy of exchange -- will fail because Hetty's "labor" is, in fact, like his own: always already possessed by the Donnithornes.

Just as Hetty's paternal heritage is economic failure, her maternal heritage is a form of bodily crisis associated with *reproductive* failure. Old Mr. Poyser complains that Hetty's mother married "a feller wi' on'y
two head o' stock when there should ha' been ten on's farm," and died "o' th' inflammation afore she war thirty" (383). As I will be taking up the issue of Malthusian economics later in the essay, it is important to note here that the undoing of the Sorrels is blamed not only on a failure to economize, but on a disregard of arithmetic: a failure to recognize the material difference between two and ten. Yet as the subject will soon turn toward the place of reproduction within a labor theory of value, I want to point out that the effects of the Sorrels' economic crisis descend to Hetty paternally through a diseased circulatory system, and maternally through "inflammation." The mysterious "inflammation" which killed Hetty's mother is the same illness that now inhibits Mrs. Poyser's ability to labor (120), and although the precise nature of the disease is vague, Mr. Poyser localizes his wife's discomfort by referring to the habitual "pain in thy side" (192). In this way, "inflammation" is coded as a trauma to the reproductive capacity of the female body: a malignant swelling that displaces other, procreative outgrowths. This illness not only links Mrs. Poyser's nonproductive body with her deceased sister-in-law's, it identifies "inflammation" as part of Hetty's maternal heritage. Hetty's circulation may be tainted by her father's bad blood, but as old Mr. Poyser ominously notes, she also "takes artuer her mother" (383).

II. Farming Economies

The way that Hetty's problematic body becomes a resonant metaphor for the circulatory difficulties endemic to the Poyser's tenure on the
bountiful Hall Farm can be clarified by an interrogation of the socioeconomic status of tenant farmers in the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth-century. F. M. L. Thompson’s analysis of landownership and economic growth in eighteenth-century England, for example, identifies most turn-of-the-century tenant farmers as "middling consumers—exactly on a par in income terms with the lesser clergy and dissenting ministers, slightly more affluent than innkeepers, slightly less well off than naval and military officers, or shopkeepers." This carefully qualified economic scale allows Thompson to suggest that "without committing ourselves to the view that the farmers did form one-third of the middle class, we may still hold that very many farmers were indeed in that social and economic category." As tentative as Thompson’s definition of "middle class" may seem, it does seem to reflect certain aspects of Adam Bede’s pre-industrial world. While the class system in Hayslope is flexible enough to dispense with any "rigid demarcation of rank between the farmer and the respectable artisan" (142), Mr. Poyser’s "latent sense of capital and of weight in parish affairs" (142) is associated with a newly developing but still dormant middle-class identity; a feeling of self-importance conferred by economic accumulation that effectively separates penniless nieces from portioned daughters within the boundaries of his own family.

Yet while the socioeconomic position of farmers such as Mr Poyser may be loosely termed middle class, it is important to recognize that "there was no statutory control of the relations between tenant and landlord" until

the Agricultural Holdings Act was passed in 1875.\textsuperscript{15} Throughout the eighteenth and for most of the nineteenth century, therefore, relations between landowner and tenant were governed by a vague set of customary laws that presumed landlords would be motivated by a paternalistic sense of social duty in all dealings with their tenantry. According to J. V. Beckett, by 1750, a rough division already existed whereby the owner undertook to provide fixed capital, and the tenant the working capital . . . the landlord's capital consisted of the land, the farm buildings, fences, hedges, gates, access roads, drainage works and river and sea defences, all of which required an annual outlay on the maintenance.\textsuperscript{16}

An 1880 pamphlet directed "To the Tenant Farmers of Great Britain" thus describes the "ideal" landlord/tenant relationship as depending entirely upon the landlord's good will:

> The ideal of the English system of large proprietors and of tenants hiring the land they farm instead of owning it, is where the landlord, being a capitalist, is able to relieve the tenant of all expenditure of a permanent character, and to leave him the full employment of his capital in his trade of farming, in stocking and cultivating the land . . . if these functions are performed by the landlord; if he has the capital and does what is recognized as a duty, nothing can be better from an economic point of view than the . . . relationship of

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\textsuperscript{15} Christabel S. Orwin and Edith W. Whetham, \textit{History of British Agriculture} (Devon: David and Charles, 1971), 153.

Understandably, by the time Eliot published *Adam Bede* in 1859, the question of "tenant right" had a long and contentious history, and the difference between an improving and unimproving landowner was tantamount to a farmer's economic prosperity. Despite some middle-class pretensions, tenant farmers had little ready capital at any given time to enact their own improvements, and as nineteenth-century agriculturist James Caird explained, "unlike that of the landowners, much of it is in daily use, circulating among tradesmen and labourers." As we know from Mrs Poyser, Squire Donnithorne is no improver, and his tenant's requests for repairs and innovations have been perpetually ignored: "my husband's been asking and asking till he's tired, and to think o' what he's done for the farm, and he's never had a penny allowed him, be the times bad or good" (126). Not only has the Squire denied the Poysers their customary tenant rights, he has forced Mr Poyser to put his relatively scarce capital into the enrichment of land that he doesn't actually own, without any legal right to compensation for the long-term improvements he may effect.

Tenant's compensation was at the crux of nineteenth-century agricultural controversy, especially in cases where short-term leases were insisted upon by landlords. In his 1850-51 analysis of English farming systems, Caird observed that since "the investment of a tenant's capital in land seldom contemplates an immediate return . . . an improving tenant has no legal security for the capital he invests in the cultivation of another's
Similarly, in 1848 tenant-farmer Charles Higby Lattimore claimed he had been evicted from his farm because he voted against his landlord's interests in a local election, and consequently appealed to the law for compensation for the "unexhausted" improvements he had effected at the coincidentally-named Bride Hall Farm. Lattimore writes:

... with extreme reluctance, but animated by the conviction of public duty to my brother farmers, I was compelled to test the law in order to ascertain (what I had ever doubted) whether there is any legal recognition of the floating capital of a tenant-farmer sunk in the soil, or expended upon the premises of another person ... the result proved to be that an agreement--good in law, if applied to commercial or trading matters--was not available to a tenant-farmer against a landlord ... no such phrase legally exists as tenant-farmer's capital. 20

Under Caird and Lattimore's analysis of "Tenant Right," the ambiguous "latency" of Martin Poyser's capital takes on a very tangible nineteenth-century commercial significance. Without any legally recognized capital, Mr Poyser isn't really a capitalist, and his apparent wealth in property is as illusory as his blooming abundance of nieces. Although the Poysers have cultivated the Hall Farm for generations, it seems that they renew their lease with Squire Donnithorne every three years (393): a period of time too short for a tenant to reap the benefits of long-term improvements, especially in light of the perpetual threat that the Squire will choose to

too short for a tenant to reap the benefits of long-term improvements, especially in light of the perpetual threat that the Squire will choose to terminate their occupancy. Moreover, as Mrs Poyser will declare when Squire Donnithorne actually does menace them with imminent eviction,

I should like to see if there's another tenant besides Poyser as 'ud put up wi'never having a bit o' repairs done till a place tumbles down--and not then, on'y wi' begging and praying and having to pay half--and being strung upwi' the rent as it's much if he gets enough out of the land to pay, for all he's put his own money into the ground beforehand. (394)

If the Poyser's capital is figuratively latent because it is unrecognized by law, it is also literally latent because it is always either buried in the soil, or perpetually circulating in the form of seed money, stock, and laborer's wages.

Interestingly, Mrs. Poyser's understanding of farming is actually more canny than her husband's, and reveals the false prosperity and hand-to-mouth nature of tenantry: "As fur farming, it's putting money into your pocket wi' your right hand and fetching it out wi' your left. As fur as I can see, it's raising victuals for other folks, and just getting a mouthful for yourself and your children as you go along" (125). While Lattimore's plea for legal compensation aligned him with his "brother" tenant farmers over his paternalist landlord, Mrs Poyser's economic perspective on tenantry is articulated in the familial idiom of parents and children. Tenant farming, in Mrs Poyser's representation, is a process by which parents are

21. As Caird notes, "the great proportion of English farms are held on yearly tenure which may be terminated at any time by a six months notice." English Agriculture, 503.
writers throughout the nineteenth century similarly viewed the controversy over tenant right as a social conflict between the "real" family and the metaphorical family: a choice between a paternalist's duty to his workers and a father's responsibility to his children. I. S. Leadam, for example, insisted that the English custom of primogeniture prevented any landowner from being as financially supportive of his tenantry as he might have been under different circumstances:

... the landlords of this country cannot provide the needful capital because they are not the real owners, they enjoy a life-interest on the estate which with or without their will, goes upon their death to their eldest sons. The less capital, therefore, that they expend upon the land the more they have for their younger children, who are also provided for by charges out of the estate.²²

Likewise, Caird insists that the customary rights accorded to tenants will not protect a farmer from the fact that an eldest "son does not always inherit the virtues of his father."²³ A breakdown in the affective connection between a landowning father and son, in other words, could produce subsequent breakdowns in the affective philosophy of social paternalism. On the tenant side of the family spectrum, moreover, a farmer who failed to stand up for tenant right was a bad father, who allowed the economic future of his own children to be sacrificed for the prosperity of his landlord's heirs. Lattimore, for example, hopes that the moral of own his story will direct tenant farmers to consider

the insecure position in which they must leave their children under

²². I. S. Leadam, "To the Tenant-Farmers of Great Britain," 5.
²³. Caird, English Agriculture, 505.
the present law,—a circumstance of peculiar interest to every good
man at the close of his life. I can never forget that my father assured
me upon his deathbed, in 1834, the last time I ever conversed with
him, that the only earthly anxiety he felt at that time was his regret
for my exposure to the possible consequences of my occupation of
this farm, under the thralls of the owner and his agents.24

According to mid-century agriculturists, the economic tensions between the
"real" family and the social family finally could not be elided by the
affective rhetoric of paternalism: in a world mediated by supply and
demand rather than by custom or tradition, "the relation is and must
become one of business, and not merely of mutual confidence."25

Mrs. Poyser is certainly able to detect the incompatible economic
claims of the literal family and the social family, and she recognizes that
tenantry puts too much Poyser labor into circulation outside of the family,
feeding bodies other than Poyser bodies, and nourishing children other
than Poyser children. Unfortunately, however, she cannot notice her
niece's body as the weakest link in the family cycle of labor and
nourishment, the site at which Poyser "victuals" are most egregiously
appropriated to nourish non-Poyser bodies. The question of who is
producing and who is consuming is central to an economic understanding
of the working-class household, as Wally Seccombe's recently published A
Millenium of Family Change makes clear. By viewing maternity as a
form of economic production (as the literal reproduction of labor power),
Seccombe is able to envision the household not as an affective space but as a

25. Caird, The Landed Interest, 149.
tenuously balanced network of producers and consumers: adults capable of productive labor, and members such as children and aged people unable to contribute to their own subsistence. 26 Seccombe explains:

The lifespan pattern of productive capacity is roughly in symmetry with the maturation of procreative capacity as well. The middle generation commands both elements of labour-power, while children and the aged are incapable of sustaining either of the two basic conditions of life. It is therefore necessary for every class of adult producers to generate continuously a "subsistence surplus" (in addition to any surplus which may be extracted from non-productive classes) in order to reproduce itself from one generation to the next. 27

In this Malthusian understanding of the history of family development, the "middle generation" of productive adults is the linchpin of economic stability in the working-class household, and must be periodically stabilized either through the limitation of births or the inclusion of extra adult members to bridge the gap between familial consumption and production. For Seccombe, this horizontal expansion of the working-class family is indicative of new and powerful ideologies of work, production, and especially, of reproduction.

26. Wally Seccombe, A Millenium of Family Change: Feudalism to Capitalism in Northwestern Europe (New York: Verso, 1992), 21. Although Seccombe is specifically interested in working-class families, it is important to recognize that the Poyser household is working-class to the extent that every able adult member of the household labors on the farm or in the dairy. I am arguing here that the very "latency" of tenant-farmer's capital kept farmers who rented their land (like Mr Poyser) on the socioeconomic cusp of middle-class existence until much later in the nineteenth-century, when tenant's right was finally codified.
27. Ibid., 21.
In the context of *Adam Bede*, of course, it is this last term that is the most provocative, as Hetty Sorrel's illegitimate pregnancy is arguably the focus of the novel. Yet even before Hetty's seduction, the production of children as a form of economic production is suggested by the figure of Mrs. Poyser, whose last experience of childbirth, as we remember from the opening quotation, has rendered her permanently unfit for "more positive labour." Registering in both the idiom of domestic work and childbirth, Mrs. Poyser's inability to "labour" must be compensated by the addition of what Seccombe terms "middle-generation" family members: productive bodies to make up for the "subsistence goods" Mrs. Poyser is now unable to supply, as well as for the absence of future sons and daughters that she will never possess. This ratio of consumers to producers in the Poyser family is repeatedly thematized by the parodies of labor enacted by Mr. Poyser's elderly father: for example, his "job" of holding the farmyard gate open for his family as they set off for church, "pleased to do his bit of work; for, like all old men whose life has been spent in labour, he liked to feel that he was still useful" (233).

At the other end of the generational spectrum are the mischievous and sometimes destructive antics of the Poysers' young children, especially three year-old Totty. In her more quiet moments, Totty parodies the domestic labor of the busy household by "arduously clutching the handle of a miniature iron with her tiny fat fist" (120) and demanding that her harried mother participate in the farce by warming the toy in the fire. Yet Totty's playful mimicry soon erodes the positive effects of her mother's labor, as she takes advantage of "her momentary leisure, to put her fingers
into a bowl of starch, and drag it down, so as to empty the contents with tolerable completeness on to the ironing sheet" (120). In light of Totty's unhelpful participation in the rites of domestic work, it is clear that adult nieces are actually more economical family additions than daughters. Dinah and Hetty, with their contributions of real work, are necessary components of productivity at Hall Farm; this is especially true of Hetty, who resides with the Poyzers on a full-time basis and is solely responsible for the making of butter in Mrs. Poyser's large and well-respected dairy. Nevertheless, the Poyser's narcissistic investment in their own daughter "blurs the seriousness of utility," making labor less valuable than exchange, and nieces less valuable than daughters.28 Under a capitalist regime, in other words, "wealth amounts to a subordination of the use of things to their accumulation" (174). Uneconomical accumulation, furthermore, is like "inflammation," and will register directly upon Hetty's body.

III. Bodily Economies

Although I earlier introduced the problem of economic autonomy as an important factor in the social organization of the family, it is also clear that the economic awkwardness of tenantry within Adam Bede -- a text that negotiates identity through the trope of possession -- is first encountered as a bodily awkwardness. In the opening paragraphs of the second chapter the reader is confronted with the oddly bifurcated body of Mr. Casson, caretaker of the Donnithorne Arms Inn:

28. Irigaray, This Sex Which is Not One, 177.
On a front view it appeared to consist principally of two spheres, bearing about the same relation to each other as the earth and the moon: that is to say, the lower sphere might be said, at a rough guess, to be about thirteen times larger than the upper, which naturally performed the function of a mere satellite and tributary. But here the resemblance ceased, for Mr. Casson's head was not at all a melancholy-looking satellite, nor was it a 'spotty globe,' as Milton has irreverently called the moon; on the contrary, no head and face could look more sleek and healthy, and its expression . . . was one of jolly contentment, only tempered by that sense of personal dignity which usually made itself felt in his attitude and bearing. This sense of dignity could hardly be considered excessive in a man who had been butler to the family for fifteen years, and who, in his present high position, was necessarily very much in contact with his inferiors. (59)

Mr. Casson is the reader's first perspective on the Hayslope commercial community and on the socioeconomic conditions which divide farmers from artisans and pub owners from the gentry. If Mr. Casson's past occupation as "butler to the family," the Donnithorne family, has given him an air of social superiority, his present occupation as innkeeper to the family now separates him from his customers, places him in a liminal economic position linked to Mr. Poyser's through the idiom of tenancy. As a tenant, Mr. Casson can participate in the enterprise of capitalism, leasing the Donnithorne Arms and the "pretty take" of land attached to it (58). His capital itself, however, is like Mr. Poyser's "latent" capital:
unable to circulate within the larger economy because it is always already possessed by the Donnithornes. The two engorged "spheres" that constitute the innkeeper's physical person are part of the thematic representation of this economic latency, as they suggest an innate failure of the whole to possess its disparate parts. Furthermore, as Eve Sedgwick has recognized in her work on *Our Mutual Friend*, this kind of bodily disruption is a metaphor for economic crisis: "the illusion of economic individualism." 29

Sedgwick's argument implies that the generic bodily icon of struggling bourgeois independence is male, and posits bodily metaphors of digestion and anality as signifiers of the failure to "possess." However, Mr. Casson's disembodied head and swollen gut merely introduce an economy of the body into *Adam Bede* that will eventually be grafted upon its representation of Hetty Sorrel, a reinscription that ultimately suggests that the female body enacts a similar crisis of ownership when it is unable to register the signs of its own pregnancy. The novel's two famous mirror scenes provide a telling map of Hetty's body, both before and after she is pregnant, as her disfigured and disfiguring bedroom mirror is "fixed in an upright position, so that she could get only one good view of her neck and arms" (194). Likewise, the small, hanging mirror she removes from Dinah's room "would show her nothing beneath her little chin, and that beautiful bit of neck where the roundness of her cheek melted into another roundness shadowed by dark delicate curls" (294). Just as neither of Hetty's mirrors will reflect her lower body, neither the Poyser family nor the Hayslope community are able to see Hetty in relation to her

corporeality; like the broken mirror, they are "fixed in an upright position," and refuse to reconcile the much-admired "roundness" of Hetty's head, neck and arms with the other, more disturbing "roundness" of her emerging middle.

Hetty's invisible pregnancy has been widely commented upon by scholars of the Victorian novel: for example, Helena Michie suggests that Hetty's "fleshy" body is unreadable because it belies physiognomy, and is finally unassimilable with her kittenish looks and flower-like delicacy.\(^{30}\) However, it is also the case that Hetty's distended middle belies the economic autonomy of her class status, as her very "fleshiness" is a mark of the economic exploitation that infects the Poyser family's commercial position within the Hayslope community, and especially in relation to the Donnithornes. Other critics have allowed Hetty's extreme egoism and vanity to deflect from the strangeness of the mirror scenes in *Adam Bede*: John Kucich, in fact, describes Hetty as psychically "driven to imagine herself as she wants others to see her."\(^{31}\) Hetty's lack of bodily integrity, however, is not a simple inscription of her vanity, but rather a portrait of an already vague sense of subjectivity unravelling under the mutually reinforcing ideologies of class and gender that began to shape social identity in the late eighteenth century. As noted by Leonore Davidoff,

\[\ldots\] the same forces which produced a world view dividing the society between masculine and feminine, working class and middle (upper) class, urban and rural, also separated physicality, e.g., bodily


functions in general and sexuality in particular, from the public gaze. This is an example of the privatization we have come to associate with the development of industrial capitalism and was part of a changing view of men's and women's positions in the cosmos and of their relation to Nature.\textsuperscript{32}

Although Davidoff's argument has been criticized for suggesting that precapitalist notions of the body were uninformed by any distinction between public and private, it is important to register the way that the social body was organized, naturalized by an image of the literal body: "The adult middle class (or aristocratic) man, representing the governing or ruling group, was seen as the Head . . . The Hands were unthinking, unfeeling "doers" without characteristics of sex, age, or other identity . . . Middle-class women represented the emotions, the Heart, or sometimes the Soul, seat of morality and tenderness."\textsuperscript{33} The unmentionable regions of the body were, of course, rounded out by the social outcasts: prostitutes, criminals and other brands of poor who were finally as unarratable or invisible as those body functions normatively concealed from the "public gaze."

With this social mapping of the body in mind, Hetty's bisected form becomes an assortment of gendered, class-inflected parts organized around the principles of private and public. If her buttermaking links her literal hands with the "doers" of the social body, and her beautiful head and neck function as false barometers of her "Soul," her unrepresentable lower body, with its mysteriously developing roundness, marks her as a social

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 19.
criminal by betraying her sexual capacities. Read along the axis of gender, Hetty's body literalizes the popular Victorian myth of women's lack of conscious sexual desire or bodily curiosity, and serves as a corporeal emblem of the stereotypical female failure to integrate the various uses of the body into an organic whole. If the potential for male exploitation of women's schooled ignorance is not made abundantly clear by Hetty's seduction, it brutally reverberates at the end of the novel when Tommy Poyser "is seen "amusing himself" with his sister's legless doll, "turning Dolly's skirt over her bald head, and exhibiting her truncated body to the general scorn" (522). Read along class lines, however, Hetty's failure to integrate her body links her with Mr. Casson's tenantry, and translates her bodily failure into a problem of ownership: a failure to possess the fruits of labor. Similarly, because Hetty is seduced by Arthur Donnithorne, her sexual exploitation is rewritten as an economic exploitation: just as the baby that no one is willing to "see" is Arthur's illegitimate child, the unacknowledged Donnithorne heir, the bountiful farm that the Poyser's work is owned and controlled by Arthur's grandfather the Squire.

Although the problems with metaphoricizing political economy have been widely discussed, reading Hetty's bodily metamorphoses in terms of commercial oscillation is imperative in light of a specifically Victorian tendency to use the female body as an economic icon. Susan Walsh dubs this gender-specific representation of financial crisis "climacteric economy," explaining that "Women's bodies, as advertisements, medical handbooks, and health manuals made clear, were the human bodies most
agitated by cyclical 'crises.'" 34 Although Walsh's argument primarily focuses on the way that an image of the elderly female body was used textually and pictorially "as a potent analogue for economic as well as reproductive 'bankruptcy,'" she insists that medical discourse surrounding the health and well-being of the female body at any stage of development provided a plethora of metaphors for representing economic instability.35

In nineteenth-century parlance . . . the "obstruction," "constriction," or "depression" of an "ill-regulated circulation" in women meant more than digestive or circulatory arrest: these terms were code words for stopped menses, whether the result of delayed menarche, pregnancy, menopause, or a general overine-uterine "derangement."36

Walsh uses a series of Punch cartoons featuring the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street in order to drive home this point: they uniformly depict an ancient woman with a ballooning bottom-half as a comic metaphor for the Bank of England. If these bifurcated female images remind us immediately of Mr Casson and his engorged lower sphere, they should remind us eventually of Hetty, and of the way Hetty's own "stopped menses" provide a resonant metaphor for the "ill-regulated circulation" of her uncle's tenant-capital.37

35. Ibid., 76.
36. Ibid., 76.
37. Interestingly, the first sign of Squire Dommithorne's contemplated exploitation of Hall Farm occurs at the birthday feast for Arthur, when he appears to be uncharacteristically concerned about Mrs Poyser's health, and proceeds to give her medical advice: "he gave his most elaborate civility to Mrs. Poyser to-night, inquiring particularly about her health, recommending her to strengthen herself with cold water as he did, and avoid all drugs. Mrs Poyser curtsied and thanked him with great self-command, but when he had passed
IV. Fertility, Fatness, and the Family: Malthusian Perspectives

At first glance, Hall Farm seems to be a place of infinite productivity and fertile richness; in fact, many critics have pointed out the edenic nature of this garden where Adam will find first the wrong, and finally the right Eve. Yet closer inspection of the metaphors of plentitude and fecundity reveal the seeds of degeneration and decay: not only was the Hall Farm once the Hall, the place where the local gentry lived, but "one might fancy the house in the early stages of a chancery suit, and that the fruit from the grand double row of walnut trees on the right hand of the enclosure would fall and rot among the grass" (115). Although Hall Farm is filled to capacity with milch cows and hens, and Mrs. Poyser's dairy makes the finest butter and cheese in Hayslope, the once "well-tended kitchen-garden of a manor house" is now littered with "unpruned fruit trees, and kitchen vegetables growing together in careless, half-neglected abundance," flowers that are "large and disorderly for want of trimming," and "a huge apple tree making a barren circle under its low-spreading boughs" (263-64). This ominous "barren circle" seems to plant potential scarcity at the root of economic plentitude, despite the narrator's disarming, disingenuous dismissal: "what signified a barren patch or two? The garden was so large" (264).

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on, she whispered to her husband, 'I'll lay my life he's brewin' some nasty turn against us. Old Harry doesn'a wag his tail for nothin'" (328).

38. For example, see Nancy L. Paxton's chapter on Adam Bede in George Eliot and Herbert Spencer: Feminism, Evolutionism and the Reconstruction of Gender (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 43-68.
Thomas Robert Malthus's *First Essay on Population* was published in 1798, a year before Hetty Sorrel's crisis in family planning is played out against the historical backdrop of *Adam Bede*. Written in the wake of the French Revolution, at a time when the issue of society's "perfectibility" was a central economic and philosophical concern, Malthus's essay dispels the more utopian scenarios of social improvement put forth by such theorists as Condorcet and William Godwin by insisting that certain laws of necessity inevitably regulate the progress of mankind. The most famous of Malthus's "laws" is the one that reflects the codes of production and consumption in *Adam Bede* and explains the inevitable decay that is shrouded within the deceptive richness and ripeness of Hall Farm:

> Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical ratio. Subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio. A slight acquaintance with the numbers will shew the immensity of the first power in comparison with the second.

> By that law of nature which makes food necessary to the life of man, the effects of these two unequal powers must be kept equal.

> This implies a strong and constantly operating check on population from the difficulty of subsistence. This difficulty must fall some where; and must necessarily by severely felt by a large portion of mankind.

