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Ann Van Sant

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Abstract
In the casual extremity that sometimes marks Sarah Scott's style, one of her characters says, "There is no divine Ordinance more frequently disobeyed than that wherein God forbids human Sacrifice, for in no other light can I see most marriages." The stories her characters tell create both isolated and cumulative evidence for the necessity of a counter-narrative for women, for which Scott provides a model in Millenium Hall. She explicitly identifies the problem of gentlewomen displaced from conventional natal and conjugal family structures, brings a critical scrutiny to those structures, and creates a family formation hospitable to women. As Felicity Nussbaum expresses it, "Millenium Hall, recognizing the potential imprisonment of women in marriage, offers an alternative to it ... [:] a feminotopia of domesticity that offers protection from unwanted marriage, pregnancy, and the disappointments and dangers of maternity. It provides daily sorority." As Alessa Johns argues in Women's Utopias of the Eighteenth Century, Scott works against the naturalized family of blood and recreates affective and moral families. Although in her letters Scott can take a tolerantly affectionate and conventionally witty tone about "our William" and his exaggerated romantic suffering ("I scold without end at his dolorous countenance and voice, abuse him without the least degree of delicacy and he takes it all with great good humour"), she also makes explicit her scepticism about the frequent bearing of children ("I am as little sensible of the merit of producing children yearly as you are") and her detachment from the concept of "blood" ("I have not that regard to blood some good people have, perhaps it may be that I have so drained my Veins that certainly there does not remain in my whole body one drop of what I brought into the World with me)."

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In the casual extremity that sometimes marks Sarah Scott's style, one of her characters says, "There is no divine Ordinance more frequently disobeyed than that wherein God forbids human Sacrifice, for in no other light can I see most marriages."[1] The stories her characters tell create both isolated and cumulative evidence for the necessity of a counter-narrative for women, for which Scott provides a model in *Millenium Hall*. She explicitly identifies the problem of gentlewomen displaced from conventional natal and conjugal family structures, brings a critical scrutiny to those structures, and creates a family formation hospitable to women. As Felicity Nussbaum expresses it, "*Millenium Hall*, recognizing the potential imprisonment of women in marriage, offers an alternative to it ... [:] a feminotopia of domesticity that offers protection from unwanted marriage, pregnancy, and the disappointments and dangers of maternity. It provides daily sorority."[2] As Alessa Johns argues in *Women's Utopias of the*

1 Sarah Scott, *Journey through Every Stage of Life* (1754), in *Bluestocking Feminism*, 6 vols., ed. Gary Kelly (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999), 6:14.

2 Felicity Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 151–52.

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Eighteenth Century, Scott works against the naturalized family of blood and recreates affective and moral families.[3] Although in her letters Scott can take a tolerantly affectionate and conventionally witty tone about "our William" and his exaggerated romantic suffering ("I scold without end at his dolorous countenance and voice, abuse him without the least degree of delicacy and he takes it all with great good humour"),[4] she also makes explicit her scepticism about the frequent bearing of children ("I am as little sensible of the merit of producing children yearly as you are") and her detachment from the concept of "blood" ("I have not that regard to blood some good people have, perhaps it may be that I have so drained my Veins that certainly there does not remain in my whole body one drop of what I brought into the World with me)."[5]

A topic of some interest in literary criticism and women's history has been that women writers of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries proposed or created fictional and actual living groups outside the boundaries of marriage and kinship. Terri Nickel, for example, argues that Sarah Fielding's "characters ... must reinvent the family as an alliance of siblings" and that "Fielding and her contemporaries ... articulate ... *affective* siblinghood, as the formation of an emotional family cut loose—perhaps unwittingly—from paternal authority."[6] Bridget Hill argues that the nunnery was a persistent model for women's separate communities, providing for a *society* of women and for practices of piety that extended to charitable work in the world as well as an alternative to marriage, creating, in the words of Hill's title, "a refuge from men."[7] In Scott's particular case, the

3 Alessa Johns writes of Scott's "disdain for biological ties." Johns, *Women's Utopias of the Eighteenth Century* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 93. See also Helen Oesterheld, "Re-reading the Woman of Feeling: Sarah Scott, Ann Radcliffe, Mary Wollstonecraft, and the Eighteenth-Century Novel of Sensibility" (PhD diss., University of California Irvine, 2001). Oesterheld argues that Scott was able to wrest the concept of sensibility from its culturally defined space and use it for her own feminized constructions outside the family.

4 Scott to Elizabeth Montagu, June 1760, Huntington Library, Montagu MSS, MO 5282 (hereafter cited as MO).

5 April 1754, MO 5240; 13 March 1762, MO 5290.

6 Terri Nickel, "'Ingenious Torment': Incest, Family, and the Structure of Community in the Work of Sarah Fielding," *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 36:3 (1995), 238, 239.