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39. Malthus's late eighteenth-century economic views are obviously more apocalyptic than Arthur Helps's mid-Victorian paternalist theory; on the other hand, Mill identifies Malthus's "Essay on Population" as the origin of the social paternalist movement because it represents the first time "the economic condition of the working classes had been regarded as susceptible of permanent improvement" (Mill, "The Claims Of Labour", 366).
Through the animal and vegetable kingdoms, nature has scattered the seeds of life abroad with the most profuse and liberal hand. She has been comparatively sparing in the room, and the nourishment necessary to rear them. The germs of existence contained in this spot of earth, with ample food, and ample room to expand in, would fill millions of worlds in the course of a few thousand years. Necessity, that imperious all-pervading law of nature, restrains them within the prescribed bounds. The race of plants, and the race of animals shrink under this great restrictive law. And the race of man cannot, by any efforts of reason, escape from it. Among plants and animals its effects are waste of seed, sickness and premature death. Among mankind, misery and vice.\footnote{40}

In Malthusian rhetoric, therefore, the barrenness implicit in fertility is an economic and mathematical given, as an economy of plentitude, a period of uninterrupted production and uncircumscribed reproduction, will eventually give way to an economy of scarcity: a time when the production of food cannot keep up with the increase in population.\footnote{41} By associating fertility with social distress instead of prosperity, Malthus's brand of political economy, according to Catherine Gallagher, "occluded the possibility of using the healthy body to signify the healthy society."\footnote{42}

Instead, the healthy reproductive body loses,

\footnote{41. Ibid., 14.}
in the very power of its fecundity, the integrity of its boundaries, and hence comes to be a sign of its opposite. The blooming body is only a body about to divide into two feeblener bodies that are always on the verge of becoming starving bodies. Hence, no state of health can be socially reassuring.  

Within the context of *Adam Bede*, the blooming body that becomes a Malthusian precursor of social decay is of course Hetty Sorrel: the health of her body measures not economic prosperity but the potential enfeeblement of uncontrolled reproduction. But Eliot's economic metaphors also allow us to interpret the *family* body as a index of commercial distress, and to read the hyperbolic prosperity of the Poysers as the harbinger of future atrophy. If the flexibility and amorphousness of the Poyser family, its seemingly benevolent ability to incorporate two orphaned nieces, registers at one time as a sign of affective health, its lack of integrity as a unit will eventually become "a sign of its opposite." While paying lip service to the affective ideologies of the paternal family, the avuncular family mistakes fat for fertility, fertility for prosperity, and economic expediency for family sentiment. Obsessed with one side of the Malthusian drama--the production and consumption of food--the Poysers finally cannot keep up with the mathematical teleology of the population principle.

Food is increasing at such a rate at Hall Farm that it becomes more and more difficult for the Poyser family to monitor its various sites of productivity, and Malthus's image of the "profuse and liberal hand" of

43. Ibid., 85.
nature resurfaces in the way that the corn itself is "ripe enough to be blown out of the husk and scattered as untimely seed" (337). Moreover, the corn is not the only bearer of "untimely seed" in Hayslope, and the empty circle concealed by the apple tree's profusion of leaves, blossoms and fruit is not the only source of potential barreness within the fecundity and verdure of Hall Farm. The narrator reminds us of what exaggerated sites of fertility so often conceal, "an image of great agony--the agony of the cross" (409):

> if there came a traveller to this world who knew nothing of the story of man's life upon it, this image of agony would seem to him strangely out of place in the midst of this joyous nature. He would not know that hidden behind the apple blossoms, or among the golden corn, or under the shrouding boughs of the wood, there might be a human heart beating heavily with anguish: perhaps a young blooming girl, not knowing where to turn for refuge from swift-advancing shame . . . such things are sometimes hidden among the sunny fields and behind the blossoming orchards; and the sound of the gurgling brook, if you came close to one spot behind a small bush, would be mingled for your ear with a despairing human sob. (409-10)

This image of illegitimate reproduction at the mainsprings of economic plenty links the blooming Hetty with the rapid overgrowth at Hall Farm and with the Malthusian laws that circumscribe both brands of production. From the overripe cornfields, to the "half-neglected" kitchen garden, to their niece's unregulated sexuality, the Poyser family, for all its adherence
to the principles of domestic economy, is finally unable to police its own fertility, to control the productivity of its various parts.

On the one hand, it seems uncharacteristic for Mrs. Poyser to be negligent about the state of overripeness on the farm and in her dairy: if she is aware of the exact moment that the currants in the garden need to be picked, she is also perpetually poised to nip her servants' burgeoning sexuality in the bud. All expressions of desire on the part of her housemaid, for example, are immediately translated into sexual desire, as Molly's seemingly innocent request to sit down to her spinning "according to Mrs. Poyser, shrouded a secret indulgence of unbecoming wishes which she now dragged forth and held up to Molly's view with cutting eloquence":

Spinning, indeed! It isn't spinning as you'd be at, I'll be bound, and let you have your own way. I never knew your equal forgallowsness. To think of a gell o' your age wanting to go and sit with half-a-dozen men! . . . That's the way with you--that's the road you'd all like to go, headlong to ruin. You're never easy till you've got some sweetheart as is as big a fool as yourself; and you'll be finely off when you're married, I daresay, and have got a three-legged stool to sit on, and never a blanket to cover you, and a bit o' oatcake for your dinner, as three children are a-snatching at. (118-19)

Yet while Mrs. Poyser vigilantly polices her servants' bodies and their sexuality, she fails to discern that her niece also participates in the sexual economy of Hall Farm and shares the capacity for "labour" with the
housemaid. What is more, Arthur Donnithorne does not constitute a sexual threat that Mrs. Poyser can recognize. To the Poysers, their future landlord signifies the potential for economic improvement rather than exploitation, and while they fiercely guard their farmyard from the "loiterers" and transient laborers who may lead their young female servants astray, Arthur, in the role of benevolent paternalist, is allowed to enter at will.

Ironically, the tenants of Hayslope are not the only people convinced of Arthur Donnithorne's potential largesse as a landlord. Arthur views himself as the antithesis of his grandfather, a potential improver of property who busily studies agricultural writers in preparation for his succession to the estate. In conversation with Reverend Irwine, Arthur eagerly describes his future plans:

I've been reading your friend Arthur Young's books lately, and there's nothing I should like better than to carry out some of his ideas in putting the farmers on a better management of their land; and, as he says, making what was a wild country, all of the same dark hue, bright and variegated with corn and cattle. My grandfather will never let me have any power while he lives; but there's nothing I should like better to do than to undertake the Stonyshire side of the estate -- it's in a dismal condition -- and set improvements on foot, and gallop about from one place to another and overlook them. I should like to know all the labourers, and see them touching their hats to me with a look of good will. (214-15)
The Reverend approves of Arthur's enthusiasm, but tries to temper it with a warning: although "increasing the quantity of food" is a noble endeavor, "You must make it quite clear to your mind which you are most bent upon, old boy -- popularity or usefulness -- else you may happen to miss both" (215). Irvine's advice penetrates to the heart of what will be Arthur's premature failure as an improver. By confusing affection for Hetty with economic interest in the Poysers, Arthur brings fertility to the wrong side of the estate, and instead of increasing the quantity of food, only ends up increasing the population. For all his benevolent impulses, the young heir proves to be as appropriative of tenant capital as his grandfather the Squire.

In fact, Arthur's initial contact with Hetty is actually enabled by Mrs. Poyser, as her pride in her dairy leads her to believe that Arthur is "really interested in her milkpans" (126), rather than in her beautiful buttermaker. Hetty's liminality -- of body, of class, and of family -- allows her to evade the perimeters of her aunt's normally rigid supervision; furthermore, in the context of the dairy, Hetty is merely another implement of labor to her aunt, a set of "hands" that makes the butter, and her actions can only seduce Arthur's regard for economic efficiency. Yet it is the sensuality of Hetty's "attitudes and movements" that are of primary interest to Arthur while he watches her work, and her "hands" register in an entirely different nexus of meaning: the "tossing movements that give a charming curve to the arm, and a sideward inclination of the round, white neck . . . little patting and rolling movements with the palm of the hand, and nice adaptations and finishings which cannot at all be effected without a great play of the
pouting mouth and the dark eyes" (129). While Mrs. Poyser quickly transforms the domestic productivity of her housemaid into a tale of potential reproductive activity, her niece's labors remain in the economic realm, and at the end of Hetty's performance she is merely pleased by the material fact that Hetty "is particularly clever at making the butter" (129).

Even Arthur's solicitation of Hetty to partner him in two dances at his upcoming birthday feast is carried out with Mrs. Poyser's unthinking approbation: "Indeed sir, you're very kind to take notice of her. And I'm sure, whenever you're pleased to dance with her, she'll be proud and thankful, if she stood still the rest o' the evening" (129). Mrs. Poyser is finally unable to see the workplace as the scene of her niece's initial seduction because it is a cross-class seduction: an exchange that has only economic significance at Hall Farm. Although Mrs. Poyser's natural sagacity is renowned throughout Hayslope, and Mr. Poyser is "secretly proud of his wife's manner of putting two and two together" (235), it is a shame that Bartle Massey, the Hayslope schoolteacher, has never taken the time to teach the couple his brand of Malthusian mathematics. Following Malthus's assertion that sexual passion "may always be considered in algebraic language, as a given quantity," Bartle calculates that the principles of "simple addition" clearly indicate that if you "add one fool to another ... in six years time six fools more -- they're all of the same denomination, big and little's nothing to do with the sum" (291).44 Bartle even comments upon the issue of human perfectibility that inspires Malthus's first Essay, as he blames Adam's mistaken faith in Hetty's fidelity

and innocence on his lack of mathematical knowledge: "If he hadn't had such hard work to do, poor fellow, he might have gone on to the higher branches, and then this might never have happened -- might never have happened" (463). Like Malthus, Bartle realizes that the daily realities of work keep the lower classes from the "higher branches" of intellectual development, and prevent them from understanding -- what the Reverend Irwine also knows -- that human affections can interfere with economic prosperity. This crucial lesson is the one with which the Poysers and others in their economic situation are grappling; it is the inaugural factor of middle-class identity, and the reason Malthus rest[s] all hopes for human improvement on the rise and empowerment of the middle classes through the "established administration of property" (Malthus 286).

Like Arthur Donnithorne, the Poysers have confused "the established administration of property" with family sentiment, and have allowed rhetorical assessments of what "a good father " to Hetty Uncle Poyser has been to elide the fact that Hetty's place in the family registers economically rather than affectively. The mistaken impulses of paternalism have been inadvertently replicated by the Poysers, and despite the sentimental idiom that allows the Poysers to understand themselves as a family, the economic and affective claims of their own children perpetually obscure what is due to their metaphoric daughter. Uncle Poyser's proprietorship of Hetty is finally like his tenant-farming: a secondary form of appropriation that has nothing to do with ownership. Although he expects to channel Hetty's fertility into a mutually empowering marriage with the innovative, upwardly-mobile Adam Bede, Uncle Poyser's interest in his niece will
prove to be as latent as his "stuck in the soil" capital: cultivated by the Poysers, but devoured by the Donnithornes.

Furthermore, when Hetty's economic productivity becomes reproductivity, it signals that another of Bartle Massey's ominous predictions has come true, and that sooner or later, a woman's food "all runs either to fat or to brats" (285). Bartle's misogynous words return us finally to the problem of fatness, a problem that has been previously addressed both under the delicate euphemism of "fleshiness" and under the sign of Mr. Casson's distended frame. Although Hetty's brand of fleshiness, her uneconomical form of productivity, is unnoticed by her family, other kinds of fat are hysterically and repetitiously recognized and celebrated by the Poysers.\footnote{Although Mrs Poyser is unable to recognize the fact that Hetty is pregnant, it is important that she \emph{does} recognize a change in her niece that she unknowingly characterizes in the economic idiom previously associated with Arthur Donnithorne: "Mrs Poyser though she noticed a surprising improvement in Hetty... she thought much less about her dress, and went after the work quite eagerly, without any telling. And it was wonderful how she never wanted to go out now -- indeed, could hardly be persuaded to go... it must be, after all, that she had set her heart on Adam at last" (398 emphasis added).} As much as Hetty's uneconomical fatness belies the Poyser's financial independence, Totty Poyser's "fat" body is a sign of the idealized economy of plentitude at Hall Farm. The difference between daughters and nieces in \textit{Adam Bede} finally materializes over the discourse of fat, marking the bodily excess of daughters as an illusory sign of accumulation, a displaced embodiment of wealth. Conversely, the fleshiness of Hetty's body is an ignored site of exploitation, and the true measure of Poyser economic status. From the time we first glimpse four year-old Totty "in retreat towards the dairy, with a sort of waddling run, and an amount of fat on the nape of her neck, which made her look like the
metamorphosis of a white sucking pig" (120), it is clear that Totty functions within *Adam Bede* as a hyperbolic image of Hetty, her fat body standing in for the unarticulated "metamorphosis" of her cousin.

Even Hetty's first rendezvous with Arthur in the Fir-tree Grove is italicized by the way that she returns home to find, despite the lateness of the hour, that her aunt is still awake "trying to soothe Totty to sleep" (189). As Hetty enters the room, Totty "raised herself up, and showed a pair of flushed cheeks, which looked even fatter than ever now that they were defined by the edge of her linen night-cap" (189). Although Mrs. Poyser initially begins to scold her niece for her tardiness, she soon digresses into a description of her daughter's unusual "fever for what I know . . . and nobody to give her the physic but your uncle, and fine work there's been, and half of it spilt on her nightgown" (190). Paradoxically, Totty's restlessness and "fever" both supply the otherwise absent symptoms of Hetty's late-night tryst with Arthur, and finally draw Mrs. Poyser's attention completely away from her wayward niece, as a new bout of crying from her daughter erupts just as Mrs. Poyser complains that Hetty would like her clock to be "set by gentlefolks time"(190), rather than the time at Hall Farm. Yet another stain (this one, significantly, on Totty's nightgown) literalizes Hetty's sexual stain, fixing Totty's "fat" body as a hyperbolic emblem of concealed sexuality: an exaggerated narrative record of Hetty's bodily transgressiveness.

Returning now to Malthusian logic, "fatness" takes on even greater significance, as the habit of turning rich agricultural land over to the "fatting" of high-grade cattle is one of Malthus's pet peeves: "A fatted
beast may in some respects be considered, in the language of the French economists, as an unproductive labourer: he has added nothing to the value of the produce consumed." As Catherine Gallagher points out, this fatted beast is an "immediate threat to society's well being . . . a distension, an overgrowth of its own circulatory system." Similarly, Totty Poyser is the very embodiment of nonproductive value, a healthy sign of economic plenty that is simultaneously a swollen marker of unregulated consumption. We frequently catch glimpses of Totty in the garden of Hall Farm, undoing the picking, gathering and unearthing of harvest-work by stuffing everything she takes from tree or soil directly into her mouth. Adam Bede is looking for Hetty in the garden one evening when he instead encounters Totty,

"Yes--with a bonnet down her back, and her fat face dreadfully smeared with red juice, turned up towards the cherry-tree, while she held her little round hole of a mouth and red-stained pinafore to receive the promised downfall. I am sorry to say, more than half the cherries that fell were hard and yellow instead of juicy and red; but Totty spent no time in useless regrets, and she was already sucking the third juiciest when Adam said, "There now, Totty, you've got your cherries. Run into the house with 'em to mother."

(264)

Totty's red-stained face will soon be reflected by the "deep red" blush that spreads over Hetty's face when Adam finally finds her--an appropriately metaphorical "stain" because Adam has interrupted her fantasies about Arthur Donnithorne. What is more, the dangerous sexual imagery of this

passage is matched by an equally problematic economic message, and the
two lines of signification collide in the slippery "hole" of Totty's open
mouth. If the sexual signs are self-explanatory, the economic signs should
perhaps be qualified by a term that Malthus recognizes as a "vulgar" but
accurate expression: "hand to mouth" subsistence.48 Malthus's complaint
that the labouring classes are prevented from planning for the future by the
"hand to mouth" manner in which they must live echoes both Bartle
Massey's feeling that Adam's daily labors keep him from important
economic knowledge, and Martin Poyser's sense that his capital is latent,
unable to circulate properly within the larger social economy. In this way,
Totty's fat body and stained mouth not only stand in for Hetty's concealed
sexual identity, but for the "fatted beast" in her father's failed circulation
of capital; the fleshy middle that is grossly out of proportion with the rest
of the economic body.49

What is more, Arthur Donnithorne's admiration for Totty, or as he
calls her, that "funny little fatty" (130), is represented in a manner that
clearly exposes the economic effects of his seduction of Hetty. While on

49. If we know where to look for the fat at Hall Farm, it is also the case that we know
where to find the lean — on the body of yet another niece, Dinah Morris. The "naked hills"
(121) and scant natural resources of Snowfield are repeatedly contrasted with Hayslope's
rich valleys and fertile farms: as Dinah warns Seth Bede when he offers to return home
with her, "It's a bleak and barren country there, not like this land of Goshen you've been
used to" (80). Just as Totty's fatness is a sign of the idealized economy of plentitude at
Hall Farm, a plentitude that Hetty's unrecognized "fatness" ultimately belies, Dinah's thin
"starved" body is a constant marker of Snowfield's struggling industrial work-force: a
brand of labor against which the Poyser's (via perpetual contrast) measure their own
economic identity. Added to the Poyser's abiding fear that "she'll never marry anybody if
he isn't a Methodist and a cripple" (555), Dinah's starved body takes on the signs of
reproductive barrenness: an infertility that initially locates Dinah instead of Hetty as the
weak link in the Poyser's economics of fat.
one of his infamous visits to the dairy, he pleases Mrs. Poyser enormously by his benevolent attentions to the child:

"Totty's a capital name. Why she looks like a Totty. Has she got a pocket on?" said the Captain, feeling in his own waistcoat pockets.

Totty immediately with great gravity lifted up her frock, and showed a tiny pink pocket at present in a state of collapse.

"It dot notin' in it," she said, as she looked down at it very earnestly.

"No! What a pity! Such a pretty pocket. Well, I think I've got some things of mine that will make a pretty jingle in it. Yes; I declare I've got five round silver things, and hear what a pretty noise they make in Totty's pink pocket." (131)

If the exchange of money for the lifting of a frock resembles prostitution in this scenario, the metaphor will retain the same valence when a pregnant and abandoned Hetty is finally forced by economic necessity to convert the expensive jewelry Arthur has given her into cash and run away from Hayslope. Capitalism, or as it is glossed by Malthusian language, "the established administration of property," will become Hetty's last hope for survival, as we painfully watch her apply "her small arithmetic and knowledge of prices to calculate how many meals and how many rides were contained" (418) in her small stock of funds. Realizing, perhaps too late, that "There's nothin you can't turn into a sum, for there's nothin but what's got a number in it" (282), Hetty's fears take on a distinctly economic bent:
Now, in her faintness of heart at the length and difficulty of her journey, she was most of all afraid of spending her money, and becoming so destitute that she would have to ask for people's charity; for Hetty had the pride not only of a proud nature but of a proud class-- the class that pays the most poor-rates, and most shudders at the idea of profiting by a poor-rate. (418)

Hetty's intuitive economic sense becomes an instinct for self-preservation that even prevents her from committing suicide: "It was no use to think of drowning herself -- she could not do it, at least while she had money left to buy food, and strength to journey on" (434). Not only food, but the bodily strength derived from nourishment is a commodity that can be given numerical value, or "turn[ed] into a sum." Although her mother died under the dual oppressions of "inflammation" and Mr. Sorrel's economic incapacities, Hetty's emerging fatness brings out the latent economic characteristics of her "proud class" as she confronts the principles of "simple addition" that shape middle-class identity. 50

While Hetty's education in the ways and means of capital is no doubt abrupt, her earlier insights into the economic realities of her pregnancy are primarily marked by her vague desires to move away from Hall Farm before her secret is revealed. Before she finally settles on a marriage to Adam as the only feasible way of altering her living conditions, she first asks the Poyzers for permission to enter domestic service in the capacity of a lady's maid. Mr. Poyser is quick to assert the sufficiency, and more importantly, the autonomy of economic production at Hall Farm as the

50. It is also the case that Malthus deplores the "Parish laws of England" because they undermine British individualism (67).
primary reason Hetty's request is ridiculous, appealing to his aged father for corroboration: "my family's ate their own bread and cheese as fur back as anybody knows, hanna they father?" (383). Similarly relying on the principles of supply and demand, Mrs. Poyser's scornful response throws us once again into the vernacular of "fatness," this time with an interesting twist:

    I'll never gi' my consent to her going for a lady's-maid, while she's got good friends to take care on her till she's married to somebody better nor one o' them valets, as is neither a common man nor a gentleman, an' must live on the fat o' the land, an's like enough to stick his hands under his coat tails and expect his wife to work for him. (384, emphasis mine)

In this invocation, "fat" is not the illusory emblem of capital, an emblem that is -- within fledgling middle-class culture -- symbolic, metaphorical and finally, unproductive; rather, "fat" is capital itself, a general synecdoche for the rich upper classes, and an immediate sign of the Donnithornes.

It is in this context that Squire Donnithorne's late-breaking desire to negotiate a business deal with the Poyzers resonates within the larger nexus of Adam Bede, and particularly Hetty's story. Delicately indicating that the Poyser's perpetual dread of eviction may become reality if their compliance is not received, the Squire proposes that they turn over a sizeable portion of their corn land to the potential tenant of Chase Farm in return for an increase in their dairy land -- an exchange that will nominally give the Poyzers the privilege of supplying the manor house with
"milk, cream and butter at the market prices" (391). Mrs. Poyser penetrates the Squire's objectives as easily as she discerned her housemaid's, however, and she refuses his offer in an explosive moment of class consciousness: "I'll not consent to take more dairy work into my hands, either for love or money; and there's nayther love nor money here, as I can see, on'y other folks love o' theirselves, and the money as is to go into other folks's pockets. I know there's them as is born't own the land, and them as is born to sweat on't" (392). Confronted with this exemplary tableau of business-as-usual at Hall Farm, the local mechanisms of economic exploitation become apparent to the Poyzers, and their pretense of autonomy crumbles under the actualities of tenantry. The plentiful "bread and cheese" that the Poyzers have eaten for generations is simply another manifestation of Donnithorne fat: like the domestic servants that Mrs. Poyser criticizes, the Poyzers are neither "common" nor "gentle," and the unpossessed richness of Hall Farm places them in a similar socioeconomic position to those who must "live on the fat o' the land."

This exchange with Squire Donnithorne represents a major economic triumph to the Poyzers, as they manage to circumvent eviction while forcing the Squire to abandon his scheme of monopolizing dairy production at Hall Farm. Apparently, the prospective tenant of Chase Farm refused to negotiate a lease without the promised corn land, and "it

51. Squire Donnithorne's offer is little more than extortion, of course: Eliot informs us that summer flooding in the Midlands has rapidly driven up the price of bread and the Hayslope farmers currently have a unique opportunity to make the most of their cornlands (337). Furthermore, according to Adam Smith's 1776 Wealth of Nations, dairyland was generally believed to be less valuable than corn land in the eighteenth-century: "the dairy is not reckoned a more profitable employment of land than the raising of corn, or the fattening of cattle" (New York: Random House, 1937), 227.
was known throughout the two parishes that the Squire's plan had been frustrated because the Poysers had refused to be 'put upon'' (396). Yet if Mrs. Poyser believes that she has also circumvented Bartle Massey's econometric on female nourishment and has literally prevented her dairy goods from running to Donnithorne fat, she will eventually realize that it is too late: her food has already run to fat in the form of the emerging fleshiness on her niece's body and in the illegitimate Donnithorne child that has been indirectly nourished by Poyser labor. Ironically, it will be Hetty's own belated understanding of the operations of capital that finally, permanently, prevents Poyser goods from running to fat, as her act of infanticide, her refusal to nourish another body at the expense of her own, is an assertion of individualism that replicates Mrs. Poyser's refusal to give her milk to the Donnithornes instead of retaining it for her own family.\(^{52}\)

While this seemingly smooth equation of infanticide with economic individualism is politically unpalatable, it is impossible not to identify the redundancy of the two incidents, especially when we are confronted with the gruesome fact that Hetty is arrested at the site of the baby's grave with "a big piece of bread in her lap" (481), literally putting her own need for nourishment before her child's. It is also telling that the baby's death is coterminous with the death of his unknowing grandfather, Squire Donnithorne, as if Hetty's refusal to nurse her child and Mrs. Poyser's refusal to provide milk products for the Manor House have, at either end of the generational spectrum, the same effects.

\(^{52}\). Malthus refers to infanticide as an economic rather than criminal resource -- a "check to population" directly resulting from insufficient food.
V. Economies of Replacement: The Redistribution of Fat and Middle-Class Empowerment

With this pair of Donnithorne deaths, fat begins to redistribute itself throughout the body of the novel, and the economics of replacement take over the management of both the family plot and the marriage plot. If at one point in the text Arthur Donnithorne's birthday feast for his tenants and laborers underscored the feudal organization of Hayslope, by the end of the *Adam Bede*, the Poysers' boisterous Harvest supper has disrupted and rewritten the brand of class-consciousness that informed Arthur's party. Martin Poyser enjoys the role of the "young master" (562) during these latter festivities, but unlike Arthur, Mr. Poyser sits at the head of one large table "helping his servants to the fragrant roast beef, and pleased when their empty plates came in again" (560). With this celebration of economic plenty replacing the paternalistic significance of the local gentry's "coming-of-age," middle-class power emerges in the guise of collectivism to foster more harmonious relations between the "head" of the social body and its "hands." Yet if the philosophy of social paternalism has been overthrown by the end of *Adam Bede*, another ideological program has taken its place: as Margaret Homans notes, Mr. Poyser's feast is only for men.53 By literally segregating the women from the "fat," the Victorian doctrine of separate spheres begins to shape the social economy of *Adam Bede* in time to neutralize the sexual dangers inherent in representations of capitalist excess.

Although the socioeconomic privileges attached to ownership and autonomy are finally awarded to the Poysers, they still must be disciplined for mistaking economic expediency for affection in their early confusion about the differences among nieces, daughters, and servants. When the Poysers' attempt to replace one niece with the other -- to make Dinah compensate the loss of Hetty's labor at Hall Farm -- and fail, it is apparent that some brands of accumulation are unwelcome in the new social order. Despite her aunt's wheedling, Dinah realizes that the position of the perennial niece in the Poyser household is a service-oriented rather than family-oriented role:

... an' now I can trust you wi' the butter, an' have had all the trouble o' teaching you, an' there's all the sewing to be done, an' I must have a strange gell out of Treddles'on to do it -- an' all because you must go back to that bare heap o' stones as the very crows fly over an' won't stop at."

"Dear aunt Rachel," said Dinah, looking up in Mrs. Poyser's face, "it's your kindness makes you say I'm useful to you. You don't really want me now; for Nancy and Molly are clever at work, and you're in good health now, by the blessing of God." (518-19)

By quietly pointing out that Nancy and Molly, the servants, are what Mrs. Poyser "really wants" instead of a niece, Dinah refuses to be absorbed into Hall Farm's economic grid and reduced to a redundant pair of hands in the Poyser family dairy. After all, once the dangerous collusions of fat and femininity are eliminated from Adam Bede, buttermaking is the last occupation that the newly domesticated Dinah can undertake. This kind of
productivity, as Hetty has made abundantly clear, is both uneconomical and antithetical to middle-class empowerment.54

Although Dinah refuses to replace her cousin at Hall Farm, Hetty's enforced emigration allows Dinah to marry Adam, her thin body gaining in "fullness" and health (581) as she adapts herself to new conventions of domesticity and maternity. The metaphors of dilation and distention proliferate as this exchange is explored, describing Adam's love for Dinah as "the outgrowth of that fuller life which had come to him from his acquaintance with deep sorrow" (574). Within Adam Bede's vernacular of fatness, Dinah is an "outgrowth," a product of Hetty's "fullness" that will clean up after sexual misconduct, renaturalize maternity and restore the integrity of the social body through a rapid deployment of domestic ideology. Accordingly, within the seven year gap between the end of the novel proper and its epilogue, just as Dinah's thin, "starved" body has begun to bloom and reproduce, Adam has come into some capital and owns the timber-yard where he used to work. As new "outgrowths" replace more deviant forms of fatness, it becomes increasingly clear that successful "possession" and the rise of the middle class are simultaneous socioeconomic events. In good Malthusian form, Adam Bede's economic philosophy is cyclical: Hetty gives way to Dinah, barreness gives way to plenty, and the accumulated wealth of the upper classes begins to circulate and finally settle around the "middle" regions of the social body.

54. Buttermaking was literally as well as figuratively uneconomical at the turn of the century. According to B.A. Holderness, in most circumstances profits from butter and cheese "were never ample and barely recompensed the dairyman for his trouble." The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 183.
CHAPTER THREE

"Turning Bones Into Spoons: Uncles, Pawnbrokers, and the Disaffected Family in Daniel Deronda"

If the idiom of fatness in Adam Bede exposes a series of economic anxieties about the status of kinship and the circulation of capital between nineteenth-century landlords and tenant farmers, fat in Eliot's later novel Daniel Deronda coalesces around another contentious site of commercial interaction: the Victorian pawnshop. During Daniel's search for the lost remnants of Mirah Lapidoth's family, he enters a store owned and operated by the pawnbroker Ezra Cohen,

whose flourishing face glistening on the way to fatness was hanging over the counter in negotiation with some one on the other side of the partition, concerning two plated stoppers and three teaspoons, which lay spread before him. Seeing Deronda enter, he called out "Mother! Mother!" and then with a familiar nod and smile said "Coming sir--coming directly."1

Turning from Cohen's "flourishing face," Daniel encounters the pawnbroker's mother, and must try "to think away the fat which had gradually disguised the outlines of her youth" (438), in order to discern her possible likeness to Mirah. The appearance of another customer occasions a call to Cohen's wife, who appears with Cohen's "robust" son Jacob, a boy whose cheeks are often "very much swollen with sweet-cake" (450). As three generations of Cohen fat confront Daniel Deronda, the

1. George Eliot, Daniel Deronda (1876; reprint, New York: Penguin Classics, 1988), 438. All further references to this edition will appear within the text.
idiom of consumption begins to link bodily images with capitalist economies, only to reach its natural apex when Daniel finds who he is looking for -- Mirah's brother Mordecai -- situated as a cannibalized martyr, living on "thin tails of the fried fish . . . the sort of share assigned to a poor relation" (449). Within the larger context of the novel, Mordecai is a quickly wan ing symbol of Jewish spirituality; an etherealized force of historical consciousness and religious traditionalism that is being overtaken by more secular icons of Judaism, most egregiously, by the pawnbroker. By situating the thinness of Jewish heritage within the commercial corpulence of the Victorian pawnshop, Eliot will use fat in Daniel Deronda, as she did in Adam Bede, to introduce the topic of commercial alienation, and to suggest that effects of nineteenth-century capitalism include the disruption of all forms of inheritance: religious, historical, and finally, familial.

Indeed, before the fatness of the pawnshop distracts us entirely from our focus on the Victorian family, I should say that Daniel Deronda resembles Adam Bede not only in its idiom of fat, but in its economy of the avunculate: as early as 1756, for reasons unspecified by the OED, "uncle" was a common euphemism for pawnbroker. For example, in an 1851 essay that appeared in Household Words, Dickens and co-writer W.H. Wills celebrated the wisdom, commercial prowess, and widespread popularity of "The most remarkable man of any age or country . . . My Uncle," by describing a few of the banking transactions the pawnbroker managed for members of the working-class:

What the Bank of England is to her Majesty's Government . . . that
My Uncle is to the De Montagues, the artisans, the labourers, and the poor of London and the suburbs generally. . . Take the case of Phelim O'Shea, bricklayer's labourer. A wet week or a defaulting brick-maker has thrown Phelim O'Shea temporarily out of employment, and his stock of cash is inadequate to meet his current expenses. Yet . . . He has a coat -- a loose blue coat, long in the cuffs, with a swallow-tail, and brass-buttons rubbed black in the center. He converts that coat into a bank deposit, and My Uncle advances him a sum of money, which enables him to meet contingent demands . . . In like manner, Mrs. Lavers, the char-woman, is short of shillings; but she has a fender; so her neighbor the washerwoman, has no money at all, but is, thanks to My Uncle, a capitalist while she possesses a flat-iron. 2

Before Dickens's signature irony begins to overpower the cultural significance of his characterization, a glance at Victorian documents -- economic essays, temperance tracts, political pamphlets, fiction -- will remind us that the debates surrounding pawnbroking pivoted upon the very conundrum that Dickens and Eliot have mapped out for us in the preceding passages: was the pawnbroker a commercial cannibal who fattened himself upon the poverty and desperation of his poor nephews and nieces, or was he, as his avuncular title seems to suggest, a benevolent agent of economic autonomy who transformed washerwomen into capitalists for the price of a flatiron? By suggesting that the pawnshop was an important, even necessary, aspect of working-class life, and the only possible means by

which the poor could emulate the economic standards set by middle-class existence, Dickens challenged a more prevalent image of the pawnbroker as an evil catalyst of insolvency, an enabler of debt, and an extortionist. Furthermore, by referring to the pawnbroker as "My Uncle," Dickens deliberately called attention to the inherent familiarity of his commercial function: what bankers are to the nobility, gentry, and middle classes "that My Uncle is to the . . . artisans, the labourers, and the poor of London."

Although Victorian annalists and satirists of the pawnshop used the avuncular euphemism frequently throughout the century, modern historians of pawnbroking have been uniformly uninterested in Dickens's Uncle. For example, in an otherwise careful and historically scrupulous study of the nineteenth-century pawnshop, Melanie Tebbutt casually mentions that pawntickets were called "uncle's cards" without so much as a discursive footnote to explain the nickname. Apparently many pawnshop historians rely upon an ahistorical ideology of the family as a sympathetic social entity in order to make sense of the euphemism, presuming the term "uncle" to be an indisputable, inviolable benchmark of the benevolent effects pawnbrokers had upon the lives of the Victorian poor. Kenneth Hudson's whimsical description of the pawnbroker as "the friendly neighborhood figure to whom his hard-up nieces and nephews could always turn for advice and a loan, the solid leaning-post in times of weakness and trouble," reflects certain standard twentieth-century assumptions about affective kinship. These cultural givens provide the bedrock for Hudson's

primary thesis that a century of silence about the cultural importance of the pawnbroker in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century England can be blamed on the fact that "pawning, like sex," was a familial concern. "Strangers would not understand. They would be unable to see pawnbroking in its proper context, to grasp how it fitted into family life" (17). Repeatedly, the avuncular euphemism provides inherent justification for prematurely situating the pawnbroker in this "proper context" of the affective family. In fact, John Caskey's recent book Fringe Banking goes no further than an "amusing" and "probably inaccurate" 1826 anecdote about a pawnbroker named Simpson and the three nephews who worked for him. 5 For Caskey, as for Hudson and Tebbutt, the correct etymology of the nickname is beside the point; because the familial connotations of the term "uncle" immediately establish the pawnbroker within an affective genre, more complicated connections between the shadiest inhabitant of the nineteenth-century commercial world and the much-contested sphere of the Victorian family do not have to be theorized.

While the impulse to understand pawnbroking within the context of the family is as central to my project as it is to the work of Caskey, Hudson, and Tebbutt, it is my contention that our own cultural investment in a concept of the affective family can sometimes elide the sociohistorical specificity that a term like "Uncle" can take on in the context of nineteenth-century debates over self-help and paternalism, free-will and social determinism, economic individualism and feudal dependence. Although the exact etymology of "Uncle" is unclear, in the Victorian period the

economic shape of pawnbrokers and the familial shape of uncles became a bilateral repository for a range of anxieties about what capitalism was doing both to the private family and the social family. Despite the ironic treatment "My Uncle" receives in Dickens's essay, a glance at Victorian tracts and pamphlets on pawnbroking is enough to indicate that Uncle epitomized a new kind of commercial patriarchy that had been steadily replacing the feudal, paternalistic culture of pre-industrial England. Because the brand of social paternalism advocated by writers such as John Ruskin and Arthur Helps insisted that business relationships be modeled after parent-child relationships, the pawnbroker's usurious commercial pursuits made him an unfit parent, incapable of affective family attachments. Moreover, as the pawnshop was the lowest common denominator of the banking industry, it was a useful red herring for middle-class moralists who sought to project this ostensible erosion of the affective family upon the laziness and thriftlessness of the poorer classes. Proving once again that all politics is local, a variety of literary texts -- from economic essays and temperance tracts to short stories and novels -- appropriated the avuncular trope with zest, rewriting cultural anxieties about the disintegration of paternalistically-ordered Victorian society as tales of literal family decay or corruption.

As thematic tensions about pawnbroking, moneylending, and usury coalesce in the figure of the uncle, a more materialist reading of the family is suddenly possible in a novel like Eliot's 1876 Daniel Deronda, where the avuncular figure is inscribed not only at the threshold of nuclear family ideologies, but at the unseemly fringes of an economic system that
measures wealth in terms of interest gained on capital. Like Dickens's "Uncle", Eliot's pawnbroker possesses the power of transformation, although his forms of renewal are not necessarily scripted in Daniel Deronda as improvements. After all, Daniel is initially drawn to Ezra Cohen's shop not because of the telltale name over the door, but because he catches sight "of some fine old clasps in chased silver displayed in the window," and thinks that his uncle's fat wife "Lady Mallinger, who had a strictly Protestant taste for such Catholic spoils, might like to have these missal clasps turned into a bracelet" (432). Here the pawnshop's transformative power does not discriminate between faiths: Catholicism and Judaism are equally susceptible to the avuncular ravages of commodification. Moreover, Daniel's mental conversion of the sacred artifacts of one religion into the trivial "spoils" of another suggests that the process of "brokering" does not distinguish between economic and affective value, and that even moral virtues such as family sentiment, religious faith, and paternal duty can be effectively commodified by the mercantilistic impulses of the nineteenth-century social world. Indeed, when Daniel redeems the wasted Mordecai from the Cohen's family pawnshop, the broker's distinction between economic consideration and affective feeling is seemingly nonexistent: "you're taking some of our good works from us, which is a property bearing interest, I'm not saying but we can afford that, though my mother and my wife had the good will to wish and do for Mordecai to the last" (636).

Although the novel's early depiction of Gwendolyn Harleth pawning a necklace with three turquoise stones that had "belonged to a chain once
her father's" (48), introduces us to the way that the pawnbroker's economic alienations underwrite other, more affective disruptions, by the time Daniel enters the Cohen's pawnshop, we have been formally catechized about the danger that brokering poses to the family. Certain sacred materials, insists the epigraph to this latter chapter, should never pass the threshold of exchange:

'No man,' says a Rabbi, by way of indisputable instance, 'may turn the bones of his father and mother into spoons' -- sure that his hearers felt the checks against that form of economy. The market for spoons has never expanded enough for any one to say, 'Why not?' and to argue that human progress lies in such an application of material. The only check to be alleged is a sentiment, which will coerce none who do not hold that sentiments are the better part of the world's wealth. (430)

This prohibition against capitalizing upon the remains of one's parents hits a variety of moral, social, and economic registers in Victorian culture: if the image of human bones being turned into spoons at once taps into a primitivist idiom of parricide and cannibalism, it also reflects certain contemporary anxieties about the commodification of the family, and the disappearing importance of heritage, genealogy, and "sentiment" in the progressive vocabulary of nineteenth-century economic identity.

By interrogating the rhetorical equation between pawnbrokers and uncles in *Daniel Deronda*, Chapter Three continues the project of Chapter Two by interrogating yet another point of fracture in the rhetorical program of social paternalism. After all, the pawnshop is not only the
literal benchmark of how far the historical greatness of Jewish culture has fallen: all paternal histories and paternalistic cultures are equally at risk of erasure in the avuncular nexus of pawnbroking, where the remains of Mirah's alienated family can be found alongside the stoppers and teaspoons of other disintegrated households. In Daniel Deronda, the laws of commerce that liberate the economic individual simultaneously devour the affective family, community, and nation, to the extent that it is difficult to separate the pawnbrokers from the uncles, and the pawnshop from the family. In order to approximate the pervasiveness of "uncle" as an anti-paternalistic metaphor, this chapter first situates the pawnshop within Victorian debates over economic and personal autonomy, foregrounding the way conflicting images of family life were deployed by both detractors and advocates of pawnbroking. While fathers are the benchmark of affective family models, uncles are a familial trope fundamental to narratives of social and economic exchange: figures that dislocate the sentimental values that had been imposed upon the commercial face of nineteenth-century culture. From these broader speculations about how the avunculate became a specific familial ideology in the Victorian period, I move toward a more local reading of Daniel Deronda arguing that the novel exploits the rhetorical equation between uncles and pawnbrokers in order to foreground the effects of capitalism on affective relationships.

After all, by the time the fictional Gwendolyn Harleth enters a Leubronn pawnshop to convert the remnants of her paternal chain into some much needed cash, the debate over the pawnbroker's social influence was already in full swing. Exemplified by Dickens's characterization of
"My Uncle," defenders of the pawnshop often justified the broker's role in the community by appealing to the social philosophy of "self-help" popular with the middle class at mid-century: after all, by transforming "passive capital" into "active capital" Uncle kept entire families, entire neighborhoods from seeking the demoralizing forms of assistance offered by charity guilds and poor-houses. With the help of "My Uncle," a common coat could miraculously take the shape of a bank deposit, and an old pair of boots could be readily translated into shillings. Furthermore, as Dickens explains, the pawnbroker's transformative powers were not limited to the pieces of furniture and wearing apparel deposited by his clients. By helping working-class families convert commodities into currency, "My Uncle" was even able to redefine the economic status of his clients themselves: although a "washerwoman has no money at all," she could become, "thanks to My Uncle, a capitalist while she possesses a flatiron."

The avuncular euphemism hits a distinctly unafective register in the transformative nexus of the pawnshop, allowing us to read Victorian anxieties over pawnbroking, moneylending, and usury as schisms in the father-centered simplicity of family/society tropes. While in Daniel Deronda George Eliot demonizes brokering as a process that inevitably commercializes kinship, in Dickens's essay, as in others of the Victorian period, the pawnshop emerges as a place where the stigmas of gender and class could be strategically discarded; a place where ready capital alone had the power to confer identity; a place where the self could be made -- and remade. Indeed, although all varieties of usury were understood, as
we will see, as a collective challenge to social and economic paternalism, the pawnbroker's function was especially identified with commercial self-making because his business entailed the conversion of objects into money, and in the case of Dickens's washerwoman, the transformation of use value into exchange value. In a chapter of *Capital* that addresses the "the fetishism of commodities," Karl Marx explains that while the commodity represents the social character of human labor, the conversion of the commodity into money erases the specific history of that labor:

When they assume this money-shape, commodities strip off every trace of their natural use-value, and of the particular kind of labour to which they own their creation, in order to transform themselves into the uniform socially recognized incarnation of homogeneous human labor. We cannot tell from the new look of a piece of money, for what particular commodity it has been exchanged. Under the money form all commodities look alike.6

With the transformation of her property into money, the washerwoman is no longer a personification of her labor; the piece of money she now possesses simultaneously erases the history of her flat-iron and the history of her class status. Although the homogeneity conferred by the money-form was distrusted by Marx, it was especially celebrated by defenders of the pawnshop. Because he elided the mutual history of pledger and commodity, "Uncle" was not only a rhetorical alternative to the law of the father, he was a radical alternative to paternalist philosophy: a "broker" of

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individual identity who offered a socially liberating denial of origins by undoing the organizing motif of Victorian society, the parent-child relationship.

By extension, if the pawnshop provided personal empowerment for the individual, it also promoted economic independence for the nation: the laissez faire commercial freedom to be found in English pawnshops epitomized "the spirit of the age" for writers such as A. Keeson, whose 1854 comparison of the religious and government-run Monts de Piété (banks that take pity) of France and Ireland and the private pawnshops of England, concluded that the "parental system" of government was completely at odds with "the gigantic commerce" currently enjoyed by "the greatest commercial nations of the age," England and America.

While the former profess to consider the State as a paternal Institution which ought to do all things for all men; the latter put their own shoulders to the wheel, and only desire that their respective Governments will leave off meddling with Trade, and permit it to enjoy the unrestricted development of its own resources.7

In Keeson's text, the private pawnshop becomes a symbol of national pride, the natural result of an highly evolved commercial system: where capital is "abundant" and "competition intense . . . the trade of lending money upon pawn may be . . . safely entrusted to private hands, although such a course may be dangerous, or even impossible, in other countries, from the paucity of respectable capitalists willing to embark on it" (387-88). Both the

successful transition to national capitalism for England, and personal autonomy for the washerwoman, depended upon a permanent overthrow of the repressive benevolence of paternalistic government, and a widespread advocacy of shoulder-to-the-wheel self-reliance.

Similarly, Jeremy Bentham's famous "Defence of Usury" implies that government intervention deprived working-class men of their ability to function within society as adults: "No man of ripe years and sound mind, acting freely, with his eyes open, ought to be hindered, with a view to his advantage, from making such a bargain." Without the ready help of the pawnbroker, the self-esteem and independent spirit of the working-classes would be dissolved under the infantilizing brands of aid offered by charity. An anonymous essay that appeared in the *Pawnbroker's Gazette* in 1871 denounced the poor-rates as a permanent blight on the self-esteem of members of the working class, insisting that it was impossible to "retain a mind erect" and ask for public assistance at the same time:

Dependence breeds servility, and he who stoops to charity, if at all avoidable, is rarely just to himself. The want of self-respect is a preparation for every evil. If degraded in their own and others' esteem, the poor are removed from the salutary restraint of opinion, and having no caste to lose -- no honour to forfeit -- often abandon themselves recklessly to vice and crime."  

Because economic individualism was the only thing standing between an otherwise honorable individual and a life of crime, the pawnbroker, by

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transforming washerwomen into capitalists, became a virtual savior of souls. He arrested the "downward spiral" that so many middle-class moralists identified as the inevitable result of thriftlessness and poverty, making "redemption" his order of business in more ways than one.

Uncle, in other words, was more than just a pawnbroker, he was an alternative social philosophy that had been empowered by modern capitalism; a visible symbol of the way that competition and autonomy were replacing patronage and thraldom in the vocabulary of commercial interaction. This cultural evolution, however, was not universally received as an improvement upon the paternalistic hierarchy of the past. By epitomizing the capitalist mantra of "buy cheap, sell dear," the pawnbroker became a convenient scapegoat for all industrial age commercial inequities, and "uncle" a familiar euphemism for any individual who made his living from interest or profit margins. For example, T. Turner's 1864 exposé *The Three Gilt Balls: or My Uncle's Stock in Trade and Customers* elided all differences between Uncle and more socially acceptable schools of brokerage.

In the present day our greatest capitalists are the greatest pawnbrokers; and our greatest merchants, their best customers. If we could only get at the facts, it would enable us to claim many as our Uncles, who forego the honour, and never display their dignity by mounting the three gilt balls. . . . The broad acres which give titles to many of our aristocracy, and the mansions in which they live in splendour, and receive the homage of their less dignified brethren, are as much in pawn as the flat iron on which my Uncle lends his
four-pence . . . Every mortgage deed is but another name for a pawn ticket . . . The bill of exchange, or promissory note, is but another form of pledging.\textsuperscript{10}

Thus, under industrial capitalism, a socioeconomic philosophy founded upon the law of the father was threatened by a competition-based commercial code that took its shape from the law of the uncle. A similar shift in family/society tropes has been traced by Benjamin Nelson's twentieth-century analysis of the sociocultural history of usury, and of the non-tribal doctrine of "otherhood" that had taken the place of "brotherhood" in the industrial age. Borrowing from the work of Max Weber, Nelson argues that the spirit of capitalism was founded upon the repudiation of the Deuteronomic commandments on usury: the first which forbid taking interest from "thy brother," and the second which permitted taking interest from "a stranger."

Originally, two opposite attitudes toward the pursuit of gain exist in combination. Internally, there is an attachment to tradition and to the pietistic relations of fellow members of tribe, clan and house-community, with the exclusion of the unrestricted quest of gain within the circle of those bound together by religious ties; externally there is absolutely unrestricted play of gain spirit in economic relations, every foreigner being originally an enemy in relation to whom no ethical restrictions apply . . . As soon as accountability is established within the family community, and economic relations are no longer strictly communistic, there is an end of the naive piety and

its repression of the economic impulse. This side of the development is especially characteristic in the West.¹¹

Because capitalism could not mature under the conditions imposed by the Deuteronomic code, what Weber refers to as "accountability" invaded the sanctified space of the family, replacing affect with economics, brotherhood with otherhood. An image of the disaffected family took its place within an already abundant set of nineteenth-century metaphors and tropes, everywhere marking and measuring the impact of "gain spirit" on interpersonal relationships.

It was this economic version of "family" life that writers such as John Ruskin deplored as the inevitable effect of capitalism and the commercial rules of political economy. Because the modern "Science of Exchange" legitimized a system by which one person's profit is another person's loss, it is "probably a bastard science -- not by any means a divina scientia, but one begotten of another father, that father who, advising his children to turn stones into bread, is himself employed in turning bread into stones, and who, if you ask a fish of him . . . can give you but a serpent."¹² Both Ruskin's alternative father and Dickens's Uncle are functionaries in the mystical process of exchange, but while the latter's transformations empower the working classes, the former's are described as perverse acts of economic sabotage practiced upon a pitiful legion of trusting children. According to Ruskin, even economic relationships carried familial responsibilities, duties that the commercial patriarch

perpetually overlooked: "men of business . . . don't know . . . what other losses or gains far away in dark streets are dependent on theirs in lighted rooms."\textsuperscript{13} As harbingers of a new capitalist doctrine of personal accountability and laissez faire competition, Ruskin's "men of business" -- the usurious fathers who were steadily replacing the benevolent feudal patriarchs -- exemplified the alternative family/society motif I have been identifying as avuncular.

The image of an interest-hungry usurer as a virtual anti-father proliferated in the nineteenth century, redressing Shakespeare's tale of Shylock and Jessica in the appropriate metaphors and tropes of capitalism. For example, in the Reverend W. P. Scargill's 1832 novella \textit{The Usurer's Daughter}, the rich usurer Erpingham attempts to compel his daughter Margaret to marry an aristocrat of his choosing, and disowns her when she does not comply. As Margaret and her new husband, Harry Worthington, slip further and further into debt and poverty, Erpingham repeatedly refuses to help because, like Ruskin's father, it is his business to traffic in distress: "He had seen wretchedness in palaces, and wretchedness in prisons, but he had not looked on it as wretchedness, but as the means of his own wealth."\textsuperscript{14} Halfway through Scargill's parable, however, the plot of the usurer and his daughter begins to dissolve in rather unexpected ways. Margaret and her husband Harry Worthington move to Naples for the sake of economy, and are lost within a Radcliffian panorama of banditti and evil monks. When the Worthingtons finally emerge from this gothic disruption, the familial tensions of the novel have drastically shifted:

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 39.
\textsuperscript{14} W. P. Scargill, \textit{The Usurer's Daughter} (London: Clarke Beeton, 1832), 10.
Erpingham dies, leaving his money to one Lord Singleton, a man who is revealed to be the insidious younger brother of Harry Worthington's unfortunate father. Harry, and not Margaret, is thus revealed to be the true victim of family conspiracy, and the actual villain of the piece is not the usurer, after all. The individual truly guilty of converting family bonds into economic bonds is Lord Singleton, and *The Usurer's Daughter* ends with neither usurer, nor daughter, but with the deathbed reconciliation of Harry Worthington and his reprobate Uncle. By way of excusing his crime, Uncle Singleton pleads the familiar plight of the second brother, forced upon the cold, commercial world to make his own way, while his elder brother enjoyed the patrimonial effects of wealth and status. Thus when the bad Uncle plot absorbs the family narrative already set in motion by the plight of the usurer's daughter, usury becomes a heavy-handed metaphor for a host of anxieties about primogeniture and its effect on family sentiment, and an inevitable byproduct of a dystopian commercial system in which even family members can be sacrificed for profit. In Scargill's novel, the figure of uncle once again disrupts a paternalistic system of signification by subverting the laws of inheritance that normatively transfer property from father to son.