7 Bridget Hill, "A Refuge from Men: The Idea of a Protestant Nunnery," *Past and Present* 117 (1987), 107–30. Hill treats Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal* and Scott's *Millenium Hall* as examples of a recovery or revision of the lost separate society for women. Scott's sister refers to the living arrangements and charitable activity of Scott and Lady Barbara as a convent of sorts. See Betty Rizzo, *Companions without Vows: Relationships among Eighteenth-Century British*

"refuge from men" is frequently understood in specifically sexual/political terms. Scott creates living groups that protect women from the ideology of conjugality and allow them to build life patterns on the basis of their love for each other. George Haggerty argues that Scott "found an alternative to the ruthlessly limited possibilities available to women in the eighteenth century. In this novel, she dramatizes this discovery in a way that claims narrative authority for women-loving-women" and thus "re-eroticizes maternal relations (and 'maternalizes' the erotic) as a way of challenging eighteenth-century assumptions concerning ... the place of the mother in domestic relations."[8] In more specifically political terms, Susan Lanser makes the case that "female friendship emerged through women's agency as a powerful resource in the struggle for autonomy and authority" and that "the politics of female intimacy, deeply imbricated with those of class, were positioned to serve the sometimes conflicting and sometimes converging needs of gentry hegemony and feminist agency."[9]

My preliminary claim is that many of these interpretations of Scott's recreation of the family, in emphasizing her opposition to traditional (and patriarchal) family structures, by implication suggest that she creates what is now sometimes called a "fictive family," a "family" grouping formed outside the boundaries of family relationships.[10] These readings, which delineate Scott's extrication of women from the setting of marriage and children and her provision of economic security, affective fulfilment, and opportunities to exercise their talents and benevolence in the wider world, take the view that her family formation is beyond or outside of the conventionally institutionalized family and an alternative to it. Without minimizing the value of the historical and theoretical work on Scott's treatment of the family, I will argue in this article that Scott was working not from an alternative

Women (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 309. For a more recent treatment of the "convent" as a space for women, see Nicole Pohl, "'In This Sacred Space': The Secular Convent in Late Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Expository Literature," in *Female Communities, 1600–1800: Literary Visions and Cultural Realities,* ed. Rebecca D'Monté and Nicole Pohl (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), 149–65.

8 George Haggerty, "'Romantic Friendship' and Patriarchal Narrative in Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall,*" *Genders* 13 (Spring 1992), 109, 113.

9 Susan Lanser, "Befriending the Body: Female Intimacies as Class Acts," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32:2 (1998–99), 180.

10 See Charles A. Ibsen and Patricia Klobus for an early discussion of what they call "Supplementary Kinship," one form of which validates association outside the institutionally recognized family. "Fictive Kin Term Use and Social Relationships: Alternative Interpretations," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 34:4 (1972), 615–20.

but from an ordinary, even ubiquitous, family model—the "household family."[11] This on-the-ground, decidedly institutionalized family, defined by co-residence and familiar across the eighteenth-century landscape, gave Scott a warrant both for her most progressive thinking (through which she achieves liberty of association for women) and her generally conservative social vision (marked by disciplinary relations with those of lower social rank). The alliance discussed by Lanser of gentry class interests with women's agency is perfectly nurtured through the household family structure. Among the definitions that the *OED* offers for "household" are "The 'holding' or maintaining of a house or family; housekeeping; domestic economy" and "The inmates of a house collectively; an organized family, including servants or attendants, dwelling in a house; a domestic establishment." The illustrative quotations for this latter definition run from 1387 to 1875. A pamphlet such as *The House-holders Helpe, For Domesticall Discipline: or A Familiar Conference of House-hold Instruction and correction, fit for the godly government of Christian Families* (1615) shows that moral training is a central task of the household. The opening address of this pamphlet is to "all Religious house-holders, their Children and servants." The assumption that the household is set up for domestic economy and discipline persists in the eighteenth-century uses of the term and pervades Scott's household organizations.