Scargill's literary condemnation of usury is like most others of the nineteenth century in that it casts the usurer as a bad father in order to highlight the disaffective results of economic individualism. This rhetorical ploy was so powerful that pro-pawnbroking literature was forced to insist that the opposite was actually true, and that pawnbrokers could, indeed, be good fathers. For example, Charles Lamb's 1830
contribution to the "Merchant of Venice" mythography was a short story called "The Pawnbroker's Daughter" written for Blackwood's Magazine, a tale that forestalls the plot of The Usurer's Daughter, only stopping short of the gothic disruption that brings on the evil avunculate. Instead, Flint (the pawnbroker) has a change of heart towards Marion (the daughter), demanding that "the prejudiced against our profession acknowledge that a money-lender may have the heart of a father . . . and that in the casket, whose loss grieved him so sorely, he valued nothing so dear as one poor domestic jewel." 15 Nevertheless, the cultural anxiety underscored by both versions of the Shylock and Jessica fable is identical: under a laissez-faire commercial code that is, by definition, usurious, all interpersonal ties are potentially fraught with economic demands, and sentimental notions of family and community are accordingly threatened.

"The Merchant of Venice" also provides an important intertext for Daniel Deronda, as the jewess Mirah Lapidoth has escaped from a father who scorned his religious heritage, and attempted to pay off his gambling debts by selling his daughter to a French Nobleman. 16 Moreover, for Mirah's brother Mordecai, any Jew who denies his religious "separateness" is like Reverend Scargill's pawnbroker: an outcast from both the private family and the social family.

What is the citizenship of him who walks among a people he has no hearty kindred and fellowship with, and has lost the sense of

16. Accordingly, Daniel's "redemption" of Mirah does not begin and end with the prevention of her suicide: he successfully transfers her from an economy of commodification and alienation to the entirely female home of Hans Meyrick's sisters and mother who, importantly, have nothing "that a broker would care to cheapen" (237).
brotherhood with his own race? It is a charter of selfish ambition and rivalry in low greed. He is an alien in spirit, whatever he may be in form; he sucks the blood of mankind, he is not a man. Sharing in no love, sharing in no subjection of the soul, he mocks at all.

(587)

In Mordecai's opinion, the only way for Jewish culture to redeem itself is by reforming the nation of Israel as an affective familial ideology rather than as a geographical entity: "to consecrate it with kinship: the past becomes my parent, and the future stretches toward me the appealing arms of children... When is it rational to say 'I know not my father and mother, let my children be aliens to me" (587-88).

The work of the usurer, on the other hand, is antithetical to family, to community, and finally to nation, as suggested by an anonymous 1825 tract called Reasons Against the Repeal of the Usury Laws. Like Eliot's Mordecai, this unspecified writer described the process by which a usurer comes into being as a thorough purgation of all emotional ties to family and home.

... the unhappy being, whose baneful calling it is to speculate on men's miseries, and like them because they are profitable; to traffic in distress, that he may distill it into gain; must begin by expelling and excluding from his bosom all emotions like these, must violently sunder the ties and feelings which connected and identified him with mankind, and stand amongst the human race, unpitying, callous and alone, feared, shunned and hated.17

17. Reasons Against the Repeal of the Usury Laws (London: John Murray, 1825), 34. The Usury Laws, which regulated the amount of interest a pawnbroker or moneylender
And what the usurer practiced himself, he also preached to his employees: the inexperienced young boys who were apprenticed to Uncle in the pawnshop were supposedly indoctrinated with their master's anti-family proclivities, and were even discouraged from marrying. "I know the fact, and assert without fear of contradiction," declared another anonymous essayist in 1825,

"that no Pawnbroker will take a married man into his service, if he knows him to be married. It is possible, that if he marries while in his service, he may be kept afterwards; but experience has shewn that to be an occurrence extremely rare in the trade . . . What strangely perverted ideas those men must have, to regard, with such antipathy, in their servants that which most others consider as one of the strongest ties of social intercourse, and in itself a sort of guarantee for the steady conduct of the person employed. 18

The resonances of the term "perverted" in this passage bring the antisocial, metaindividualistic figure of the pawnbroker into the realm of sexuality, suggesting that Uncle somehow represents a carnal alternative to the legitimate social intercourse of marriage. Of course, this suspicion that the usurer's crimes against humanity were sexual as well as social has a long philosophical and economic history. Following Aristotle, many nineteenth-century writers were opposed to usury on the grounds that it was contrary to "natural law." As explained by J. B. C. Murray in his

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18. An Examination of the Present Modes of Granting Temporary Loans on Pledges by Pawnbrokers by "A Retired Pawnbroker" (London: Effingham Wilson, 1825), 56.
1866 History of Usury, "money being naturally barren, to make it breed money is preposterous and a monstrous perversion from the end of its institution, which serves the purpose of exchange and not increase."\textsuperscript{19}

When interest is metaphorically biologized, likened to an unnatural breeding method because it is a site of increase without animation, the pawnbroker becomes guilty of appropriating and perverting yet another manifestation of family affection: sexual intercourse. In the absence of marriage, and more importantly, in the absence of women, the pawnbroker, along with the young men and boys he prefers to employ, carries on a form of reproduction untrammeled by natural law, and as a result the pawnshop is often described as a place of inherent ribaldry. "Did they hang out their balls for the purpose of serving the world or serving themselves?" inquires one 1824 opponent of pawnbroking, enjoying his own pun so thoroughly that he cannot resist predicting the decline of the pawnbroker as the "bruising" of the balls.\textsuperscript{20} James Greenwood's 1867 essay "An Evening with My Uncle," evinces a similar penchant for innuendo when describing the inner workings of the pawnshop, especially the "spout" at the center of the store that allowed deposited items to be warehoused on the story directly above the trading floor. Disingenuously collapsing the pawnbroker's sexual and economic largesse, Greenwood observes that "to accommodate Uncle Gawler's enormous business, his spout is of enormous size."\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{20} W. P. Chubb, Usury v. Equity (London: W. Chubb, 1824) 12.
\textsuperscript{21} James Greenwood, "An Evening with My Uncle," London Society 9 (1867), 140.
These satirical representations of Uncle's corruptive influences existed side by side with more sincere attempts to demonize pawnbroking, and these latter forms of attack were all the more powerful because they adopted and redeployed the rhetoric of self-help initially used by proponents of the pawnshop. As described by Dickens, the transformative power of pawnbroking reads as a natural component of the brand of self-making that Samuel Smiles was advocating at mid-century. First published in 1859, Smiles's *Self-Help* quickly became a manifesto of personal empowerment, promoting providence, free-will, and thrift as the materials of commercial success. Above all, Smiles emphasized the possibility that an otherwise disenfranchised man could rise above his social origins, disregard his economic background, and triumph within modern society through industry, diligence, and self-denial. But despite his anti-paternalistic philosophy, his disparaging view of charity, and his signature image of the "self-made" man, Smiles was decidedly against the brand of debt-driven autonomy conferred by the pawnbroker:

The man who is always hovering on the verge of want is in a state not far-removed from that of slavery. He... is in constant peril of falling under the bondage of others and accepting the terms which they dictate to him... It is easy enough for a man who will exercise a healthy resolution to avoid incurring the first obligation; but the facility with which that has been incurred often becomes a temptation to a second; and very soon the unfortunate borrower becomes so en-

tangled that no late exertion of energy can set him free.\textsuperscript{23}

Although Smiles never mentions the pawnbroker by name, it is clear that his trademark horror of debt spills over into a contingent antipathy to borrowing. Like Dickens, Smiles views moneylending as a potentially transformative process, but if Dickens envisions the pawnshop as a place where a superficially conferred identity can be discarded or exchanged, Smiles understands borrowing as a process by which integral, autonomous self-hood is enslaved to an addictive pattern of pledging, as well as to an usurious rate of interest. Instead of conferring identity, the Smilesian moneylender invariably eroded it.

Consequently, while proponents of the pawnshop used the discourse of self-help to characterize the economic autonomy provided by Uncle, anti-pawnshop propagandists resorted to the infamous "downward spiral" motif to drive home the rhetorical link that writers like Smiles made between pledgers and addicts. Indeed, the pawnshop was so embedded in the Victorian conception of alcoholism and addiction that pawnbroking was often looked upon as the virtual alpha of the downward spiral: for example, in Trollope's 1879 novel \textit{John Caldigate}, Mrs. Shand is told that she should not send her emigrant son, a Queensland shepherd, any money because he is an alcoholic, so she instead decides to send him a dozen shirts because "he couldn't drink the shirts out there in the bush. Here, where there is a pawnbroker at all the corners, they drink everything."\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 285, 288.
Likewise, anti-pawnbroking tracts of the nineteenth century repeatedly insisted that habitual recourse to the pawnshop directly promoted other, more dangerous addictions. In 1846, an anonymous pamphlet entitled *The Poor Man's Four Evils* dramatically proclaimed that "the pawn-shop and gin-shop are the twin brothers of darkness; they support each other and combine to ruin thousands."  

25 Mrs. Henry Wood's 1862 temperance novel *Danesbury House* described a more topographical kinship between the pawnshop and a gin-palace known as the Golden Eagle:

If that house was the Golden Eagle, the one at the opposite corner of the narrow street might be called the Golden Balls. It was a pawnbroker's shop. Do you ever see the two far apart? And many a one visited that before they visited the Golden Eagle. Numbers were passing into it that Saturday night, carrying with them incongruous articles -- flat-irons and children's clothes, pillows and timepieces, wedding rings and men's boots, Dutch ovens and chimney ornaments. Some pressed in there from sheer necessity, others, to obtain means of gratifying their fiery craving for drink.  

26 (192).

Earlier in the century, John Woodyer's *Treatise on Pawnbroking* casually equated pledging with alcoholism, and even self-murder: "Who can esteem it improbable that pawning leads to the 'water, the razor, or the rope,' to free the wretched from so miserable an existence?"  

27 The loss of self-control initiated by the pawnbroker was only the first in a series of declensions to which the pledger was inevitably subjected; furthermore,

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25. *The Poor Man's Four Evils* (London: C. Fox, 1846), 7. The "four evils" are the pub, the quack-doctor, the pawn-broker, and waste of time.
because the pledger was enmeshed in a nexus of obligations that began with his family, his loss of self-control eventually became a social problem. *The Poor Man's Four Evils* includes criminal behavior among the roster of disorders the pawn-shop could potentially produce, and is quick to connect individual corruption with family decay. Just as the combination of alcohol and pawning produced crime, alcoholic parents who frequented the pawnshop produced socially deviant offspring: "Families whose subsistence is consumed by the publican, the quack-doctor and the pawnbroker are nurseries for our prisons. A wasteful mother and a drinking father are sure to have bad, disorderly, vicious, and criminal children."\(^{28}\)

In 1868, "Truths From A Pawnbroker" expressed a similar conviction that pawning led directly to drinking, and drinking, "where carried to an excess in men . . . tends to reduce the family to beggary and want, while in women the example is more frequently followed by members of the family, and the effect is felt more in the debasement of their morals."\(^{29}\) What is more, for T. Turner, this erosion of family morality was exacerbated by the way children were often used to "gratify" their parents' perverse desires:

\[\begin{align*}
& \text{I have known a man to compel his wife to strip his children and pledge their clothing, to procure him the means of gratifying his base appetite. I have known a woman to do it while her husband has been hard at work. You may put it down as certain that every}
\end{align*}\]

\(^{28}\) *The Poor Man's Four Evils*, 11.

drunken man or woman among the lower classes knows the pawn shop as well as the gin shop.30

Against the plethora of "base appetites" satisfied by the pawnshop, incest stands out as the most egregious form of family erosion imaginable. If the hand-to-mouth conversion of children's clothing into drink insinuates that the pawnbroker was literally stripping away the moral and bodily integrity of both the pledger and his entire family, the idea that he could make a mother into a procurer of her own children suggested that Uncle had a role in what was popularly believed to be the inherent sexual depravity of the working classes.

Moreover, incest was not the only brand of sexual immorality that the pawnbroker was believed to foster. Because women tended to have the least valuable possessions to use as security, their pledges most often took the form of their own clothing: "I blush to state it," wrote Turner in 1864, but "women, when all their money is gone, are known to slip off some article of dress, and hand it to the landlord as a security for the maddening beverage he calls porter."31 Similarly, in Danesbury House, when a girl "scarcely seventeen" with "the plague spot of intemperance" already on her face is refused credit at the gin-palace, she leaves for a few minutes only to return,

and flinging down a shilling on the counter, demanded a half-quartern of "mountain dew." The gin was served out to her and the eightpence change. She had taken off her cotten gown in the street,

and pledged it for a shilling at the opposite pawnshop. "Who says I am to be done?" cried she, when it was swallowed, turning round and holding out her scant petticoat, as if she were preparing to dance a minuet.32

As female pledging and burlesque become suddenly identical, the friendly, neighborhood pawnbroker takes on all the insidious characteristics of both publican and panderer. Rampant prostitution emerges quite easily from this vision of women disrobing in pubs, and Turner warns his readers that these unfortunate pledgers,

are not limited to any class -- their ranks are filled from every grade. Some have been nursed in comfort -- trained with care -- lived in the enjoyment of every luxury the heart could desire, and owe their degradation to a false step -- to disappointed hopes -- to cunning schemers -- to the formation of habits which not only admit, but compel a downward tendency, until the last stage is reached, when destitute of shame they seem to possess only the power to resist every effort to elevate and bring back to a position of comfort and respect."33

Using the idiomatic downward spiral of social determinism debates, Turner maps his teleology of female degradation against the destructive workings of the pawnshop, epitomizing the way that women, and not only working-class women, often took the brunt of anti-pawnshop propaganda. Although statistical evidence did point to the fact that women were Uncle's primary customers, the causal relationship established by Turner and other writers

32. Ward, 197.
33. Turner, 9-10.
between pawnbroking and prostitution, pawnbroking and incest, was a rhetorical deflection of social anxieties about female empowerment onto the culturally sensitive ideology of the Victorian family. For example, moral anxiety about women "pledging" their own bodies for drink may be displaced economic concern about women's legal and social right to own and dispose of their own property. Apparently the pawnshop could not only liberate the working-classes from an economic heritage of poverty and subservience, but it had the power to free women from the social imperatives imposed on them by gender: given that before the Married Women's Property Act was passed in 1882 all of a wife's possessions legally belonged to her husband, "a wife was alienating not her goods but his at the pawnbroker's."34

While the difficulty of proving spousal consent rendered any official regulations virtually impossible, it is nevertheless apparent that female access to pawnshops, like working-class access to pawnshops, directly threatened a certain philosophy of ownership which was endemic to the mid-nineteenth century, when as Jeff Nunokowa argues, "the right to alienate had become the centerpiece of proprietorial prerogative."35 Moreover, Turner's rhetorical leap from the pawnshop to the prostitute acquires a certain degree of logic when we are reminded by Catherine Gallagher that the "whole sphere to which usury belongs, the sphere of

34. Tebbutt, 42. The suspicion that washerwomen were capitalizing on their husband's property was so disturbing to middle-class legislators that the 1870 Select Committee on Pawnbroking made female pledging their primary order of business.
exchange as opposed to that of production, is traditionally associated with women":"Women are items of exchange, a form of currency and also a type of commodity. Of course, in normal kinship arrangements, when the exchange is completed and the woman becomes a wife, she enters the realm of "natural" (in the Aristotelian sense) production. But the prostitute never makes this transition from exchange to production; she retains her commodity form at all times. Like money, the prostitute, according to ancient accounts, is incapable of natural procreation.36
Returning us neatly to Marx's notion of the homogenizing power of money, Gallagher complicates her argument by including the figure of the female author in this association of the usurer and the prostitute, pointing out that although money is a "sign of sterility, and even of outcast status . . . it is nevertheless an emblem of liberation from patriarchal authority."37
Although Gallagher is finally more interested in George Eliot's status as a female writer who escaped patriarchal authority by earning her own money than she is in the cultural and historical status of the Victorian pawnshop, it is important that her observations about money, usury, and the figure of the prostitute are made with reference to the economic morphology of Daniel Deronda. Without making the connection between pawnbrokers and uncles, Gallagher still comes to the conclusion that the usurer represents a significant challenge to patriarchy because of his

37. Ibid., 46.
perpetual association with the sphere of exchange rather than production. Indeed, as I have been arguing, the pawnbroker's libertarian capacities made him a culturally resonant personification of the threat that commercialism and the rhetoric of self-help posed to the social, biological, and economic hierarchisms of the paternal chain. Yet my own work differs from Gallagher's by introducing a concept of the avunculate to the debates surrounding usury and pawnbroking, in order to indicate the extent to which non-nuclear, or at least non-normative, family structures were used to represent developing capitalist economies in the nineteenth century. In this context, the brokering process described by the rabbinical prohibition in *Daniel Deronda* -- the transformation of parental bones into spoons -- functions as a parable of nineteenth-century capitalism, outlining the way the affective law of the father was being replaced with the political economy of uncles, severing children from their parents by dissolving the links between past and future, origin and outcome, cause and effect. Although Gwendolyn and Daniel seem to represent oppositional forces in *Daniel Deronda*, and their stories have been viewed as so irreconcilable that the formidable critic F. R. Leavis wished they could be physically separated, Gwendolyn's extreme egoism and Daniel's masochistic selflessness are attributed to similar familial disruptions and paternal erasures, and to the same avuncular machinations that inevitably commodify parental relicts. In *Daniel Deronda*, two tales of economic individualism are played out in the context of family disaffection, with uncles standing in for pawnbrokers in the mystification of paternal heritage.
The structure of *Daniel Deronda* even replicates this mystification of origin in that the novel opens with the Leubronn scenes of Gwendolyn losing all her money at the gambling table, and resorting to the pawnshop to repair her loss, only to abruptly refocus the narrative on a series of events that occurred *prior* to the incidents at Leubronn. If the relationship between cause and effect seems obvious in the early portion of the novel, and we are satisfied that Gwendolyn's recourse to the pawnbroker is an individualistic alternative to making "herself in any way indebted" (46) to the charitable compassion of her travelling companions, Eliot destabilizes our initial assumptions by indicating that Gwendolyn's choice to pledge her father's chain merely literalizes a process of paternal alienation that is well underway by the time Gwendolyn reaches Leubronn. "All my best ornaments were taken from me long ago" (319), Mrs. Davilow has admitted to her daughter, despite the fact that she "usually avoided any reference to such facts about Gwendolyn's step-father as that he had carried off his wife's jewellery and disposed of it" (319). When Mrs. Davilow's confession effectively resituates Gwendolyn's act of pledging along a continuum of paternal subtractions, it suggests that by pawning the paternal chain Gwendolyn is merely participating in her own alienation from her past, perpetuating a project of divestment initiated not at the counter of the pawnbroker, but at the hands of another force of paternal erosion: her step-father.

In fact, Captain Davilow's gradual alienation of the Harleth family jewels is closely linked to the anxiety about pawnbroking that lies at the heart of both halves of *Daniel Deronda*. By literally functioning as a place
where family affection can be commodified, the economic nexus of the pawnshop isolates and defines the inevitable teleology of modern capitalism "which left all mutuality," in the words of cosmopolitan musician Herr Klesmer, "to be determined simply by the need of a market" (283). In Gwendolyn's case, the market for family sentiment and paternal identity was first determined by her step-father, and by the time Daniel Deronda opens, Gwendolyn's affective memory is as alienated as most of her biological father's remnants:

She would probably have known much more about her father but for a little incident which happened when she was twelve years old. Mrs Davilow had brought out, as she did only at wide intervals, various memorials of her first husband, and while showing his miniature to Gwendolyn recalled with a fervour which seemed to count on a peculiar filial sympathy, the fact that dear papa had died when his daughter was in long clothes. Gwendolyn, immediately thinking of the unlovable step-father whom she had been acquainted with the greater part of her life while her frocks were short, said --

'Why did you marry again, mamma? It would have been nicer if you had not.'

Mrs. Davilow colored deeply, a slight convulsive movement passed over her face, and straightaway shutting up the memorials she said, with a violence quite unusual in her --

'You have no feeling, child.' (52)

While the mention of short frocks here, supplemented by Gwendolyn's apparent fear of sex later, has generated some critical speculation about the
possibility that Captain Davilow's "spoilage" is sexual as well as economic, it isn't necessary to anchor such narrative traces of incest to psychological interpretations of *Daniel Deronda*. Like other nineteenth-century critics of capitalism and detractors of pawnbroking, Eliot combines the terminology of economic alienation with the rhetoric of sexual exploitation in order to highlight the paternal and patriarchal erosions taking place under the directives of capitalism. After all, within the economic conventions of nineteenth-century culture, a widow with a fortune is also a paternal relict, a bit of floating capital that cannot be repossessed without a great deal of anxiety about the degree of "proprietal prerogative" still accruing to the deceased husband. Along with the more portable spoils of the Harleth jewellrey box, Captain Davilow appropriated the dead man's wife and daughter, and there is little ambiguity about the moral status of this kind of paternal usurpation in the economically charged world of *Daniel Deronda*, a novel that will later characterize the courtship of a widow as "lurking about the battle-field to strip the dead" (778).

On the one hand, Gwendolyn's derailed history lesson about her father underscores her step-father's powers of alienation by demonstrating the way Gwendolyn's affective interest in her paternal heritage is instantly sidetracked by Captain Davilow's figurative presence. Yet it is also the case that Mrs. Davilow's angry response that her daughter has "no feeling," neatly encapsulates the problem with Gwendolyn that *Daniel Deronda* forces us to confront throughout the rest of the novel. Devoid of all sentimental attachment to the past, Gwendolyn epitomizes the disaffected results of modern economic philosophy, and the way that commercial
factors work to mystify personal relations between individual people and among family members. If her willful ignorance begins with a fundamental lack of knowledge about her father, it extends into a more general failure to understand the connections between the private world of the family, and the economic world of capital. Although she is comfortable with the knowledge that her mother has a modest inheritance, for example, she has "no notion how her maternal grandfather got the fortune inherited by his two daughters; but he had been a West Indian -- which seemed to exclude further question" (52). Furthermore, it never "occurred to her to inquire into the conditions of colonial banking, on which, as she had many opportunities of knowing, the family fortune was dependent" (94). If Gwendolyn accepts the economic fact of her family fortune, she remains in devout ignorance about its origin in the sugar and coffee plantations of the West Indies, and about the enslaved race of people whose forced labour cultivated her family's commercial success.

For these reasons, Daniel Deronda's redemption of Gwendolyn Harleth's paternal history exceeds his initial, literal redemption of her father's turquoise chain from the shop of the Leubronn pawnbroker. Indeed, Gwendolyn's first encounter with Daniel is in the Leubronn casino, where he casts an "evil eye" on her play at the roulette wheel and makes her lose her stake as rapidly as she had won it. Although Gwendolyn experiences "a striking admission of human equality" (36) in the gambling hall, and the rapid redistribution of money dissolves all social distinctions normatively maintained by nationality, class, and even gender, Eliot is unambivalent about the negative effects of such rampant republicanism:
The white bejewelled fingers of an English countess were very near touching a bony, yellow, crab-like hand stretching a bared wrist to clutch a heap of coin... And where else would her ladyship have graciously consented to sit by that dry-lipped feminine figure prematurely old, withered after short bloom like her artificial flowers, holding a shabby velvet reticule before her... There too near the countess, was a respectable London tradesman... Standing close to his chair was a handsome Italian, calm, statuesque, reaching across him to place the first pile of napoleons from a new bagful just brought him... the pile was in half a minute pushed over to an old bewigged woman with eyeglasses pinching her nose... But while every single player differed markedly from each other, there was a certain uniform negativeness of expression which had the effect of a mask -- as if they had all eaten of some root that for the time compelled the brains of each to the same narrow monotony of action. (36-37)

As the familiar idiom of addiction converts difference into sameness in this passage, Gwendolyn's abiding desire to access personal freedom and autonomy by "doing as she liked" is reabsorbed within a distasteful scenario of determinism: even the most exciting forms of pleasure become monotonous, boring, methodical when individuals become habituated to their rhythm. Moreover, when Eliot adds a little boy to the picture who "alone had his face turned toward the doorway," and his back to his mother, "a lady deeply engaged at the roulette-table" (36), the gambling hall is figured as yet another place where the sacred tie between parent and
child is the price of admission. We hardly need Daniel's negative characterization of gambling as "raking a heap of money together, and internally chuckling over it, when others are feeling the loss of it" (383), to realize that the casino and the pawnshop function as analogous emblems of the capitalist system, each converting bones into spoons, and affect into cash.

Although Daniel is unable to stop Gwendolyn from marrying Grandcourt, and displacing the woman who has already borne Grandcourt four children, he will eventually teach Gwendolyn the human element of her economic crimes, and remind her of her paternal heritage in the process. "You wanted me not to do that -- not to make my gain out of another's loss," Gwendolyn realizes, transforming the redeemed necklace into "memorial" by winding "it thrice around her wrist and ma[king] a bracelet of it." (495, 500). Moreover, at the height of Gwendolyn's marital unhappiness, when she and Grandcourt are yachting on the Mediterranean, she will remember Daniel's advice to stop being so self-absorbed, and attempt to "interest herself in sugar-canes as something outside her personal affairs" (735). In casting about for external interests, Gwendolyn ironically focuses on the economic benchmark of her paternal heritage, the nexus of commercial exploitation that she has always profited by, but ignored. However unmotivated, Gwendolyn's new consciousness of the sugar-canbes subtly marks a point of filial return, illustrating the way that Daniel's primary function in the plot of Daniel Deronda is to resanctify the law of the father: to redeem the paternal family as well as
the paternal nation from the modern state of economic disaffection epitomized by the pawnshop.

Indeed, we don't need to enter the hyper-commercial atmosphere of the pawnshop or the gambling parlour to visit the sphere of brokerage in *Daniel Deronda*: just as Captain Davilow was the first alternative father to alienate Gwendolyn from her place in the paternal chain, a more literally avuncular sphere of influence continued the process of mystification when Mrs. Davilow moved Gwendolyn and her four stepsisters to Offendene, a manor house in the community where her brother-in-law is the current rector. Immediately Uncle Gascoigne assumes responsibility for Gwendolyn's social and economic liberation from her past, arguing with his wife that no expense should be spared in their niece's commodification:

This girl is really worth some expense: you don't often see her equal. She ought to make a first-rate marriage, and I should not be doing my duty if I spared my trouble in helping her forward. You know yourself she has been under a disadvantage with such a father-in-law, and a second family keeping her always in the shade. I feel for the girl. And I should like your sister and her family now to have the benefit of your having married rather a better specimen of our kind than she did (66).