Such usage is a central part of Naomi Tadmor's study, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage.* Tadmor shows that the "household" family was, in fact, a significant structure of experience. This family form includes a head of household (usually a man but not necessarily) and then, variously, a conjugal unit if there is one, relatives for the period that they live in the house, children, servants, apprentices, lodgers, and companions. As Tadmor indicates, this family formation was defined mainly by household organization and governance; except in the case of children, relationships were contractually understood; it was instrumental, though its being instrumental did not prevent its being in many cases also sentimental; it was flexible and permeable, that is, its membership could expand and contract without compromising it as a structure.[12] The household family, as analysed by Tadmor, provides a

11 The concept of *family* that Samuel Johnson defines in the *Dictionary* as "those who live in the same house."

12 Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and*

lens for reading women's relation to family structures. Shaped by co-residence rather than by kinship or conjugality, it accommodated either but was defined by neither. This organizational structure fulfilled a central disciplinary function, and, at the same time, its membership was flexible and permeable, limited principally, as to co-residence, by the contractual relations of its members.

To allow the household family to emerge as a salient structure, it is necessary to set aside some of the principal themes and oppositions in the historiography of the family. Whether great developmental changes occurred in the early modern period (changes often located in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but sometimes earlier) or a great deal of continuity was maintained in both affective and property relations has been widely debated.[13] In his introduction to Scott's *Millenium Hall*, Gary Kelly, relying on the work of Randolph Trumbach, states with a confidence implying general agreement that the "family as primarily an institution of property and patronage was being replaced by (or concealed behind) the family as primarily a network of subjective relationships."[14] Amy Erickson, in her history of women and property, on the other hand, regards as "widely discredited among social historians" the "emotional modernization"[15] arguments of Trumbach, Lawrence Stone, and others. Closely related to the contrast between traditional and modern families is the

Patronage (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21–24. Tadmor has been influenced by a number of historians' studies of households. She chooses, however, to use what she sees as an eighteenth-century vocabulary for reference to the household rather than rely on modern classifications of the household as represented by, for example, Peter Laslett and Richard Wall (see *Household and Family in Past Time; Comparative Studies in the Size and Structure of the Domestic Group over the Last Three Centuries in England, France, Serbia, Japan and Colonial North America, with Further Materials from Western Europe*, ed. and intro. Peter Laslett, with Richard Wall [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972]). Tadmor highlights eighteenth-century usage for analysis in order to get at the contemporary experience of the family (19–20, 35–36).

13 For a broad review of the issue among historians, see Keith Wrightson, "The Family in Early Modern England: Continuity and Change," in *Hanoverian Britain and Empire: Essays in Memory of Philip Lawson*, ed. Stephen Taylor, Richard Connors, and Clyve Jones (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), 1–22.

14 Gary Kelly, introduction to *Millenium Hall*, by Sarah Scott, ed. Kelly (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1995), 13. References are to this edition of *Millenium Hall*.

15 Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 6–7. Amanda Vickery sees the opposition between patriarchal and companionate marriage as a misleading contrast in her "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History," *Historical Journal* 36:2 (1993), 383–414, and her *The Gentleman's Daughter:Women's Life in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

opposition between the extended and the nuclear family, with the "continuity" school claiming that nuclear families have historically been the predominant family form in English culture. Tadmor has argued that although the continuity historians in these debates have largely won out, the opposition itself is misleading and prevents us from attending to the key descriptive and analytic terms that will bring the eighteenth-century family into view. Margaret Hunt, working from a different angle, also insists on the complexity of family relations. She demonstrates the extent to which, during this period, those in the "middling" ranks were still embedded in family networks and how important they regarded their obligations (often property obligations) to a wider kin group.[16] A simple opposition such as the one between "property and patronage" and "subjective relationships" or between nuclear families and extended families obscures rather than clarifies familial relations and makes it difficult to see how family structures could be reshaped by women.

Further elements necessary to understand the experience of families in households in the eighteenth century emerge from demographics. Although demographics do not tell fine-grained stories,[17] certain kinds of population figures can serve as a corrective or counterweight to prevailing beliefs. Despite the widespread presumption that women would marry, "most adult women in the population at any given time were not married."[18] This number includes widows, many

16 Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680–1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 22–45.

17 Ruth Perry expresses a sceptical view of demographic work because she wants to get at what she calls an historical shift that cannot be seen through such studies: "Some time between the end of the seventeenth century and the middle of the eighteenth century, a momentous shift in the structure of kinship occurred in English society. It is a shift that has gone unrecorded by demographic historians because it did not result in changes visible in the parish records and susceptible of analysis by computer ... . The shift I am referring to involves a psychological shift in the meaning of family and kinship, a change in the axis of what constituted the primary kin group ... the biologically given family into which one was born was gradually becoming secondary to the chosen family constructed by marriage." Perry, "Women in Families: The Great Disinheritance," in *Women in Literature in Britain 1700–1800*, ed. Vivien Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 111. Erickson confirms the disinheritance of women during this period: "Between 1692 and 1725, the ecclesiastical right of widows and children to reasonable parts in the province of York, Wales, and the City of London [where that right still held] was abolished by statute" (28). In Erickson's study of early modern women and property, however, this change does not correlate with a conceptual alteration in the biological and marital family: it did indeed impoverish women, but tended to hurt widows rather than daughters, with a general effect of increasing women's dependence on men (19).