Superficially, Uncle Gascoigne's avuncular benevolence would seem to counteract the bad parenting of Gwendolyn's reprobate stepfather: indeed, he is quick to insist that there are no similarities between Captain Davilow and "better specimens" of fathering such as himself. Yet the more we learn about Uncle Gascoigne, the more we realize that he is as
contradictory in his character as he is in his physical profile: his "nose began with an intention to be aquiline, but suddenly became straight," and "there were no distinctly clerical lines in his face, no official reserve or ostentatious benignity of expression, no tricks of starchiness or affected ease" (59). The narrator suggests that these anomalies have a very specific history, and that they may be traced to the fact that Uncle Gascoigne was not born a clergyman, but became one through a series of independent acts.

Perhaps he owed this freedom from the sort of professional make-up which penetrates skin tones and gestures and defies all drapery, to the fact that he had once been Captain Gaskin, having taken orders and a diphthong but shortly before his engagement to Miss Armyn . . . Mr. Gascoigne's tone of thinking after some long-quieted fluctuations had become ecclesiastical rather than theological; not the modern Anglican, but what he would have called sound English, free from nonsense: such as became a man who looked at a national religion by daylight, and saw it in its relation to other things. (60)

In other words, Uncle Gascoigne, or rather, Captain Gaskin, is more like that lesser specimen of fatherhood, Captain Davilow, than he may like to admit. When we later learn "what nobody would have suspected, and what nobody was told," that Mr. Gascoigne's father had "risen to be a provincial corn-dealer" (176), it is clear that the social status of Gwendolyn's popular uncle is based upon a more figurative brokerage of the paternal chain than his niece's: a process of self authorization that enabled a disenfranchised boy to erase his paternal origins and alter his very subjectivity through a series of professions, an advantageous marriage, and a strategic
transformation of surname. Like the pawnbroker, like Captain Davilow, Uncle Gascoigne is well-versed in the transformation of bones into spoons, and he understands that the commodification of Gwendolyn is the process by which he will release his niece from the shadows of her paternal history.

Furthermore, it appears that the freedom from patrilineal identity enjoyed by Uncle Gascoigne is shared by many of his neighbors. Community gossip has it that "there's no blood on any side" of the Arrowpoint family, for example: although they are one of the wealthiest and most exclusive families in the area, "Old Admiral Arrowpoint was one of Nelson's men, you know -- a doctor's son. And we all know how the mother's money came" (460) -- from trade, of course. Although the same Arrowpoints also patronize a penniless German musician, Herr Klesmer, they disingenuously protest "the possibility of any longer patronising genius, its royalty being universally acknowledged" (135). Klesmer himself has "cosmopolitan ideas" (284), and responds to upper-class condescension by staunchly insisting that "[my] rank as an artist is of my own winning, and I would not exchange it with any other" (292). Of Sir Hugo Mallinger and his adopted nephew Daniel Deronda, much more will be said, but it is worth noting here that the avuncular wisdom of this man who "habitually undervalued birth," includes some important advice to "remember Napoleon's mot -- Je suis un ancetre," (201) or, "I am an ancestor."

The social events favored by this neighborhood are, likewise, modeled upon seemingly republican principles: the tournament prizes of
the archery club "were all of the nobler symbolic kind: not property to be
 carried off in a parcel, degrading honor into gain: but the gold arrow and
 the silver, the gold star and the silver, to be worn for a time in sign of
 achievement and then transferred to the next who did excellently" (134).
 When Gwendolyn Harleth joins the archery club under the sponsorship of
 her Uncle Gascoigne, who of course is already a member, she achieves "not
 the vulgar reward of a shilling poll-tax, but that of a special gold star to be
 worn on the breast . . . There was a general falling into ranks to give her
 space that she might advance conspicuously to receive the gold star from
 the hands of Lady Brackenshaw" (140). If the gold star destined for
 Gwendolyn's breast already resembles the medal of a military hero, the
 description of fellow archers and spectators "falling into ranks" to let
 Gwendolyn pass idiomatically reinforces the scene's connection to military
 service, where honor gained through skill can reshuffle class-based
 hierarchies, as it did for Nelson, Napoleon, and even Captain Gaskin.

 Unfortunately Gwendolyn will soon learn that the carefully
 controlled competitions of the Brackenshaw Archers are mock scenarios of
 egalitarianism, primarily because women are usually shut out from the
 kind of self-making effected through public acts of heroism. "Women
 can't go in search of adventures -- to find out the North-West Passage or
 the source of the Nile, or to hunt tigers in the East" (171), insists
 Gwendolyn to Grandcourt, attempting to stall his upcoming marriage
 proposal by diverting his pointed suggestions that she might not always live
 with her mother at Offendene.38 "But a woman can be married,"

38. Despite the fact that Gwendolyn purportedly knows nothing about world events, she
 manages to list two major goals of Victorian exploration among the things in which women
Grandcourt responds, simultaneously making his intentions clear and citing the only socially sanctioned kind of self-transformation open to a woman. If this proposal scene between Gwendolyn and Grandcourt sounds familiar, it is because the exchange replicates a prior proposal made to Gwendolyn by her cousin, Rex Gascoigne, in which Gwendolyn announces that marriage is antithetical to a woman's ability to do any of the things that she would like to do, such as "-- go to the North Pole, or ride steeplechases, or go to be a queen in the East like Lady Hester Stanhope" (101). Considering Gwendolyn's ignorance about the history of her family, it is worth noting that both of these responses bespeak a certain amount of knowledge about the goals of Victorian exploration, and about the unwritten social codes that keep all but the most eccentric of women from participating in such projects. What is more important, however, is that Gwendolyn deflects both marriage proposals with a restless litany of possible or impossible identities for herself, roles that answer her abiding desire to "be something" (271) other than a requisite stopgap in the paternal chain: to create for herself an identity unrelated to the family functions of daughter, wife or mother.

Yet the cosmopolitan pretensions of Uncle Gascoigne and his contemporaries become predictably conservative where women are concerned, and it appears as if "respectable" women can never entirely divest themselves from the obligations of patriarchal heritage. They are necessary points of reference in the homosocial continuum between father and son, requisite links in a paternal chain that is constantly being forged cannot participate.
with or without their approval. The Arrowpoints, for example, may pay lip service to the republican notion that artistic genius is the social equivalent of royalty, but when Catherine Arrowpoint informs her parents that she is engaged to the bohemian musician Klesmer, she is immediately told that her duty is to "think of the nation and the public good," and to prevent great properties from passing into the "hands of foreigners" (290). The self-made, liberal-minded Arrowpoints are actually hypocrites who view their daughter's marriage into an established English family as a way to permanently disguise the unseemly origins of her fortune: as Catherine so rightly interprets, it is the presumed duty of an heiress to "carry the property gained in trade into the hands of a certain class" (290). While the pawnshop converts paternal relicts into capital, Catherine Arrowpoint's marriage to a nobleman will reverse the commodification process, transforming trade-gotten spoons back into the venerable bones of the British aristocracy.

Although Gwendolyn is not an heiress, and is not viewed as a financial "carrier" like Catherine Arrowpoint, the role that she seems similarly destined to occupy as a medium between father and son is foreshadowed by male reaction to her community debut, and it becomes clear that a beautiful woman's currency in the continuum of male homosociality is sexual rather than economic.

'Who is that with Gascoigne?' said the archdeacon, neglecting a discussion of military manoeuvres on which, as a clergyman, he was naturally appealed to. And his son, on the other side of the room -- a hopeful young scholar, who had already suggested some 'not less
elegant than ingenious emendations of Greek texts -- said nearly at the same time, 'By George! who is that girl with the awfully well-set head and jolly figure?' (73)

Before Gwendolyn arrives, father and son appear to be separated by more than the length of the room. In fact, their only similarity seems to be the abiding anti-paternalism that loosely characterizes the entire male community: while the archdeacon, like Uncle Gascoigne, appears to have a military past, his more idealistic son is busy modernizing the plots and plausibilities of ancient Greek literature. Yet sexual desire for Gwendolyn spontaneously elides all differences between father and son, ironically subverting the way that Gwendolyn views her attractiveness to men as a form of personal empowerment that removes her from the paternal chain. Although Uncle Gascoigne wants to help his niece escape the negative ramifications of her paternal history, he wants to do so by reinscribing her within a more socially acceptable set of patriarchal connections: like the Arrowpoints, Uncle Gascoigne's project is one of repaternalization, and he intends to disguise Gwendolyn's origins in the same way he elided his own, with a strategic marriage and an alias, without encouraging her desire to become something else.

Central to the idiom of self-making is the familiar Victorian metaphor of theatricality, and it is no coincidence that Gwendolyn's youthful habit of staging herself in a variety of tableaux vivants -- as St. Cecilia (55), as the famous actress Rachel (84), as Hermione (90) -- becomes a full-fledged desire to become an actress in order to escape the multiple oppressions of marriage: "The inmost fold of her questioning
now, was whether she need take a husband at all -- whether she could not achieve substantiality for herself and know gratified ambition without bondage" (295). Her private audition for Herr Klesmer is an abject failure, however; like the controlled competitions of the archery club, the community theatricals in which Gwendolyn has taken part in the past have been scenarios of false republicanism: places where ladies can become actresses without the sacrifice of caste that is endemic to life on the public stage. Under Klesmer's criticism, Gwendolyn "wished she had not sent for him: this first experience of being taken on some other ground than that of her social rank and her beauty was becoming bitter to her" (300). Like the pawnshop, the public theatre strips the self of patrilineal context and socioeconomic status, leaving identity to fashion and refashion itself solely through the artistic renderings of plastik.

It is precisely this desire to live "a myriad of lives in one" (689) that Daniel's mother, the famous actress Alcharisi, cites as the reason she abandoned Daniel when he was a child and pursued a career on the stage. "I had not much affection to give you." Alcharisi explains to Daniel years later, "I did not want affection. I had been stifled with it. I wanted to live out the life that was in me, and not to be hampered with other lives" (688). For Alcharisi, as for Gwendolyn, the economic and social autonomy that becoming an actress promises women is irreconcilable with affective ties to family and with the genealogical imperatives of the paternal chain. Alcharisi, in fact, has chosen to be an artist to escape her father's mandate that she become the consummate "Jewish woman' under pain of his curse":
To have a pattern cut out -- "this is the Jewish woman; this is what you must be; this is what you are wanted for; a woman's heart must be of such a size and no larger, else it must be pressed small, like Chinese feet; her happiness is to be made as cakes are, by a fixed receipt." That is what my father wanted. He wished I had been a son; he cared for me as a makeshift link. His heart was set on his Judaism . . . such men turn their wives and daughters into slaves.

(694)

To prevent herself from becoming a "makeshift link" between past and present, from becoming a medium through which Jewish heritage is descended, Alcharisi resolves "to have no more ties, but such as I could free myself from" (697). She pawns the remnants of her paternal chain more effectively than Gwendolyn, finding in Sir Hugo Mallinger a willing Uncle who "would pay money to have such a boy" (697) as her son Daniel.

It is finally one of the fundamental ironies of Daniel Deronda that the Alcharisi delivers her son from a patriarchal heritage of Jewish banking, moneylending, and usury, only to deposit him in the parallel world of the avunculate. Even more powerfully than Uncle Gascoigne, Uncle Hugo represents the force of modern individualism in Eliot's novel, and the kinds of commercial brokerage that threaten the social, economic, and biological law of the father. Sir Hugo is unmarried and childless when he initially transplants Daniel to England, and though he does marry several years later, his wife produces no male offspring. The very existence of the Mallinger family is dangerously under erasure by the time Gwendolyn Harleth marries the next in line for Sir Hugo's fortune, his
biological nephew, Grandcourt: "that fine families dwindled off into females, and estates ran together into the single heirship of a mealy-complexioned male, was a tendency in things which seemed to be accounted for by a citation of other instances" (497). The family crisis here represented by Sir Hugo Mallinger's "dwindling" line of inheritance, becomes a symbol of national crisis in *Daniel Deronda*, and of the way that the idiom of nephews is replacing the idiom of sons in the teleology of heirship.

Despite Sir Hugo apparent distress about about Lady Mallinger's failure to produce a male heir, he is quite careless about conservative notions of lineage, heritage, and tradition. In fact, the English manor house in which Daniel was raised is the perfect setting for a variety of cosmopolitan transformations: described as a hybrid of "the undisguised modern with the antique," and a convergence of "various architectural fragments" (469), Uncle Hugo's country home used to be a gothic abbey, but few of the old rooms still function as they were originally intended. In fact, "the finest bit of all is turned into stables. It is part of the old church. When I improved the place I made the most of every other bit; but it was out of my reach to change the stables, so the horses have the benefit of the fine old choir" (462). The Abbey, like the pawnshop, is a place where the remnants of ancient religions are converted into modern Protestant luxuries, and it is here that Uncle Hugo works the transformation of bones into spoons, converting a Jewish son into a Christian nephew by mystifying his origins and rescripting his genealogy.
This hybrid Abbey is also the scene of Daniel's first suspicions about his parentage. "Enclosed on three sides by a gothic cloister," a thirteen year-old Daniel is reading -- appropriately -- an History of the Italian Republics when he is prompted to ask his tutor, "Mr. Fraser, how was it that the popes and cardinals always had so many nephews?" Looking up -- also appropriately -- from his political economy, Mr. Fraser gives the matter-of-fact answer: "Their own children were called nephews" (202-203).

Having read Shakespeare as well as a great deal of history, he could have talked with the wisdom of a bookish child about men who were born out of wedlock and were held unfortunate in consequence, being under disadvantages which requires them to be a sort of heroes if they were to work themselves up to an equal standing with their legally born brothers. But he had never brought such knowledge into any association with his own lot, which had been too easy for him ever to think about it -- until this moment when there had darted into his mind with the magic of quick comparison, the possibility that here was the secret of his own birth, and that the man whom he called uncle was really his father. (205-6)

By schooling him from childhood in this republican philosophy of self-making, Je suis un ancêtre, Uncle Hugo has encouraged his nephew to forget the importance of biological parents by pointing out that the stigmas of heritage are rhetorically erased, and the paternal chain effectively broken, when an individual situates himself at the point of genealogical origin. But after learning that the idiom of uncles and nephews is a
cultural euphemism for illegitimacy, "t]he uncle that he loved very dearly took the aspect of a father who held secrets about him -- who had done him a wrong -- yes, a wrong" (206). Until he meets the Alcharisi, and learn the truth about his heritage, Daniel labors under the suspicion that Uncle Hugo's Napoleonic rhetoric of self-making is really a form of paternal rejection, and that he, like the popes' nephews, is kept from his birthright by a father who does not want to acknowledge the stigmas of sexual excess.

This is the primary reason that Daniel is so offended when Sir Hugo summons him to sing for a group of his friends, and consequently inquires if his nephew would like to be "a great singer" when he grows up:

He knew a great deal of what it was to be a gentleman by inheritance . . . and now the lad had been stung to the quick by the idea that his uncle -- perhaps his father -- thought of a career for him which was totally unlike his own, and which he knew very well was not thought of among possible destinations for the sons of English gentlemen.

(208-9)

The opera-house is a site of patrilineal nullification for Daniel as it was for his mother, and he takes his uncle's apparently casual comment as further proof that "there was something about his birth which threw him out from the class of gentleman to which the baronet belonged" (209). Although Daniel has the details of his parentage wrong, it is clear that he has the tenor of avuncular disinheritance right. Freed from the oppressions of the paternal chain and from the rigid, biology-is-destiny determinism of patriarchal inheritance, Daniel is his own ancestor, with "an apprenticeship
to life which would not shape him too definitely, and rob him of that choice that might come from a free growth" (220).

What Eliot makes clear, however, is that Daniel's uninhibited sense of free-will and personal autonomy actually prevents him from creating an active identity for himself; instead, the radical undoing of Daniel's patrilineal history leaves him wandering in a contemplative, philosophical "state of social neutrality. Other men, he inwardly said, had a more definite place and duties" (220).

A too reflective and diffuse sympathy was in danger of paralysing in him that indignation against wrong and that selectness of fellowship which are the conditions of moral force . . . as soon as he took up any antagonism, though only in thought, he seemed to himself like the Sabine warriors in the memorable story -- with nothing to meet his spear but flesh of his flesh, and objects that he loved. (412)

While Gwendolyn's lack of paternal ties and affective memory leaves her devoid of all sentimental attachments, ready to capitalize indiscriminately on the fragments of her paternal history, Daniel's capacity for empathy is so expansive it threatens him with moral stagnation. Everyone is potentially a family member to Daniel, and any "antagonism" may risk turning the flesh of unknown family members into political, economic, or religious capital. This is finally the reason why Daniel, from the time he was a child, has been unable "to push his way properly," or to "swop for his own advantage"(218) in Uncle Hugo's competition-driven world of Whigs and Tories, supply and demand, gains and losses: without knowledge of his patrilineage he has no way of understanding the
Deuteronomistic commandments on usury, and cannot, after all, tell the
difference between brothers and others.

Consequently, the excessive scope of Daniel's sympathy becomes a
selfless desire to "redeem" other people, even at the expense of his own
interests. It is not only Gwendolyn, but Hans Meyrick, his college friend,
who Daniel saves from "threatening chances" (222) when he abandons his
own course of study to help Hans win a classical scholarship. Moreover,
after Daniel rescues Mirah Lapidoth from a suicide-by-drowning attempt,
she compares him to "the wonderful story of Bouddha giving himself to the
famished tigress to save her and her little ones from starving" (522).
Mirah's brother, the etherealized Jew Mordecai, will extend his sister's
analogy by seeing Daniel as a healthy body capable of absorbing the
enfeebled soul of Jewish historical consciousness: "You must be not only a
hand to me, but a soul -- believing my belief -- being moved by my reasons
-- hoping my hope . . . You will be my life: it will be planted afresh; it
will grow" (557). Within the ongoing panorama of cannibalism that Daniel
Deronda repeatedly stages, Daniel is perpetually at risk of becoming food
for other people's hunger, and a commodity for other people's use. In
fact, the "apprenticeship to life which would not shape him too definitely"
risks leaving Daniel with no shape at all: "[M]y dear boy, it is good to be
unselfish and generous," Uncle Hugo warns his nephew, "but don't carry
that too far. It will not do to give yourself over to be melted down for the
benefit of the tallow-trade; you must know where to find yourself" (224).

If this avuncular metaphor is initially interesting for its description
of Daniel as a commodity that is endlessly appropriable, pliable, and
transformable, it becomes even more significant when we consider that
tallow is a colorless, tasteless form of animal fat used in the making of
candles. Unable to swop for his own advantage in the economy of the
avunculate, Daniel is himself in danger of being swopped: it is no accident
that when Eliot identifies Ezra Cohen as a "Jeshurun of a pawnbroker"
(575), she is invoking an Old Testament figure who apparently "waxed fat"
(n898). Moreover, Sir Hugo's anxiety about Daniel's tendency to put his
own identity under elision in the service of other people reflects an
inherent fear that his nephew will eventually revert to Hebraic type, or
rather, stereotype. Daniel's excessive pliancy resembles not only the
Alcharisi's remarkable talent for plastik, but the pawnbroker's unlimited
capacity for "accommodation"; after all, Ezra Cohen describes his family's
specifically Jewish talents as "a sort of cleverness as good as gutterch: you
can twist it how you like. There's nothing some old gentlemen won't
do if you set 'em to it" (578). While Cohen is nominally a usurer, a broker
of valuable objects, a lender of money, a waxer of fat, he is also a tool to
be used by his customers: in Marxist vernacular, a malleable
personification of his own stock-in-trade. Cohen explains to Daniel that he
"began early . . . to turn myself about and put myself into shapes to fit every
sort of box" (447), adding later that his business of accommodation has
made him "a sharp knife" (450). Within Cohen's idiom of perpetual
mutability, the pawnbroker's economic services finally become
indistinguishable from his goods: "in point of business, I'm not a class of
goods to be in danger. If anyone takes to rolling me, I can pack myself up
like a caterpillar, and find my feet when I'm alone" (636). Although Ann
Cvetkovich has identified male Jewish identity as the only stable type of masculine subjectivity in *Daniel Deronda*, the pawnbroker's stability, like Daniel's, is founded upon permanent instability. They find their autonomy, like the Alcharisi, in the reconstitutions of self enabled by social, economic, and national displacement.

When Grandcourt assesses Daniel as "fat" (475), he seemingly intends the word to register in its French significance as "fop," but his turn of phrase is finally more telling in its English sense. Without paternal antecedents, Daniel is fat -- tallow, plastik, guttapercha -- and derives his identity from an un-English, un-masculine capacity for utility. In fact, because Uncle Hugo's metaphor of the constantly reconstituted matter of the tallow-trade connects Daniel's subjectivity with his mother's (and Gwendolyn's) natural talent for plastik, it reminds us that Daniel's makeshift position in the Mallinger family has perpetually assigned him the feminine task of promoting patrilineal coherence. Not only does the bond between uncle and nephew act "as the same sort of difference does between a man and a woman in giving a piquancy to the attachment which subsists in spite of it" (367), but Sir Hugo views Daniel in the aspect of a prized commodity, "which, if found voice, might have said, 'You see this fine fellow -- not such as you see every day is he? -- he belongs to me in a sort of way, I brought him up from a child; but you would not ticket him off easily" (367). Furthermore, in the absence of the female figures that would normally mediate male relations, Uncle Hugo employs Daniel as the "medium" between himself and his biological nephew and heir-apparent,

Grandcourt. Learning that Grandcourt is cash-poor, the baronet sends Daniel to propose that Grandcourt exchange all future interest in Diplow (a property that stands to be entailed away from Lady Mallinger and her four daughters) for "a good sum of ready money" (197). By sacrificing both past and future for his own present comfort, Grandcourt's patrilineal chain is brokered by Sir Hugo as effectively as Gwendolyn's, and the baronet ironically forces Daniel to become an instrument of the very kind of alienation he most deplores; an alienation that has already put his own past under erasure.

In this context, Sir Hugo's declaration that Gwendolyn Harleth is no more like Lady Cragstone, the infamous female-gambler, "because she gambled a little, any more than I am like a broker because I am a Whig," (368) only underscores more thoroughly the parallel between uncles and pawnbrokers that has guided the economic telos of the novel. Uncle Hugo's brand of alienation interrupts the paternal chain so thoroughly that even Daniel's longed-for reunion with his mother, the Alcharisi, is described in Daniel Deronda's now-familiar idiom of transformation: "it made the filial yearnings of his life a disappointed pilgrimage to a shrine where there were no longer the symbols of sacredness" (723). Daniel's "filial yearnings" lose their hallowedness in the economy of the avunculate as easily as the missal clasps lost their religious significance in the economy of the pawnshop. The inevitable transformation of objects into capital proves too powerful a force for even Daniel to resist, and although he despises the modern mantra of buy cheap, sell dear, we learn that his years of social inaction and Hamlet-like self-scrutiny have been, ironically, "sustained by
three or five percent on capital which someone else has battled for" (225). As Daniel's forefathers have "battled" for their money in the despised Jewish money-markets, the a-commercial Daniel is revealed to be no better than a usurer, after all. Realizing that the economy of the avunculate is the only sphere in which practical action and decision-making can occur, Daniel chooses to marry Mirah, only able to bring closure to the marriage plot by making Gwendolyn "the victim of his happiness," and by making Gwendolyn's loss into his own gain.

When Daniel finally discovers the "truth" about his heritage, the text's abiding suspicion that the family is a pawnshop takes on an inverted logic, creating a parallel anxiety that the pawnshop is actually the family. Both pawnbrokers and uncles put the sacred affections of the family under erasure, and turn bones into spoons in the name of cosmopolitanism and progress. In fact, the pawnshop, like the gambling hall and the archery club, forges connections between people of disparate classes, religions, and nationalities, engendering a cosmopolitan kinship based solely on the business of financial "accommodation." As Cohen boasts to novice pledger, Daniel Deronda,

Well, sir, I've accommodated gentlemen of distinction -- I'm proud to say it. I wouldn't exchange my business with any in the world. There's none more honorable, nor more charitable, nor more necessary for all classes, from the good lady who wants a little more of the ready for the baker, to a gentleman like yourself, sir, who may want it for amusement. I like my business. I like my street, and I like my shop. I wouldn't have it a door further down. And I
wouldn't be without a pawn-shop, sir, to be the Lord Mayor. It puts you in connection with the world at large. I say it's like the Government revenue -- it embraces the brass as well as the gold of the country. (442)

As the undiscriminating "embraces" of the cosmopolitan pawnshop replace the more traditional connections of the paternal chain, Eliot reminds us of another of Marx's elucidations about capital: although "the exchange of commodities breaks through all local and personal bounds inseparable from direct barter . . . it develops a whole network of social relations spontaneous in their growth and entirely beyond the control of the actors."40 If the affective nuclear family is under erasure in the nineteenth-century social order, a new and accidental "network" has risen to take its place, a set of relations guided not by the patronage or sentiment of fathers, but by the political economy of uncles.

Indeed, when she is finally freed from her relations with patriarchy -- divested of both the oppressive husband, Grandcourt, who dictated her behavior and actions for the whole of their short marriage, and the paternalist Daniel -- Gwendolyn desires to return to her mother and sisters, but the teleology of the novel has other plans. By coming to represent the merged interests of her uncles, Gwendolyn is absorbed into the economy of the avunculate: clergyman Uncle Gascoigne, who mourns his past inadequacy as a father-figure to Gwendolyn, and baronet Uncle Hugo, who does not forgive Grandcourt for "the shabby way he has provided for your niece -- our niece, I will say" (826) become fast friends. Moreover, Uncle

40. Marx, 126.
Hugo is emphatic about the moral to the story of Gwendolyn: "If you marry another niece, be it to the Archbishop of Canterbury, bind him down. Your niece can't be married for the first time twice over. And if he's a good fellow, he'll wish to be bound" (827). It is important that Uncle Hugo's first lecture to the less worldly Uncle Gascoigne is about the economic "bonds" that must precede affective ties, as well as a lesson about the proper distribution of commodities so that they need never re-enter an economy of exchange. Unable to make the transition from the economic sphere of exchange to that of production, Gwendolyn again reminds us of her association with the prostitute and with the usurer; on the other hand, it is doubtful if her status as a commercial outlaw buys her any final freedom from patriarchal authority. As "our niece," Gwendolyn again serves as the connective tissue between men, but instead of linking men vertically through patriarchally-conferred roles -- mother, daughter, sister, wife -- she links men horizontally through the shape of uncles, dissolving class differences in the new cosmopolitan world. Our last view of Diplow is shaped by the social work of Uncle Hugo, who was spreading some cheerfulness in the neighborhood, among all ranks and persons concerned, from the stately homes of Brackenshaw and Quetcham to the respectable shop-parlours of Wancester. For Sir Hugo was a man who liked to show himself and be affable, a Liberal of good lineage, who confided entirely in Reform as not likely to make any serious difference in English habits of feeling, one of which undoubtedly is the liking to behold society well fenced and adorned with hereditary rank. Hence he made
 Diplow a most agreeable house, extending his invitations to old Wancester solicitors and young village curates, but also taking some care in the combination of his guests, and not feeding all the common poultry together, so that they should think their meal no particular compliment. (864)

Uncle Hugo's careful "combination" of guests is obviously guided by a desire to promote a kind of reform that takes place without revolution, and Eliot leaves us finally with the suspicion that the promises of the avunculate are simply feudal ideals in progressive clothes.
CHAPTER FOUR

"Send the Letters, Uncle John": Penny-Postage Reform and the Domestication of Empire

No, I don't have any big hypothesis about the conjoint development of capitalism, Protestantism, and postal rationalism, but all the same, things are necessarily linked. The post is a banking agency. Don't forget that in the great reformation of the "modern" period another great country of the Reformation played a spectacular role: in 1837 Rowland Hill publishes his book, *Post Office Reform: Its Importance and Practicability*. He is an educator; and a reformer of the fiscal system. What was he proposing? but the stamp, my love, what would we have done without it? The sticking stamp, that is, the uniformization of payment, the general equivalent of the tax, and above all, the bill before the letter, the payment in *advance*.

Jacques Derrida

*The Post Card*

In the summer of 1839, a short pamphlet, entitled *A Report of a Scene at Windsor Castle Respecting the Uniform Penny Postage*, appeared for the first time in a monthly issue of Charles Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby*. This fictional sketch, which would later prove to be the work of social reformer and art critic Henry Cole, is staged as a dramatic "scene" in which the young Queen Victoria sits at a large table in a council chamber at Windsor Castle "in deep study over 'Post Office Reform' by Rowland Hill," and surrounded by "Parliamentary and Commissioners Reports on Postage; Copies of the *Post Circular*; and Annual Reports of the American and French Post Office."¹ Lord Melbourne is depicted anxiously awaiting the Queen's opinion, which he receives in the opening lines of the sketch:

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THE QUEEN (exclaiming aloud) -- Mothers pawning their clothes to pay the postage of a child's letter! Every subject trying how to avoid postage without caring for the law! The Messrs. Baring sending letters illegally every week to avoid postage! Such things must not last.²

After summoning Lord Lichfield and Rowland Hill to give competing evidence about the prospective results of penny-postage reform, the Queen recommends to Lord Melbourne that Lord Lichfield be forced to retire from his duties as Postmaster General, and that Hill's plans be summarily adopted:

This interview, and what I have read, have convinced me that a Uniform Penny Post is most advisable. Sure am I that it would confer a great boon on the poorer classes of my subjects, and would be the greatest benefit to religion, to morals, to general knowledge . . . and that it would effectually put down the smuggling postman, and lead my people to obey and not to disobey the law. My Lord Melbourne, you will please to bear in mind that the Queen agrees with her faithful Commons in recommending a uniform penny post. If your Lordship has any difficulty in finding a minister among your party able to carry the measure into effect, I shall apply to my Lord Ashburton or my Lord Lowther, as circumstances may require. Mr. Hill, the nation will owe you a large debt of gratitude, which I am sure it will not be unwilling to repay.³

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². Ibid.
³. Ibid., 7-8.
Within the context of the family/society tropes I have been exploring in previous chapters, the self-contained logic of Cole's imaginary "Scene" becomes particularly legible, first because it situates the unreformed Post Office and the anti-paternalistic pawnshop as points on the same continuum of family demoralization. The propaganda materials that so absorb the interest of Cole's Queen are full of references to the way that "mothers yearning to hear from absent children would pawn clothing or household necessaries rather than be deprived of the letters."4 The evils of the pre-Hill Post Office and the pawnshop even appeared to be coterminous in the 1840 testimony of a rural postmaster, who stated that "one poor woman offered my sister a silver spoon to keep until she could raise the money."5 Thus, when the Queen in the above sketch summons Rowland Hill to her chamber, she heralds the penny post as a safeguard of the family integrity threatened by the pawnshop, positioning the two institutions as oppositional powers in the construction and redeployment of affect.

Yet the scene should also be recognizable within the larger context of my dissertation as a text that appears to uphold affect over politics and biological motherhood over Victoria's role as Queen Mother. As portrayed by Henry Cole, the Queen's decision to champion Hill is finally a choice to regenerate one family, the affective, biological, lower-class family, at the expense of a socioeconomically privileged, aristocratic "family" of which she is the head. Cole goes to great lengths to insist that any party consequences of the Queen's decision are secondary and

irrelevant, and that penny-postage reform will greatly enhance the moral, sentimental, and intellectual progress of the English people by making all letters equivalent in the eyes of the law. Yet in democratizing communication, the reformed Post Office finally has more in common with the anti-paternalistic, egalitarian pawnshop than our fictional Queen's initial opposition of the institutions would suggest.

By presenting the question of postal reform as an affective dilemma rather than a political challenge, Cole's penny-postage propaganda followed the ideological path that had been set in 1837 by the text that so influences his fictional Queen: Rowland Hill's *Post Office Reform: Its Importance and Practicability*. Beginning with a Malthusian observation that Post Office revenues had not been keeping up with increases in population, Hill concluded that lower postage would increase revenue and simultaneously "accelerate" the social and intellectual improvement of mankind, as well as the affectionate and morally uplifting intercourse between parent and child. Under Hill's plan, all inland, United Kingdom letters would be charged a mere penny for delivery, payable when the letter was posted rather than when it was received. "Fortunately this is not a party question," Hill asserts repeatedly throughout his text, downplaying the egalitarian philosophy that lurked at the center of postal reform:

When it is considered how much the religious, moral, and intellectual progress of the people, would be accelerated by the unobstructed circulation of letters and of the many cheap and excellent non-political publications of the present day, the Post Office assumes the new and important character of a powerful
engine of civilization . . . Its object is not to increase the political power of this or that party, but to benefit all sects in politics and religion; and all classes, from the highest to the lowest.  

Not only was Hill's idea of penny postage immediately received as a relatively simple way to increase the revenue of the Post Office, his "powerful engine of civilization" was also celebrated as a spontaneous remedy to many of the social and economic problems caused by overpopulation and rapid industrialization, especially the dispersion of the working-class family due to migratory employment. By reducing the perimeters of overwhelming social and economic problems to the sentimental size of a postage stamp, Hill's plans gained widespread support from reformers such as Cole who insisted that enabling poor families to send and receive letters would re-institute "natural" claims of duty and affection within working-class communities.

Throughout this dissertation, I have been arguing that alternatives to the law of the father and the oppression of patriarchy need to be theorized by feminist critics and by social historians, and I have interrogated a variety of nineteenth-century documents to suggest that familial tropes in the Victorian period were more varied and comprehensive than normative nuclear paradigms would suggest. I have also characterized the avunculate as the site at which the economic claims of the social world begin to intersect with the private family, introducing the family to the rites of exogamy, to the laws of exchange, and to the commodification of affection. The figure of the Uncle, by extension, has been shown to be a vehicle of

narrative explication: a way to personify and make familiar the discourses of anti-paternalism, anti-regency, and anti-monopoly. If on the one hand, the penny post was conceived of as a government institution that could defeat the commodifying powers of my Uncle the pawnbroker, it was also, as Derrida notes in the epigraph, imagined as a "banking agency" that would circulate family sentiment as economic, political, and cultural currency. Functioning as an authoritarian alternative to the hegemonic paternalism and prohibitive monopoly of previous postal regimes, the Penny-Post Office was designed to be an institution that would manage society by managing the family: a site of discipline and power at odds with the law of the father, but in step with the shape of uncles. Literally, the avuncular trope had widespread value for colonial agitators, who began to rally support for "Ocean Penny Postage" as soon as postal reforms had been passed in England. As we will see, these penny post advocates turned to the avunculate for an image of English benevolence and authority divested of the paternalistic proprietorship that would have been so objectionable to liberated American citizens.

But aside from these literal engagements with the avunculate in postal propaganda, this chapter traces the shift in national authority that occurred during the period of postal reform, and uncovers a parallel crisis in family coherence that was catalyzed by the unraveling of traditional models of patriarchal power. A written record of these related developments is provided by Anthony Trollope, literally and figuratively a man of letters, who worked for the central London Post Office in St. Martin's le Grand under the direction of Rowland Hill from the 1830s till
the 1860s. Trollope credited himself with the introduction of pillar boxes to England in 1853, and many of his novels, as biographer Victoria Glendening notes, described "with fascination, and some concern the effects of this change. The pillar box on the corner of the road . . . made private correspondences even easier for independent-minded wives and daughters."7 Despite Trollope's complicity in Hill's reforms, his novels repeatedly suggest that the authority of the Post Office to maintain the integrity of the paternalistic family is an untrustworthy and ineffective fiction: an ideology of power that was finally belied by seditions and corruptions from within.

One of the few objections raised to postal reform at the time of Hill and Cole's agitation was that its ability to generate affect was in fact a mixed blessing: "Will clerks write only to their fathers, and girls to their mothers? Will not letters of romance or love, intrigue, or mischief, increase in at least equal proportions? Does any rational mind doubt that there will be, on this point of the question, a balance of good and evil?"8 Indeed, by allowing unsanctioned "families" to form amongst blackmailers and victims, trade unions and striking workers, young girls and unsuitable men, the Post Office was a potentially dangerous catalyst of instant cousinship: an ambivalent uncle who could not be counted on for purely sentimental interventions. Turning to Trollope's Autobiography and to three of his novels, The Claverings (1867), John Caldigate (1879), and especially He Knew He Was Right (1867), which was written while Trollope was in America ironing out the details of overseas postage rates,

we will see how the subjects of domestic integrity and nationalism reconcile themselves with the social discipline of the avuncular Post Office. By following the path of Rowland Hill's "civilizing engine" as it used affection to produce reform, and reform to produce discipline, this chapter will interrogate the way that the sentimentalized ideology of the Post Office disguised the political Post Office long enough to foster a decentralized network of social control that even today interprets the intersection of technology, nationalism, and family life.9

I: Affect and Penny-Postage Reform

In 1838 Cole began publishing *The Post Circular*, a weekly newspaper entirely devoted to the advocacy of penny postage. Along with minutes from current Parliamentary hearings on postage rates and occasional Hill-like assertions about the apolitical nature of postal reform, the Circular was packed with narratives of family disaffection that repeatedly originated in high postage, and these stories often took the shape of personal letters or testimonials to the editor. In one issue addressed to the "Effects of Heavy Rates of Postage on the Resident Clergy and Dissenting Ministers," a series of anonymous narratives appeared.

Mr. ______ is himself one of ten -- the children of a pious and affectionate couple, residing in the opposite extremity of the kingdom, who are deprived by the enormous tax from receiving that

9. Witness the contemporary advertising campaigns waged by telecommunications giant MCI, where the "Friends and Family Plan" is promoted to assuage any public anxieties that an increasingly complicated and mechanized postal network may be alienating people from each other instead of bringing them together.
support and consolation in their old age, which is the best and last hope and stay of pious Christians. Just examine all the ramifications by which the affectionate feelings of this family are damped, if not necessarily extinguished by the unequal and unjust tax, and you will have a scene of moral mischief, for which I do not believe any government is able to answer -- as communication between any two members of this family costs two shillings and twopence!^{10} By characterizing postal rates as a tax on family sentiment, Cole's propaganda machine repeatedly suggested that the government-controlled post office was actually responsible for commodifying kinship, and for placing the moral "stay" of affection beyond the economic reach of most working-class families. When children did finally sit down to write to their parents, moreover, "they sit down under the idea that they must write a letter that their father may think worth the postage."^{11} The minutes from a public meeting in Liverpool give a similar testimony:

When a child leaves the home of its parents, there was a natural anxiety on both sides for an interchange of sentiments; but a heavy rate of postage had a tendency to dry up the affections, which expired from a want of a cheap channel of communication.^{12}

A letter to the editor from one John Rowland again asked readers to consider the anxiety of poor parents for their absent children's welfare, and to imagine

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11. Ibid., 11.
how gladly would they, from time to time, avail themselves of a cheap mode of communication to remind them of their duty and hear of their welfare, while at present they are debarred the indulgence of their paternal feelings by the knowledge that neither themselves nor their children have the means of paying for the letter by which the information could be conveyed.\textsuperscript{13}

As one anonymous 1844 essayist pointed out, the proliferation of "touching anecdotes" in support of postal reform shows "with what dexterity the snare of cheap postage was spread; that it was represented as a case of feeling and won immediate access to the heart of a large class of people."\textsuperscript{14} Indeed, the nearly hysterical repetition of such stories produced a disingenuous but powerful connection between the present postal regime and what the upper and middle-classes saw as the amoral and unsentimental behavior of poor families. Hill, Cole, and the other penny-postage propagandists bombarded the public with images of the family solidarity that would necessarily be the result of cheap postage, implicitly arguing that the newly-regenerated post would become a vehicle for consolidating affect and generating long-distance versions of family life. Posters and petitions addressed to "MOTHERS and FATHERS that wish to hear from their absent children! FRIENDS who are parted, that wish to write to each other! EMIGRANTS that do not forget their native homes!" appeared everywhere, all with the familiar depoliticizing mantra "This is no question of party politics."\textsuperscript{15} Moreover, the ideological force of these reform

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\textsuperscript{13} The Post Circular (Tuesday, April 24, 1838), 27.
\textsuperscript{14} The Administration of the Post Office (London: J. Hatchard, 1844), 19.
\textsuperscript{15} Poster, Uniform Penny Postage (Hanbury: W. Potts, 1839).
efforts continued to shape the penny post in the popular imagination of its admirers long after the reform was initiated. Throughout the century, the penny post was coterminous with more normative tropes of domestic happiness and middle-class sustenance, as one American rhapsodized:

To thousands and tens of thousands of family circles, in town, village and hamlet, the dispensation of the penny post comes almost as gratuitously and as silently as the morning dew upon the flowers that breathe and blush in the windows. Associating its benefits with enjoyments most necessary to nature, it serves up its messages of friendship and love as condiments of the morning meal. The administration of the tea-urn, under the presidency of the lady of the house, commences at the same time as that of the penny post at the other end of the table . . . The relish of this double repast is the refinement of that social enjoyment which England has procured for her millions by giving them the blessing of cheap postage.¹⁶

By insisting upon the morning-dew naturalness of cheap postage, and by suggesting that the tea-urn and the penny post were parallel emblems of domestic nourishment, the above passage continued the work of early reform propaganda: erasing the political and economic history of postal reform, even erasing the presence of the postman himself in this celebration of a nearly miraculous kind of postal "dispensation."

In the place of the Post Office's political and economic history, an affective history was generated: although, as David Allam has noted, "there appears to have been surprisingly little open dissatisfaction

expressed by the public with the condition of the Post Office or its high charges before 1837, "17 Hill and Cole's penny-postage propaganda was so powerful that it constructed a retrospective narrative of family disaffection that reformers and parliamentarians alike seem to have had no trouble believing. "When you contemplate the enormous increase which has taken place in correspondence," asserted Lord John Russell in a 1848 House of Common's speech, "you may estimate the number of persons who were deprived of the benefit of communicating with their friends and of offering the interchange of domestic affections."18 Another similarly revisionist estimation about the regenerative powers of the penny post can be found in Benjamin Disraeli's 1880 novel Endymion, which begins by tracing the plight of a financially embarrassed family in the 1830s who are forced to retire to the country:

Parcels came down by the coach, enclosing not merely proof sheets, but frequently new books -- the pamphlet of the hour before it had been published, or a volume of discoveries in unknown lands. It was a link to the world they had quitted without any painful associations. Otherwise their communications with the outer world were slight and rare. It is difficult for us, who live in an age of railroads, telegraphs, and penny posts and penny newspapers, to realize how uneventful, how limited in thought and feeling, as well as in incident, was the life of an English family of retired habits and limited means,

only forty years ago. The whole world seemed to be morally, as well as materially, 'adscripti glebae'.

Thus postal propaganda created a self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby benefits down the road were used as de-facto evidence of the morally and intellectually "limited" aspects of family life under high postage. This hindsight romanticization of pre-penny postage disaffection was partly enabled by the fact that Hill himself attributed the origin of his idea to a story he had heard about Coleridge on a walking tour of the Lake District, who paid the postage of a poor barmaid's letter, only to find that the envelope was empty, and was just supposed to serve as an outward sign that her brother was well. The Coleridge story was told and retold in every account of penny-postage reform to be published, including one by Harriet Martineau, who mistakenly identified the Lake District samaritan to be Rowland Hill. Indeed, the desire to keep Hill the central figure of reform efforts and to locate him at the origins of reform led some psychobiographical historians to insist that the true alpha of penny postage was in Hill's childhood and in the bonds of family affection that made him so sensitive to issues of domestic harmony. As one happy philatelist observed as recently as 1955, "If Rowland Hill, as a very small boy, had not noticed his mother's worried look whenever a postman knocked at her door to demand a shilling or so for the letter he brought her, we might never have been able to collect postage stamps."

Yet nineteenth-century historical narratives such as Harriet Martineau's *A History of the Thirty Years' Peace* did the primary work of historical revisionism by projecting images of family disaffection into the pre-reform years. While Disraeli went back only four decades to depict a family "limited in thought and feeling," Martineau conjured up an image that was even farther removed from her mid-Victorian perspective:

We look back now with a sort of amazed compassion to the old crusading times, when warrior husbands and their wives, grey-headed parents and their brave sons, parted with the knowledge that it must be months or years before they could hear even of another's existence. We wonder how they bore the depths of silence. And we feel the same way now about the families of polar voyagers. But, till a dozen years ago, it did not occur to many of us how like this was the fate of the largest classes in our own country . . . When once their families parted off from home, it was a separation almost like that of death.\(^{22}\)

Just as penny postage had prevented such metaphoric deaths, it was also attributed with remedying widespread disease and literal death. "Who would now divine that high rates of postage could have any relation to the prevalence of smallpox?" marveled Hill in his autobiography. "And yet it was found that 'Practitioners and others in the country do not apply for lymph, in the degree they otherwise would do, to the institutions formed in London for the spread of vaccination, for fear of postage."\(^{23}\) In


\(^{23}\) *Life*, vol. 1, 305.
retrospect, there was a never-ending litany of illnesses that the cheap
circulation of letters had cured, ailments that infected the individual body
and the social body alike. Moreover, again according to Martineau, the
body that may have been the most affected by postal reform was Rowland
Hill's:

The alteration in Rowland Hill himself, since he won his tardy
victory, is an interesting spectacle to those who knew him twenty
years ago. He always was full of domestic tenderness and social
amiability; and these qualities now shine out, and his whole mind
and manners are quickened by the removal of the cold obstruction he
encountered at the beginning of his career.24

The intellectual and moral improvement that Martineau here
represents in terms of a single body, was characterized in terms of the
social body by advocates of Malthus. High postage, in the opinion of W. H.
Ashurst, prevented scientists from gathering information from the working
men who possessed it, and from in turn circulating knowledge amongst
their intellectual peers:

the mine of facts which is now locked up in them cannot be
brought forth; the results of the past and the seeds of the future,
scientific, mechanical and moral fruit is wholly unproductive; the
heavy rates of postage not only prevent an accurate record of facts
from being transmitted, but actually prevent their being elicited . . .
Indeed, intellectual seed is scattered among men with the same
profusion that Providence supplies it for our physical wants: this has

24. Harriet Martineau's Autobiography, with memorials by Maria Weston Smith, vol. 1
(London: Smith, Elder, 1877), 411.
been shown wherever revolutions or any great exciting cause has thrown masses of men into new positions.\textsuperscript{25}

If the Malthusian rhetoric of the above passage throws us back upon the pre-industrial world of \textit{Adam Bede}, we should linger there long enough to note the anti-paternalistic message embedded in Ashurst's account of present scientific unproductivity. Intellectual seed may be found everywhere, amongst the lowest classes of men as well as the highest, and cheap postage will prove this egalitarian truth without the political violence that accompanies more normative scenarios of revolution.

\section*{II. Politics and the Post Office}

Rowland Hill's divestment of politics from postal reform is partly explained by Mary Favret's study of the political function of the fictional letter in the Romantic period. Favret argues that the nineteenth century witnessed a transformation in the ideology of the letter, from an emblem of revolutionary politics to an anachronism that could not survive the modern Post Office. In Favret's understanding, the nineteenth century was a "post-epistolary age":

an age where one imagines the post where once there were letters, where one reads the movements of a mail coach, not the vagaries of epistolary sentiment, and where one begs the postman, not the lover for the correspondence . . . it deliberately staged the death of the

letter . . . and began to pay strict attention to the fiction of the Post Office.26

The Victorian "fiction of the Post Office" as designed by Rowland Hill and Henry Cole deliberately dislocated the letter from its eighteenth-century ideological history: instead of an emblem of revolutionary hostility and incendiary violence, the letter became a circulating token of affection that would renaturalize the demoralized space of the family and dispel social frictions between classes. In this way, Cole's fiction of the Queen authorized the fiction of the Post Office: by scripting the British monarchy's relinquishment of postal tyranny, Cole rewrote the revolutionary ideology of the letter that had previously circulated in the form of the French monarchy's lettre de cachet.

Cole's Scene at Windsor Castle was reprinted many times during the 1838-40 penny-postage campaign, and the imagined scene of Queen Victoria disregarding her Lords for the sake of commoners eventually gave way to the circumstance of the actual Queen not only giving up her own franking privilege but abolishing the franking system entirely. Apparently, when penny-postage was passed by parliament in 1840, the real Queen Victoria was "graciously pleased" as Rowland Hill remembered in his 1880 autobiography, "to abandon her privilege of franking, thus submitting her letters to the same rule as those of her humblest subject," and consequently "it was determined that all other privileges should cease at the same time."27 Despite Hill and Cole's mutual denial of the political

importance of reform, in both of their representations of the Queen's real or imagined reaction to penny postage the localized power of Victoria and her House of Lords is seen to be voluntarily replaced by a more amorphous type of authority signified by "the powerful engine of civilization" Hill had invented: a disembodied machinery of law enforcement that functioned without the police.

F. M. L. Thompson has argued that the postman did the opposite cultural work of the policeman in the Victorian period, characterizing him as "a friendly, unassuming, unobtrusive official; a member of the working class himself" who did not embody the main weight of the law. Yet it was precisely by not embodying the law that the reformed Post Office could be so effective. As Cole's Queen implied, the law was being disobeyed during the unreformed postal regime, but under penny postage, the law would naturally compel citizens to behave properly, to give up the "smuggling postman" and to submit their letters to "friendly, unassuming, unobtrusive" channels of dispersion. In Hill's remembrance, likewise, the Queen subjects herself and her letters to an alternative "rule," and a decentralized, depersonified version of power can be seen taking shape in the mechanistic process of sorting, stamping, and delivering known as the Post Office.

These dual images of the Queen's ready acceptance of postal reform are important benchmarks of a radical shift in ideologies of authority that was catalyzed by nineteenth-century agitation for penny postage. The regenerated Victorian Post Office was invented and sustained along the

same principles as Bentham's Panopticon, through which, as Michel Foucault has argued, a "collection of separate individualities" maintain "a power relation independent of the person who exercises it." By appearing to relinquish power, the Queen and her minions would actually extend their authority; indeed, when postage reform came into effect, the penny stamp that authorized the egalitarian right of all British subjects to send and receive letters bore an image of the Queen's profile. Although some subjects expressed a certain amount of discomfort at the thought of "kissing or rather slobbering over Her Majesty's Back," most were "rather proud of sticking the Queen's head on their letters." While these reactions to the Penny Black may seem radically different, they are identical in their suggestion that the apparent deflation of the Queen's power actually proliferated the visibility of her image and authority, making the effects of Victoria's rule tangible to all citizens in every part of the kingdom simultaneously.

In this context, Foucault's interpretation of the panopticon, especially its ubiquity as a disciplinary architecture for a variety of nineteenth-century social institutions -- the prison, the hospital, the madhouse -- is instructive. "The body of the king," Foucault writes,

with its strange material and physical presence, with the force that he himself deploys or transmits to some few others, is at the opposite extreme of this new physics of power represented by panopticism;

the domain of panopticism is, on the contrary, that whole lower region, that region of irregular bodies, with their details, their multiple movements, their heterogeneous forces, their spatial relations... At the theoretical level, Bentham defines another way of analysing the social body and the power relations that traverse it; in terms of practise, he defines a procedure of subordination of bodies and forces that must increase the utility of power while practicing the economy of the prince. Panopticism is the general principle of a new 'political anatomy' whose object and end are not the relations of sovereignty but the relations of discipline.32

By turning to Foucault's "political anatomy" here, to the "economy of the prince" that replaces and disperses "the body of the king" in this passage, it becomes apparent that the disembodied machinery of the Post Office similarly enforced discipline through diffusion and proliferated postal authority in the place of sovereignty.

In 1855, American citizen Pliny Miles celebrated Hill's engine of civilization precisely for its far-reaching ability to manage, to organize, and to control: "Like a giant possessing ubiquitous powers, like a Briareus with twice ten thousand hands, it is everywhere present, reaching nearly every house in the kingdom, receiving, distributing, and delivering whatever is entrusted in its care, with a marvellous celerity that resembles the movements of a pantomime."33 By substituting a seemingly infinite number of ubiquitous "hands" for the monolithic authority of the "head,"

32. Discipline and Punish, 208.
the reformed Post Office became a carefully choreographed ritual of social management, a disciplinary institution divested of individuality or personification. Significantly, Anthony Trollope's fundamental point of discord with Rowland Hill was the way that reform had projected an image of automation onto the civil servants of the Post Office. In his *Autobiography*, Trollope writes:

> With him I never had any sympathy, nor he with me. In figures and facts he was most accurate, but I never came across any one who so little understood the ways of men, -- unless it was his brother Frederick. To the two brothers the servants of the Post Office, -- men numerous enough to have formed a large army in the old days, -- were so many machines who could be counted on for their exact work without deviation, as wheels may be counted on, which are kept going always at the same pace and always by the same power.\(^\text{34}\)

If the servants of the Post Office were once soldiers in a large army, they now are automatons: the dehumanized, mechanized "wheels" of Hill's great civilizing engine.

Trollope's view of the predetermined mechanization of the postal service spurred him to put himself further out of favor with Hill by delivering a lecture to the clerks in the General Post Office on "the doctrine that a civil servant is only a servant as far as his contract goes, and that he is beyond that entitled to be as free a man in politics, as free in his general pursuits, and as free in opinion, as those who are in open

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professions and open trade."\textsuperscript{35} This indeterminate line between individual freedom and institutional control was a subject that Trollope explored in his other career as a fiction writer, expressing similar anxieties that Hill had replaced the totalitarian monopoly of the pre-penny post with a disciplinary regime that fostered artificiality, mechanism, and determinism under the sign of family affection and social perfectibility.

In this way, reading the vicissitudes of Hill's postal reform through Bentham's Panopticon, or even through Foucault's interpretation of panopticism, is appropriate. It may even be necessary, considering that Hill's previous career as a schoolmaster and educational reformer met with high approval from Bentham, who frequently visited the school Hill and his brothers presided over in the mid- to late twenties.\textsuperscript{36} Moreover, all of the Hill brothers perceived of reform in the spirit of "the great truth" that Bentham had advocated, "that the object of all government, and of all social institutions, should be the greatest happiness for the greatest number for the greatest length of time."\textsuperscript{37} In this historical context, it is not surprising that Hill's Post Office prototype should yoke the greatest happiness principle and the disciplinary effects of the panopticon to mobilize an image of the re-affected family in the service of social control. As Ann Cvetkovich has argued in her Foucauldian work on the political impact of Victorian sensation fiction, "If affect can be a source of resistance, it can also be . . . a mechanism for power."\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 123.
\textsuperscript{36} Life, vol. 1, 171-72.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 193.
III. Postal Discipline and Home Control

This is not to say that an affective model of the Post Office allowed the republican, revolutionary rhetoric of postal reform to go entirely unremarked or unchallenged. Hill's penny post did receive some conservative criticism, primarily from members of parliament who did not want to give up their franking privileges and from stationers who protested that cheap postage would drive down the price of paper. Moreover, at least one 1839 article questioned the assumption that all forms of information were productive, or even benign:

are there no societies in this country which have other than religious, moral, and charitable objects -- are there no societies which might wish to spread disaffection, irreligion, or faction? . . . Was the committee ignorant -- we think not -- that the radicals in politics, and the sectarians in religion, have been the warmest advocates -- and indeed . . . the only very zealous advocates for this penny post? The reason is obvious; because at present such societies cannot circulate their venom without some kind of machinery and agency . . . it is Sedition made easy.40

To a certain extent, the author appears to have been right about the more "seditious" effects of reform. The radical leader of the Anti-Corn Law League, Richard Cobden, for example, wrote Hill a letter in 1843 praising the reformed Post Office as "a terrible engine for upsetting monopoly and

40. Croker, 531.
Cobden's idiom replaces the sentimentalized family of reform propaganda with a depersonified, anti-paternalistic social family suggesting that penny postage had not renaturalized the private family, but had instead spawned alternative combinations of people such as trade unions and political leagues. Indeed, thanks to Hill, Cobden was able to circulate approximately 40,000 League pamphlets; he "gave it as his opinion, that their objects were achieved two years earlier than otherwise would have been the case owing to cheap postage." When the Corn Laws were finally repealed in 1846, Cobden sent another evocative letter to Hill announcing the virtual dissolution of his League:

I shall feel like an emancipated negro -- having fulfilled my seven-year apprenticeship to an agitation which has known no respite. I feel that you have done not a little to strike the fetters from my limbs, for without the penny postage we might have had more years of agitation and anxiety.

Although Cobden's rhetoric of slavery and emancipation directly belies Hill and Cole's repeated insistence that penny-postage reform was inherently apolitical, for the most part, postal propaganda played down these incendiary images by suggesting that cheap postage would actually domesticate revolutionary politics. The mob scenes usually associated with trade union agitation and labor strikes were appropriated and rewritten by reformers such as Cole, who described the scene at the General Post Office

41. *Life*, vol. 1, 478.
the night before the change in postage rates went into effect as an inverted riot:

The great hall was nearly filled with spectators, marshalled in a line by the police to watch the crowds pressing, scuffling, and fighting to get to the window first. The superintending President of the Inland Office with praiseworthy zeal was in all quarters directing the energy of his officers where the pressure was the greatest... When the window closed, the mob, delighted at the energy displayed by the officers, gave one cheer for the Post Office, another for Rowland Hill.44

Rowland Hill's Post Office could virtually rechannel the frenzy and potential violence of mob activity, making police officers less central to maintaining discipline and control than the postal officers who were cheered by the crowd for their efficiency and energy. Similarly, Hill's daughter described the scene of the Post Office on the first evening of the reform in an idiom that domesticates even the most pernicious emblem of the French Revolution:

When the last stroke of the hour had rung out, and the lower sash of every window had come down with a rush like a guillotine, a great cheer went up for penny postage and for Rowland Hill, and another for the Post Office staff who had worked so well.45

An 1838 report from the Select Committee on postal rates, moreover, had already determined that high postage actually kept working men "ignorant of the state of wages in different parts of the country, so they do not know

45. Smyth, 165.
where labour is in demand. This state of ignorance has a tendency to promote strikes and trade unions among them."46 In this way, despite the inherently radical aspects of postal reform, most of its advocates insisted that its effects would be wholly anti-revolutionary: "Our greatest achievement of late has been the obtaining of the penny postage" wrote Harriet Martineau to an American friend, "I question whether there will be now time left for the working of beneficent measures to save us from violent revolution; but if there be, none will work better than this."47

Thus, if the deployment of sentimental ideology advanced some liberal or radical causes like Cobden's Anti-Corn Law League, it also functioned conservatively, to enforce social control over an increasingly mobile and fragmented society. Martineau was especially interested in the pacifying effect that cheap postage had on men otherwise supposed to be violent and unsentimental, repeatedly pointing out that soldiers are "more sober and more manly, more virtuous and more domestic in their affections" when they are encouraged by their commanding officer to correspond with their families.48 Moreover, W. H. Ashurst testified that even the violent impulses of a hardened criminal would be softened by the frequent correspondence with home and family, asking "How often from the criminal in the hour of condemnation do we here [sic] the first gush of misery break forth in, 'Oh my poor mother!'"49

The domestic affections were more often than not personified in this figure of the working- or middle-class mother, whose higher claims both

46. Third Report from the Select Committee on Postage (August, 1838), 25.
47. Martineau’s Autobiography, vol. 3, 249.
48. Martineau, History, 12.
49. Ashurst, 94.
replaced and extended the Queen's authority. Most noticeably, "mother" appears when the subject in need of home control is a young girl: "give me a girl who left the parent's roof pure," insisted one country clergyman in 1838, "and as long as she writes freely to her mother, I shall scarcely fear for her virtue." Martineau agreed that the disciplinary power made available by the penny post could be especially effective in the cases of impoverished young women forced to leave their homes to seek out work is distant places:

If the governesses of this country (in whose hands rest much of the moral destiny of another generation) could speak of the influence of the reform upon their lot, what should we not hear of the blessing of access to home? We should hear of parents' advice and sympathy obtained when needed most; of a daily sense of support from the scarcely ideal presence of mother or brother; . . . while expense is no longer the irritating hindrance of speech, the infliction that makes the listening parent deaf, and the full-hearted daughter dumb. . . who shall say to how many this privilege has been the equivalent to peace of mind -- in how many cases to the preservation of innocence and a good name?  

In a parenthetical comment in his chapter on panopticism, Foucault tentatively suggests that "one day we should show how intra-familial relations, especially in the parents-children cell, have become 'disciplined', absorbing since the classical age external schemata . . . which have made

50. *The Post Circular* (Friday, May 4, 1838), 34.
the family the privileged locus of emergence for the disciplinary question of the normal and the abnormal."⁵² By generating a long distance version of family life and doing away with any need for immediacy in the affective interaction between mother and child, postal reform provided a set of principles by which first the family and then society were thoroughly disciplined. The penny post became the ultimate mechanism for the moral preservation and social control of all culturally suspicious groups of people, from working men to criminals, governesses to revolutionaries.

IV. Empire and the Avunculate

After the passing of postal reform in 1840, moreover, activists realized that the reformed Post Office could be put to work in the guise of a domesticated imperialism, carrying out colonial imperatives without the oppressive violence and tyranny that traditionally accompanied the promulgation of the British Empire. Hill had, indeed, planted these seeds himself in a footnote to his original 1838 pamphlet, mentioning that cheaper postage between the colonies and "the mother country" would remove some significant obstacles to emigration, and would "maintain the sympathy . . . which is the only sure bond of connection."⁵³ As early as 1844, the sitting House Committee on Postage began to formulate the future objects of the postal system, making evident the extent to which the moral and national integrity of British emigrants was a central government concern:

⁵³. Hill, Post Office Reform, 48.
To content the man, dwelling more remote from town with his homely lot, by giving him regular and frequent means of intercommunication; to assure the emigrant, who plans his new home on the skirts of the distant wilderness or prairie, that he is not forever severed from the kindred and society that still share his interest and love; to prevent those whom the swelling tide of population is constantly pressing to the outer verge of civilization from being surrendered to surrounding influences, and sinking into the hunter or savage state; to render the citizen, how far soever from [sic], worthy, by proper knowledge and intelligence, of his important privileges as a sovereign constituent of the government; to diffuse throughout all parts of the land enlightenment, social improvement, and national affinities, elevating our people in the scale of civilization, and binding them together in patriotic affection.\(^54\)

With the advent of penny postage came the idea that home and civilization could be maintained in any wilderness that had a Post Office, and that national identity could be preserved through a constantly circulating medium of "patriotic affection." In the same way that advocates of cheap postage appropriated revolutionary rhetoric in order to stress the nonviolent aspects of Hill's reforms, supporters of universal or ocean penny postage appealed to a sentimentalized version of empire that could generate British nationalism through love and fellowship.

A faster, cheaper, and more technologically advanced postal system was heralded throughout the nineteenth century as the only means of

maintaining the integrity of the British empire. "What family in England to-day does not have a relative in the colonies?" asked J. Henniker Heaton in an 1890 tract called *Ocean Penny Postage*, moving quickly from the subject of affection to the subject of empire:

It is often gloomily predicted that such a tremendous agglomeration as the British Empire will inevitably fall to pieces and dissolve like its predecessors . . . I venture to reply that, in the postal and telegraphic services the empire of our Queen possesses a cohesive force which was utterly lacking in former cases. Stronger than death-defying warships, than devoted legions, than natural wealth, or wise administration, are the scraps of paper that are borne in myriads over the waves, and the two or three slender wires that lie hidden in the fathomless depths below.55

Similarly, in the 1907 book *Sentiment: The Bond of Empire*, W. R. Malcolm insisted that the affective communalism fostered by cheap postal rates would diminish economic and political "misunderstandings" between nations, as well as "bring the scattered members of the race together; to promote community of taste and aspirations is to create identity of race feeling and sympathy, and on this sentimental basis the empire will rest."56

Of course, these ideas shared by Henniker and Malcolm about the way that the sentimental circulation of letters would maintain national (or racial) communities and prevent the hostilities of war had their roots in mid-Victorian reform efforts; in fact, the prevention of international violence was one of the primary objectives behind ocean penny postage.

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By far the most sustained appeals to Britain for universal postage came from American, especially from "the learned blacksmith" Elihu Burritt, a self-made, Yale-educated working man who visited London in 1847 and formed "The League of Universal Brotherhood." The movement was "dedicated to promote friendship and good relations between countries and to work for the abolition of war."\(^{57}\) Cheap postage was viewed as the potential key to international peacekeeping, and in 1849, Burritt published *Ocean Penny Postage: Its Necessity Shown and Its Feasibility Demonstrated*, a tract that began with a prolonged ode to Hill and the people of Great Britain and ended with a series of appeals to the mother country.

Every day this year nearly a thousand of her children will sail from her shores for these distant lands. These self-expatriated children are not prodigal sons, whose supercilious importunities have constrained her to divide with them a portion of her substance, that they might spend it in distant lands, in riotous living. No; they are her poorer children, whose hands are hardened, and whose shoulders are bowed with long years of labour, which they have bestowed on her green fields . . . They are going, portionless, to pioneer the English race, language, science, and commerce to these unclaimed continents and islands of the earth; to extend and elaborate the integrity of the British Empire . . . why should they not be treated as equal subjects of an integral empire in the matter of the penny post?\(^{58}\)

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57. Staff, 108.
58. Burritt, 5-6.
In Burritt's text, the reformed Post Office clearly functions as an alternative method of maintaining empire and enforcing national "integrity," and the affective trope of mother and child is obviously central to his ideological objectives. Yet when the penny post's diffuse and expansive form of control began to be represented iconographically, the hegemony of power suggested by the rule of the Queen or the patronage of parents was unsuitable as a colonial emblem. A variety of pictorial envelopes was designed to propagandize for universal postage; most stressed an unpersonified image of home and community that could be established across oceans by the networks of the post. "The World Awaits Great Britain's Greatest Gift/An Ocean Penny Postage/To Make Home Everywhere and All Nations Neighbors" reads the message on one such envelope designed by London artist Henry Anelay around 1850.59 In this way, the imperatives of empire were domesticated by the creation of an entirely postal version of home. It seemed to advocates that the very constraints of "time and space had begun to yield before increasing energy of the human mind, and it was reserved for [Hill's] administrative faculty to inflict upon them a new defeat by bringing the interchange of letters within the reach of all."60

Another envelope designed by Anelay, described in glowing detail by Burritt at the close of his pamphlet, testifies to the way that advocates needed to proselytize for universal postage with emblems and icons that avoided any association with paternalism or patronage:

John Bull, in the coziest mood of grandfatherly benevolence, is represented sitting in an arm chair, with his squat hat cocked urbanely, and his yellow-topped boots, looking to the life like the image of "the olden time." On one side a beautiful little fairy of a girl, with eyes as bright as diamonds, is looking askingly into his face, while she holds up a letter in one hand, subscribed "To cousin Jane in America," and with the other points to the American coast, which is dimly seen in the distance, lined with children, black and white, all with letters in their outstretched hands, and in the act of hailing an approaching steamer . . . bearing the English flag . . . At the bottom of the piece these words give language to its significance, -- "Uncle John! Won't you please send my letter to cousin Jane in America, for a penny?"61

By personifying John Bull in the shape of an uncle, the artist was able to conjure up an image of English benevolence and authority divested of the paternalistic proprietorship that would have been so objectionable to American citizens. Uncle John Bull was a domesticated appeal to British Imperialism, just as the Post Office came to be perceived as a mechanism for peacefully fostering domestic and colonial discipline within an Empire that was increasingly unwieldy, in both size and in temperament.

Indeed, appeals to this anti-paternalistic icon of sentimentality were quick to point out that affect was, in fact, a form of capital that could be put into circulation abroad as well as at home. A poem written in 1848 by the Englishman H. G. Adams, "Send the Letters, Uncle John," stressed

Rowland Hill's philosophy that more frequent and cheaper access to sentimental interaction with family would actually increase and empower the commerce of the British empire:

*Will it pay?*  why, UNCLE!  UNCLE!

Can you doubt it?  look at home;
See how, from all parts, your mail-bags
Daily weightier become:
Hear how all your children bless you
For the boon they here enjoy;
Oh, extend it o'er the waters,
And our eager pens employ!

*Will it pay?*  why, fifty letters
Will be sent instead of one: --

*Fifty* pence from *one* poor shilling,
Think of that, good UNCLE JOHN!
Think, too, how 'twill foster commerce,
And all friendly ties increase,
Binding nation unto nation
In the bonds of *Love* and *Peace.*

Accordingly, Uncle John Bull was a useful icon in bridging the gap between an ideology of the affective, private family and the intrusive imperiousness of government control. "It has been said that the Government cannot weave the ties that bind us to our families," wrote a

reporter for The Lancaster Guardian in 1838, "but how much may they not
do towards strengthening and cherishing them?"63 Through the agitation
for penny postage, and eventually ocean penny postage, the government
was reconceived as a network of support internal to kinship, rather than
outside of it.

Another 1848 poem entitled "Sophie's Petition to Uncle John" was
penned as a Christmas request from a child to her avuncular Santa Claus of
postage, and includes a direct request to replace an international
environment shaped by violence and commercial haggling with an affective
economy mediated by the Post Office. After asking "Dear Uncle John" for
a way to send cheap letters to her cousins in Australia, Canada, and
America, "thy loving niece, Sophie" makes some economic observations
about the high cost of waging wars overseas:

It costs some millions every year
   To pay the men who fight;
'Twould be much better, uncle dear,
   To set our pens to write.
Then kindly words of love and peace
   Would reach from shore to shore,
Till men should learn they're brothers all,
   And think of war no more.
Oh, uncle John! dear uncle John!
   How very nice 'twould be
For ships with letters, not with guns,

63. The Lancaster Guardian (February 10, 1838).
To sail across the sea;
For cannon-balls, take letter-bags,
'Twould be a pleasant change
They'd reach a longer way, by far,
Than Captain Warner's "range."  

As the depoliticized, sentimentalized embodiment of the British empire, "Uncle John" accessed ideological notions of familialism without the taint of traditional, hierarchical models of power. Just as the avuncular term in debates surrounding pawnbroking signified the intersection of the affective world of the family with the commercial world of exchange, so Uncle John Bull is the figure chosen by propagandists for universal postage to suggest that affect is not only a nicer and more civilized way to maintain empire than war, but that it is also a much more economically conservative strategy.

The avuncular trope resurfaces in novels such as Margaret Oliphant's 1861 The House on the Moor, a text that celebrates the reformed Post Office as a vehicle for introducing an isolated nuclear family into the rites and rituals of exogamous social life. Oliphant's novel focuses on a small, disaffected family living in an desolate corner of northern England: Susan and Horace Scarsdale are motherless siblings residing with their reclusive father who is "dark not so much in complexion as in sentiment." When we learn that Susan has the affectionate, domestic disposition of her dead mother, but that she is unloved by her self-absorbed father and cruel

64. Burritt, 32.
65. Margaret Oliphant, The House on the Moor 3 vols. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1861), vol. 1, 35. All further references to this edition will be made within the text.
brother, the blunt disavowal of Mr. Scarsdale's racial darkness resurfaces, implying that the initial anxiety of the narrative is that without love, Susan will inevitably succumb to the "dark" forces of the Moor that surround her. This threat is summarily neutralized by the sudden appearance of her mother's brother, Uncle Edward Sutherland, who has been a Colonel in the British army in India for twenty years. Fortunately for Susan, the sole point of Uncle Edward's return is to reestablish "reciprocity of honest affection and kindred between his own family and their nearest relatives" (vol. 1, 48). Beloved by her uncle, the colonial agent, Susan is at last able to enjoy the sympathetic interaction of kinship, and when Uncle Sutherland is finally forced by his brother-in-law to depart, Susan can, for the first time in her life, take comfort in the daily dispensations of the post:

All had not disappeared with Uncle Edward. Here was a perennial expectation, a constant thread of hope henceforward to run through her life. Never before had Susan known the altogether modern and nineteenth-century excitement of looking for the postman. It gave quite a new interest to the day -- any day that unknown functionary might come again to refresh her soul with this novel delight. She could see him coming across the moor, that celestial messenger! Not a cupid, honest fellow; but bearing with him all the love that brightened Susan's firmament... all was very different from that dead blank of her former life, in which she had no expectation. (vol. 1, 49)

By introducing his niece to civilization and to sentiment simultaneously, the avuncular visitor to *The House on the Moor* combines the colonial
imperative of banishing foreign darkness in the name of empire with the postal imperative of redeeming the disaffected family.

Carrying mailbags instead of cannonballs, letters instead of guns, the "celestial messenger" of the nineteenth-century Post Office assumed a highly visible cultural role in the maintenance and expansion of the British empire: a circumstance that made the connection between postmen and policemen, postmen and soldiers, a point of metaphoric exploitation in a variety of Victorian texts. For example, Disraeli’s 1844 novel Coningsby finds one ultra-conservative character, the Right Honorable Nicholas Rigby,

concocting, you could not term it composing, an article, a 'very slashing article,' which was to prove that the penny postage must be the downfall of the aristocracy. It was a grand subject, treated in the highest style. His parallel portraits of Rowland Hill the conqueror of Almarez, and Rowland Hill the deviser of cheap postage were enormously fine . . . There was never a fellow for giving a good hearty kick to the people as Rigby.

Rigby's comparison of Rowland Hill, a general in the Peninsular War who died in 1842, and Rowland Hill the "deviser of cheap postage," would seem random and unmotivated without the context of the reformed Post Office's role in shaping and maintaining empire. By yoking the two disparate Hills in order to suggest that postal reform had more in common with violence than with sentiment, Rigby's conservative suspicion attempts to undo the domesticating rhetoric of Hill's advocates. In Rigby's establishmentarian

assessment, penny-postage reform was no more than a war waged by Rowland Hill against the aristocracy.

But nowhere is the connection between the civil servants of the Post Office and the soldiers of the British Empire more telling than in Trollope's *Autobiography*. In 1851, Trollope returned from Ireland where he had been setting up colonial postal routes to begin working on similar networks in rural England: "During those two years," his *Autobiography* records, "it was the ambition of my life to cover the country with rural letter-carriers."\(^{67}\) As a clerk whose primary function was the establishment of "postal networks which should catch all recipients of letters,"\(^{68}\) Trollope was complicit in producing and extending the "powerful engine of civilization" Hill had created.

All this I did on horseback, riding on an average forty miles a day . . . I have often surprised some small country postmaster, who had never seen or heard of me before, by coming down upon him at nine in the morning, with a red coat and boots and breeches, and interrogating him as to the disposal of every letter which came into his office . . . In all these visits I was, in truth, a beneficent angel to the public, bringing everywhere with me an earlier, cheaper, and much more regular delivery of letters. But not unfrequently the angelic nature of my mission was imperfectly understood . . . Unless I came down suddenly as a summer's storm upon them, the very people who were robbed by our messengers would not confess the robbery, fearing the ill-will of the men. It was necessary to startle

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\(^{67}\) Trollope, *An Autobiography*, 82.  
\(^{68}\) Ibid., 81.
them into the revelations which I required them to make for their own good. And I did startle them. 69

Trollope's representation of himself as a redcoated soldier, "interrogating" rural postmasters and startling country citizens into confessions about their mail delivery is, on the one hand, an ironic inflation of his socially demeaning occupation as a public servant. But on the other hand, if we think of the Post Office as an institution that had ideologically replaced the monarchy in order to extend its discipline, Trollope's mounted man of letters forces the political Post Office to resurface as a reconfigured soldier of civilization and empire. In Foucault's political anatomy, Trollope takes on the local authority of the prince, functioning not in the service of the Queen, but for an "earlier, cheaper and much more regular" circulation of information and affection.

V. The Post Office and the Affective Family: Trollope's Novels

Of course, Trollope's evident enjoyment of his power to "come down upon," to "interrogate," and to "startle," is seemingly at odds with his initial description of the reformed Post Office as a mechanized institution, staffed with clerks and postmen who were expected to do the work of automatons. Yet the two passages from his Autobiography are symptomatic of the conflictedness over postal progress mentioned by Glendenning. Trollope's enjoyment of the power that accrues to him as a navigator of postal routes, a soldier for intercommunication, is undercut by

69. Ibid., 83-84.
a nagging suspicion that he, as both a civil servant and as a British citizen, is subject to a specifically nineteenth-century brand of discipline enforced by heightened expectations for performance and participation. If the duties of a postal clerk under Rowland Hill were circumscribed by demands for ritualized and pre-determined actions and behaviors, the duties of a letter writer in the age of penny postage were governed by affective rules and regulations that were especially threatening to normative models of masculinity. "Women expect such a lot of letter-writing!"70 mourns the vacillating hero of Trollope's 1867 novel The Claverings, who ultimately blames his engagement to two women at once on the fact that his first fiancé, Florence Burton, desired him to "live upon letters" (34) during a long engagement. "Dear Harry," Florence writes, "I am sure that we ought to wait... I fancy that I can be quite happy if I can see you two or three times a year, and hear from you constantly. It is so good of you to write such nice letters, and the longer they are, the better I like them" (90). When Harry begins to write shorter and shorter letters, and finally fails to write altogether for a few weeks, Mrs. Burton gets suspicious that her girl is being ill-treated and proposes a journey to London to find him. "It would look as if we were all afraid," Mr. Burton protests,

"... and after all, what does it come to? -- a young gentleman does not write to his sweetheart for two or three weeks. I used to think myself the best lover in the world, if I wrote once a month."

"There was no penny post then, Mr Burton."

70. Anthony Trollope, The Claverings (1867; reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 233. All further references to this edition will be made within the text.
"And I often wish there was none now," said Mr. Burton.

(273)

The affective rituals of courtship have so accelerated under penny postage that male negligence and indiscretion are immediately perceptible not only to the lover, but also to the lover's entire family; moreover, the non-delivery of a letter can have just as many affective ramifications as a successful transmission. While postal relationships prolong the most empowering period of a courtship for a woman, they increase the chances that men will go astray, or rather, in Trollope's idiom, that they will be caught in the act of going "to the wrong side of the post" (178).

As a policing agent that functioned nominally in the service of female sentiment, the penny post was often represented as the downfall of masculine autonomy. In Robert Surtees's 1858 novel, *Ask Mamma; or, The Richest Commoner in England*, the slowness of mail coaches is remembered as having been very conducive to the pulse of masculine lovemaking in pre-railway days, but the penny post and the railroad have given women all the power of romantic conquest. In light of this, the novel's titular "Mamma" has some important advice about courtship for her son, Billy Pringle:

Be cautious too about letter-writing. There is no real privacy about love-letters anymore than there is about the flags and banners of a regiment, though they occasionally furl and cover them up. The love-letters are a woman's flags and banners, her trophies of success, and the more flowery they are, the more likely they are to be shown, and to aid in enlightening a Christmas party tea. Then the girl's
Mammans read them, their sisters read them, their maids read them, and ultimately perhaps a boisterous, energetic young barrister reads them to an exasperated jury.\textsuperscript{71}

While this passage reopens the ideological connection between the Post Office and the military, it suggests that the female recipients of love letters are actually more like soldiers than the postmen who deliver them. The reformed, nineteenth-century Post Office, Surtees implies, has imposed an affective economy upon British citizens that circulates for the entertainment and legal benefit of women. Letters "enlighten" trivial Christmas parties, rather than intellectual circles, and, most egregiously, serve as evidence against young male writers in law suits. Once a letter is written it comes untethered from the context of its inception and may be absorbed in a variety of alternative economies: at any time, information or affection may "go to the wrong side of the post" with or without the knowledge of the writer.

If this is Derrida's point about postal economies ("a letter can always \textit{not} arrive at its destination"\textsuperscript{72}), it is also Trollope's point about nineteenth-century epistolary communication: "The word that is written is a thing capable of permanent life, and lives frequently to the confusion of its parent. A man should make his confessions always by word of mouth if it be possible."\textsuperscript{73} Considering that only four years after the successful inauguration of penny postage, a secret, inner office was discovered at St.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{71} Robert Surtees, "\textit{Ask Mamma}, or, The Richest Commoner in England\textit{"} (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1858), 173.
\item \textsuperscript{72} Jacques Derrida, \textit{The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond\textit{"}}, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 123.
\item \textsuperscript{73} \textit{The Claverings}, 440.
\end{itemize}
Martin's le Grand where the letters of suspected political dissidents and foreign visitors to England were opened, Trollope's advice was motivated by more than the potential failures of interpretation. On the other hand, the possible interception of mail was just the most literal fracture engendered by postal communication. Although the popular ideology of the Post Office insisted that cheap postage could repair the disaffected family, a distinct counter-ideology suggested that it could also catalyze other, more linguistic breakdowns. As Alexander Welsh writes in his book on *George Eliot and Blackmail,*

The availability of the penny post probably lent impetus to greater literacy; at the same time, the increased use of the mails and of the telegraph placed a subtle strain on the trust between individuals. As in all uses of writing, the messages are loosed from their origin to be interpreted elsewhere.74

While holding the family and the nation together on the plane of ideology, the penny post engendered more "subtle" fractures at the level of the sentence and the paragraph. It was this loosening of origin from interpretation that opened up space for outside agents to wreak havoc on interpersonal relationships, especially relationships between and among family members.

For example, Trollope's 1879 novel, *John Caldigate,* introduces and upholds the hegemonic narrative of the Post Office's ability to reform the family, but ends with an ambivalent assessment of the interpretive loosenings that are inevitable within postal intercourse. The novel begins

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by telling the story of a family plagued by paternal disruptions: not only is John Caldigate's relationship with his father in ruins, but his father's relationship with his grandfather had been similarly fractured by general incompatibilities. While at college John has fallen in debt to Davis, an infamous Jew-usurer, and in light of his pre-existing problems with his wealthy father, has turned to his also wealthy Uncle Babington for help. Uncle Babington does render some temporary financial aid, but John consequently finds that he is expected to recompense his uncle's family by marrying their eldest daughter, Julia. When John realizes he has merely proliferated his outstanding debts within the ledgers of a variety of uncles, he forfeits his future inheritance by selling his entail to his father for a sum of ready cash, and emigrating to Australia to dig for gold.

True to the ideology of postal reform, however, when John begins to send "rational, pleasant, and straightforward" accounts of his endeavors home to his father, "there was no touch or tone of the old quarrel."75 Letters came regularly, month by month, and were always regularly answered, -- till a chance reader would have thought that no father and son stood on better terms with each other . . . each letter was regarded as the rising of a new sun . . . This went on not only from month to month, but from year to year, till at the end of three years from the date at which the son had left Folkling, there had come to be a complete confidence between him and his father. (118-19)

The cheap and frequent circulation of letters between Britain and her colonies triumphs in the opening pages of John Caldigate, redeeming the

75. Anthony Trollope, John Caldigate (1879; reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 118. All further references to this edition will be made within the text.
alienated bond between father and son and simultaneously undoing the work of uncles. The reformed Post Office makes the father "certain of the son's reform" (120), and the elder Mr. Caldigate happily reinstates John as his heir.

John returns home, marries Hester Bolton, and produces his own heir; but suddenly a letter signed "Euphemia Caldigate" arrives from Australia, threatening to expose a previous marriage if he does not return a large sum of money that he had received in payment for a now-defunct gold mine. John refuses and finds himself indicted for bigamy, the proof of which consists entirely of the testimony of the Lady and a single letter and an envelope, both in his handwriting; the envelope is addressed to "Mrs. Caldigate" (280). Despite the defense's plea that "a man does not marry a woman by simply writing his own name with the word mistress prefixed to it on an envelope" (294), the warnings of Billy Pringle's mother in Ask Mamma come true: John is convicted, and the power of the Post Office to prove family relationships appears hegemonic and infallible. In fact, the name on the envelope is all that is necessary to convince the Judge of John's guilt; if anything, the contents of the letter should throw doubt on the possibility of a marriage between John and Euphemia. They "referred almost altogether to money matters, though perhaps hardly to such as a man generally discusses with his wife. Certain phrases seemed to imply a distinct action. She had better sell these shares or those, if she could, for a certain price, -- and suchlike" (281). The fact that John's

76. It is also important that when Dick Shand's mother suggests sending shirts to her son in Australia because "he can't drink the shirts out there in the bush," John Caldigate tries instead to get her to send letters imparting motherly encouragement and kindness.
letter to Euphemia has a strictly economic content has no bearing on the trial; as we know, the cultural work accomplished by postal ideology is the successful suggestion that every letter is a love letter.

In establishing the existence of an economic family, the Post Office denies the existence of an affective one, and Hester Caldigate's realization that she is no longer considered to be married registers as a confusion about how she will get her future mail: "what would they call her? When they wrote to her from Chesterton how would they address her letters?" (415). But it isn't long before Samuel Bagwax, Post Office clerk and authority on postage stamps, begins to suspect that something is wrong with the Australian stamp on the envelope addressed to "Mrs. Caldigate." To Bagwax, the envelope is indicative of the disaffection of one couple rather than the love of the other: "Every moment that I pass with that envelope before my eyes I see the innocent husband in jail, and the poor afflicted wife weeping in her solitude" (499). After months of careful study and research, Bagwax realizes and successfully proves that the "queen's-head" affixed to the envelope was not issued until long after the dated postmark (524). Despite the fact that the failures and corruptions of the colonial Post Office have allowed blackmail and forgery to masquerade as bigamy, the police work of Bagwax realigns the sentimental family by proving bigamy to be forgery, after all. For his good service, Bagwax is sent to Australia to enforce greater postal inviolability between Britain and the colonies, and John Caldigate ends up enforcing the same ideology it introduced: the sanctity of the affective family depends upon the reformation and maintenance of colonial Post Offices.
If, in *John Caldigate*, blackmail replaces bigamy in the novel's economy of crimes, in *The Claverings* we see that blackmail has replaced abduction and other forms of gothic brutality in the nineteenth-century economy of criminal behavior. In the middle-class parlor of the Burton family, the penny post is represented as a policing agent operating in the service of domestic affection, but in the hands of foreign personages, the penny post is as revolutionary in effects as the anachronistic *lettre de cachet*. Appearing in the pages of a late eighteenth-century gothic novel, the French-speaking Russian, Count Pateroff, would be the brutal and violent foreign villain, infiltrating the British parlor in order to kidnap a young, rich English maiden and force her hand in marriage. In Trollope's *The Claverings*, however, Count Pateroff's tactics have altered to suit the temperament of mid-Victorian realism. Pateroff has attempted to propose to the rich British widow Lady Ongar on more than one occasion, but he has been consistently refused entrance to her London townhouse. Rather than abandon his pursuit, he turns his mind to alternative methods of manipulation, "feeling that he must operate on Lady Ongar through some other feeling than her personal regard for himself":

He might, perhaps, have trusted much to his own eloquence if he could have seen her; but how is a man to be eloquent in his wooing if he cannot see the lady whom he covets? There is, indeed, the penny post, but in these days of legal restraints, there is no other method of approaching an unwilling beauty. Forcible abduction is put an end to as regards Great Britain and Ireland. So the count had recourse to the post. (280)
While the nineteenth-century legal system in Britain has terminated the practice of forcible family-making, the penny post has become an engine of alternative coercions: a tool for manipulating family bonds in the absence of affective feeling. In *The Claverings*, Trollope finally suggests that the penny post runs counter to the sentimental ideology that brought it into existence, and that the business of building kinship can be the chosen occupation of greedy gothic criminals as well as domesticated British families.

In other words, although the popular ideology of the Post Office was that it could bring the family together, it constantly threatened to bring the wrong family together: to solidify kinship bonds that were adverse to the claims of the "real" affective family. Moreover, the family relationships at risk in postal intercourse were linguistic as well as affective. Although the letter written by Count Pateroff is too long to be given to the reader (280), it is apparently a masterpiece of deliberate ambiguity, an example of the way that postal communication is subject to a plethora of loosenings between word and deed, intention and outcome, subject and object:

His letter was very long . . . He began by telling Lady Ongar that she owed it to him for the good services he had done her, to read what he might say, and to answer him. He then gave her various reasons why she should see him, pleading among other things, in language which she could understand, though the words were purposefully as ambiguous as they could be made, that he had possessed and did possess the power of doing her a grievous injury,
and that he had abstained, and -- hoped that he might be able to abstain for the future. She knew that the words contained no threat . . . but she understood also all that he had intended to imply. (280)

Black-mail, consequently, was the economic and linguistic subversion of affective mail, the point at which the Post Office's republican accessibility became dangerous. "The temptation to blackmail of the fictional employee of the Post Office is not what finally distinguishes them," Welsh insists, "Blackmail is an opportunity afforded to everyone by communication of knowledge at a distance."77 This is certainly the conclusion reached by the dismissed chaplain, Mr. Greenwood, in Trollope's last completed novel Marion Fay. Unsatisfied with the "beggarly stipend" granted him by the Marquis of Kingsbury, Greenwood "remembered that though it might be base to tell her ladyship's secrets, the penny post was still open to him."78 That "penny post" functions as a satisfactory euphemism for blackmail in the above sentence is indicative of how the cheapness and ubiquity of the first had given birth to the second. Like Count Pateroff, moreover, Greenwood possesses secrets that could significantly alter patriarchal alliances and family bonds: "her ladyship's secrets" are her plots and schemes to drive a wedge of disaffection between her husband and his children from his first marriage. Indeed, in its ability to engender a plethora of alternative interpretations of the family, Trollope's representations of the penny post are reminiscent of Richard Cobden's letter to Rowland Hill about the communities of angry citizens that the

77. Welsh, 58.
78. Anthony Trollope, Marion Fay (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1882), 317.
reformed post was capable of organizing: "witness our League operations, the spawn of your penny postage!"

_He Knew He Was Right_, however, is probably Trollope's most extended revision of the affective ideology of the postal reform, as it happens to be a novel that reverses the avuncular romance of the Post Office generated by Oliphant's _The House on the Moor_. When Colonel Osborne, "that odious destroyer of the peace of families,"⁷⁹ first makes his appearance at the London home of a happily married couple, their new baby, and the wife's unmarried sister, the "dark" wife Emily and her sister Nora have already been rescued by Louis Trevelyan from an isolated life on the tropical Mandarin Islands. Colonel Osborne is nominally an old friend of Emily's father, and it seems at first natural to Mrs. Trevelyan "that so old a friend should come to her and congratulate her and renew his friendship":

nevertheless it was not true that he made his appearance in her husband's house in the guise of the useful old family friend, who gives silver cups to the children and kisses the little girls for the sake of the parents. We all know the appearance of that old gentleman, how pleasant and dear a fellow he is, how welcome is his face within the gate, how free he makes with our wine, generally abusing it, how he tells our eldest daughter to light his candle for him, how he gave silver cups when the girls were born, and now bestows tea services as they get married, -- a most useful, safe, and charming fellow, not

⁷⁹. Anthony Trollope, _He Knew He Was Right_ (1869; reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 121. All further references to this edition will be made within the text.
a year younger-looking or more nimble than ourselves, without whom life would be a very blank. We all know that man; but such a man was not Colonel Osborne in the house of Mr. Trevelyans young bride. (6)
The "useful, safe, and charming" ideology "we all know" of a traditionally avuncular figure like Colonel Sutherland, who indeed redeemed his niece's life from the "dead blank" that it had been before, allows the more insidious Colonel Osborne to pick away at the fragile seams of the affective family. Gaining access to Emily's company and correspondence by claiming the psuedo-familial privileges of a "godfather," Colonel Osborne inflicts the first blow on Trevelyans marriage by addressing the wife as "Dear Emily" (41) in his letters.

In the absence of Sir and Lady Marmaduke, who returned to the Mandarins after their daughter's wedding to continue the business of colonial governing, Colonel Osborne is dislodged from the economy that maintained him as a member of the family and now circulates in more onerous postal capacities. Although Emily is unconscious of wrongdoing, Louis believes that his own patriarchal authority as "her lord, and her master" (41) is usurped by the familiar mode of the Colonels "address," and consequently begins to communicate with his wife only by letter. In this way, a family quarrel that eventually escalates to the permanent separation of husband from wife and child begins with a problem of interpretation and of postal loosenings. As Trollope explains, when Emily Trevelyans declares that the Colonel is entitled to "semi-paternal feelings of veneration because he was older than her father, she made a comparison
which was more true in the letter than in the spirit" (6). Adherence to the avuncular letter over the patriarchal spirit in *He Knew He Was Right* produces the very colonial disaffection and rebelliousness that it repaired in *The House on the Moor*.

It is important, moreover, that Osborne's postal communications with Emily rest on the pretext of getting Sir (and Lady) Marmaduke home to London to give testimony at the Colonial Office about his daily work in the Mandarins: although he brings together one ruptured family for the greater glory of empire, Osborne's ulterior motive is the subversion and disaffection of another. In this way, the false uncle Osborne counters the ideological work performed by Uncle John Bull and Uncle Edward Sutherland, producing a reading of anti-paternalism that is closer to avuncular models deployed by detractors of pawnbroking. Like the pawnbroker, Colonel Osborne is finally a destroyer of patriarchal chains and paternal bonds rather than a consolidator of family affection.

In *He Knew He Was Right*, the Post Office's utter inability to police the disaffected family is realized by everyone, especially by the very aunts and uncles who are expected to serve as extensions of maternal love and paternal law. The staunch Tory Aunt Stanbury, for example, has no confidence in the writing of many letters, "and regarded penny postage as one of the strongest evidences of the coming ruin" (67). She carries all of her letters to the central Post Office in town, moreover, because she hates the new pillar boxes, not having "the faintest belief that any letter put into one of them would ever reach its destination" (69). Anticipating the problems of postal loosening and the shortcomings of governance through
sentiment, Aunt Stanbury resorts to more gothic methods of policing her dependent niece's affections: arranging her marriage, intercepting her mail, and openly demanding her pliant submission. Moreover, the economic aspects of Aunt Stanbury's patronage of Dorothy are never veiled in affective rhetoric, and are entirely without recourse to the domesticating ideologies of the sentimental Victorian family.

Aunt Stanbury's model of discipline, then, is at the far end of the spectrum from what Foucault called panopticism, and is closer to "the discipline-blockade, the enclosed institution, established on the edges of society, turned inwards towards negative functions: arresting evil, breaking communications, suspending time."\(^{80}\) The failure of postal control in *He Knew He Was Right* produces a conservative backlash against panopticism, and aunts and uncles everywhere attempt to return to the discipline blockade of the gothic novel in order to impose submission on a legion of wayward nieces who have already been liberated by the Victorian Post Office. When thwarted, Louis Trevelyan seeks advice from Lady Milborough, an old friend of his deceased mother, her knowledge that there is nothing Colonel Osborne "likes so much as going about and making mischief between men and their wives" (26), is based on her knowledge of Agustus Poole:

he had been compelled to break up his establishment, and take his wife to Naples, because this horrid Colonel would make himself at home in Mrs. Poole's drawing-room in Knightsbridge. Augustus Poole, with courage enough to take any man by the beard, had taking

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by the beard been possible, had found it impossible to dislodge the Colonel. He could not do so without making a row which would have been disgraceful to himself and injurious to his wife; and therefore he had taken Mrs. Poole to Naples. (25)

Just as Naples was the answer to the marital problems of the Pooles, it is Lady Milborough's proposed solution to the Trevelyans' difficulties: reminiscent of the pages of an Ann Radcliffe novel, Italy looms as a gothic space where violence and forcible repressions are permissible for a husband.

Ignoring Lady Milborough's advice, Louis finds a series of more local answers to the discipline-blockade, first by arranging for his wife and sister to live with a widow and her elder daughter at the Clock House in Nuncombe Putney. Not only is the isolation of the region evident in its name, "none come," but the neighborhood postman is especially slow due to his wooden leg, and the very clock of Clock House was long ago broken and removed. It is also located near a prison, and various rumors circulate in London society as to this proximity.

By some it was said that [Mrs. Trevelyans] was in the prison on Dartmoor, -- or if not actually in the prison, and arrangements which the prison discipline might perhaps make difficult, -- that she was in the custody of one of the prison warders who possessed a prim cottage and a grim wife, just outside the prison walls. (187)

As isolated and as prison-like as the Clock House is, much to Louis's despair, Emily still manages to send and receive letters, and in answer to one, receives a visit from Colonel Osborne. The networks established by
Trollope and other civil servants of the Post Office are so multiple and so diffuse that Trevelyan's prison blockade inevitably fails: "He had sent her away, into the most remote retirement he could find for her; but the post was open to her" (177).

Forced to leave the Clock House because the widow and her daughter are made uncomfortable by the arrangement, Emily and her sister Nora seek refuge in St. Diddulph's-in-the-East, home of their clergyman uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Outhouse. The rectory of St. Diddulph's is in the poorest, ugliest, dirtiest section of London, and the Outhouses have no neighbors with whom they can socialize. Moreover, the home of Uncle Outhouse is a place of waste and excess in more than the most obvious of ways:

not far removed from the muddy estuary of a little stream that makes its black way from the Essex marshes along the houses of the poorest of the poor into the Thames, a large commercial establishment for turning the carcasses of horses into manure. Messrs. Flowsem and Blurt were in truth the great people of St. Diddulph's-in-the-East, but the closeness of their establishment was not an additional attraction to the parsonage. (271)

The connection between women and horses, or rather between redundant women and waste, will be clearly established when Priscilla Stanbury, Dorothy's elder sister, declares her intention to bring herself to live upon "a straw a day" like the horse in the fable, until she reduces herself to death (914). Although Priscilla's meaning is figurative, her words still shed some light on what happens to women when they fail to be absorbed by
paternal or patriarchal economies, and especially on what happens to Emily and Nora in the economy of the avunculate: the "inward" functions of this disciplinary blockade are the turning of women into waste, nieces into shit, while all the time denying the presence of the smell. "Non Olet" (271), says Uncle Outhouse to himself every time Flowsem and Blurt make a sizeable donation to the rectory. Yet Uncle Outhouse's mantra doesn't work as well when Emily Trevelyan attempts to disguise her own smell with money: when he admits his nieces to his home on the footing of lodgers, he exposes the economic shape of the family, and feels that his very power as a Victorian patriarch is eroded by "paying his tradesmen with a portion of Mrs. Trevelyan's money" (383).

Realizing his avuncular duty is tainted by economics, Uncle Outhouse cannot finally govern his nieces with the affective ideology of the Post Office. His impotence becomes especially clear when Nora Rowley, Emily's younger sister, begins to receive letters from an unsuitable suitor, and the issue of postal authority utterly confounds the regulatory powers of the avunculate.

The question of the management of letters for young ladies is handled very differently in different houses. In some establishments the post is as free to young ladies as it is to the reverend seniors of the household. In others it is considered to be quite a matter of course that some experienced discretion should sit in judgement on the correspondence of the daughters of the family. When Nora Rowley was living with her sister in Curzon Street, she would have been very indignant indeed had it been suggested to her that there
was any authority over her letters vested in her sister. But now, circumstanced as she was at St. Diddulph's, she did understand that no letter would reach her without her aunt knowing that it had come. (497-98)

The undoing of postal ideology begins with the authority of sisters, and lingers momentarily on the authority of the aunts. Nora's letter contains a proposal of marriage from Hugh Stanbury, and while Emily begs her to postpone the answer until mamma returns from the Mandarins, Nora refuses. Emily persists:

'Will you ask Aunt Mary?'

'Certainly not. What is Aunt Mary to me? We are here in her house for a time, under the press of circumstances; but I owe her no obedience. She told Mr. Stanbury not to come here; and I shall not ask him to come. I would not willingly bring any one into Uncle Oliphant's house that he and she do not wish to see. But I will not admit that either of them have any authority over me.'

'Then who has, dearest?'

'Nobody; -- except papa and mamma; and they have chosen to leave me to myself.' (502)

The separation of the affective family due (in the case of the Rowleys) to colonial business, cannot be remedied by the intermediary control of the avunculate; the disciplinary Post Office in which reformers such as Harriet Martineau were so confident, is shown to be vulnerable to alternative use. Not at all sure that Aunt Mary "would not stop the emission of the letter from her house" (502), Nora takes her acceptance of Hugh's proposal to
the Post Office herself, forging her own interpretation of the affective family and dismissing the affective claims of the avunculate. As Uncle Outhouse repeatedly recognizes, avuncular authority is not what it used to be in last century, and "The Parsonage of St. Diddulph's isn't a castle in the Apennines" (495). In the context of an Ann Radcliffe novel, Uncle Outhouse's authority over his nieces would be absolute, and his right to discipline the women of the family would be an imperative of the plot.
EPILOGUE

Middlemarch Redux

In Middlemarch, Mr. Bulstrode's housekeeper is confused about kinship. Knowing that Mr. Bulstrode has purchased Stone Court from the recently deceased Mr. Featherstone's illegitimate son and heir, Joshua Rigg, the connection between Bulstrode and Rigg is understandable, but when the mysterious Raffles comes to town, Mrs. Abel's powers of comprehension are severely taxed:

Mrs. Abel thought, like the other servants at The Shrubs, that the strange man belonged to the unpleasant 'kin' who are among the troubles of the rich; she had at first referred the kinship to Mr. Rigg, and where there was property left, the buzzing presence of such large blue-bottles seemed natural enough. How he could be 'kin' to Bulstrode as well was not so clear, but Mrs. Abel agreed with her husband that there was 'no knowing', a proposition which had a great deal of mental food for her, so that she shook her head over it without further speculation. (751)

Unlike Mrs. Abel, we know how Raffles is "kin" to Bulstrode, and we soon learn how Raffles is related to Rigg: he became the boy's stepfather after the mother was abandoned by Peter Featherstone. But like Mrs. Abel, we also know that the affective family is not always coterminous with the economic family, and that money can often engender "unpleasant kin."

To the dismay and confusion of Middlemarch's inhabitants, alternative families proliferate wherever capital is at stake, and biological,
patriarchal kinship is perpetually threatened by the shape of uncles. On one end of the novel’s spectrum of events, uncles forclose even the possibility of the affective family for Tertius Lydgate, when his wife Rosamond, believing she is "riveting the connection with the family at Quallingham" (630), goes riding with Sir Godwin Lydgate’s son while she is pregnant, and has a miscarriage. Even the inheritance that Peter Featherstone hopes to bequeath to his illegitimate son, Joshua Rigg, fails to engender the Featherstone patrilineage that he had intended. Not only does the Featherstone property go to Bulstrode, a man Peter Featherstone hated, Bulstode’s purchase money, the money he hoped to launder by buying Stone Court, reverts, with Rigg, to its disreputable origins.

The cool and judicious Joshua Rigg had not allowed his parent to perceive that Stone Court was anything less than the chief good in his estimation, and he had certainly wished to call it his own. But as Warren Hastings looked at gold and though of buying Daylesford, so Joshua Rigg looked at Stone Court and though of buying gold. He had a very distinct and intense vision of his chief good, the vigorous greed which he had inherited having taken a social form by dint of circumstance: and his chief good was to be a money-changer . . . The one joy after which his soul thirsted was to have a money-changer’s shop on a much-frequented quay, to have locks all round him of which he held the keys, and to look sublimely cool as he handled the breeding coins of all nations while helpless Cupidity looked at him enviously from the other side of an iron lattice. (564)
Joshua Rigg's economic inheritance -- "the vigorous greed" that made his biological father into a miser and his adoptive father into a blackmailer -- proves his true father to be Uncle Bulstrode, after all.

The primary objective of this dissertation has been to loosen the nuclear family's hold upon Victorian culture, to suggest that under industrial capitalism ideologies of kinship were more complex and expansive than father-centered theories or histories will allow. Just as the uncle becomes the vehicle of exogamy and exchange for the closed, nuclear family, the avunculate marks the intersection of feudal, paternalistic culture with newly developing nineteenth-century discourses of economic individualism, free trade, and kinder, gentler versions of empire. That these discourses often spawned anxieties about female emancipation, the rights of tenant farmers, and the revolutionary effects of trade unions, suggests that the shape of uncles functioned as both ideology and counter-ideology: sometimes as a conservative, disciplinary supplement to the law of the father, and sometimes as a liberating promise of a life without father. In this context, the American emblem of "Uncle Sam" functions as the ultimate ideological turncoat: in Uncle Sam, a British discourse of home control was reversed and redeployed, becoming a resonant personification of anti-English democracy and nationalism. But whether the shape of uncles in nineteenth-century America proved to be an unambivalent icon of religious freedom, social autonomy, and political justice is another subject entirely.
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