18 Erickson, 9.

of whom headed their own households.[19] Second, in one marriage out of three, one partner died "before the end of the wife's fecund period,"[20] which, with rates of remarriage, created many families with two groups of children. We can safely draw some inferences from this information. First, despite the widespread ideological commitment to marriage, the social landscape brought into view many examples of women who were not married. Conceiving of women's living arrangements outside a marital setting but in a household did not, therefore, require a radical imagination. Second, families were in continuous formation, changing, sometimes dramatically, over the course of a life. We thus need to unsettle our idea of family and, in particular, to think of families as being frequently reconstituted in order to historicize family formation in the century's fictions. Scott achieves "alternative" results for women but works from a familiar model of household organization that reinforces her views on social rank. The household model, daily before her eyes, provided a structure outside conjugality and inheritance patterns but well inside known conventions for social organization, a structure that was varied across the landscape and continually accommodating families as they were being reconstituted.

The concept of household family organization seems to be taken for granted in Scott's thinking. In a letter to her sister, she writes that because their house is "too near the water for winter," she and Lady Bab have moved: "We remov'd from Bath Easton to Bath on Saturday, with as much trouble as if we had been to go an hundred miles, for a *family* removal is a serious thing" (emphasis added).[21] The lineaments of household families can easily be traced in her work. She routinely (even insistently) calls her co-resident groups "families."[22] Scott's narrator refers to the "amiable family" (53, 64, 68) at Millenium Hall and says he could not imagine receiving more pleasure "than by remaining in a family so extraordinary" (62).[23] When, in his own

19 See Richard Wall's study of nine parishes from 1599 to 1796: "Women Alone in English Society," *Annales de Demographie Historique* (1981), 303–17.

20 Tadmor (34), for mid-century, relying on the work of D. Levine, *Reproducing Families: A Political Economy of English Population History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 79.

21 17 November 1754, MO 5245.

22 Another term she frequently uses is "society": they are little societies formed on a household model.

23 The narrator is entertained by "one of their *family* concerts" (62); comparably, "The

novel, Sir George Ellison returns to Millenium Hall, he is "treated without ceremony; the politeness of the inhabitants inspiring him with the same ease as if he had been one of the *family*" (emphasis added).[24] Some uses of the term are marked not only by co-residence but also by the economic organization and instructional function associated with the household. One of a group of poor but industrious women praising the generosity of the women at Millenium Hall says, "Then every saint's day, and every Sunday after church, we all go down to the hall, and the ladies read prayers, and a sermon to us, *and their own family*" (67; emphasis added). The narrator also indicates that the Millenium Hall women from the outset "ordered every thing in *their own family* with great œconomy" (159, emphasis added).[25] "Their own family" is a marker of their separate residence grouping, and these quotations point one to the instructional, the other to the economic function of the household family. Further, in the multiple uses of the term "family," other meanings—such as kinship, conjugality, and lineage—are usually specified or are clear from context: "I begged her to give me leave to ask her, of what family [lineage] of Maynards she was" (61) and Mr Selvyn is "the younger brother of an ancient family [lineage]" (199). Miss Melvyn's stepmother, arranging a repugnant match for her, falsely claims that Miss Melvyn must be secured from her own "intrigue" with a young farmer. Her stepmother reproaches her, "lament[ing] that she should so far forget herself, and disgrace so worthy a family [lineage]" (108). Sometimes different uses of the term "family" are set against each other: Mrs Maynard explains their creation of a second female community, to which we will return, for "women, who from scantiness of fortune, and pride of family [lineage], are reduced to become dependent, and to bear all the insolence of wealth, from such as will receive them into their families [households]" (115).[26] Miss Melvyn, after becoming Mrs

afternoons, in this *family*, generally concluded with one of their delightful concerts" (161–62, emphasis added).

24 Scott, *The History of Sir George Ellison*, ed. Betty Rizzo (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 89–90. References are to this edition.

25 Similarly, Mrs Morgan comments that the park supplies them "with as much venison as we can use, either in presents to our friends, or *our own family*" (110).

26 Another example: Mr D'Avora hopes "to be able to establish [Louisa] in some widow's family, as governess to her children" (103); and he later resents, on her behalf, Lady Lambton's failure to recognize "the honour which he thought such a woman as Miss Mancel must reflect on any family into which she entered" (142).

Morgan, has to contend with an unmarried sister-in-law, whom she is displacing in Mr Morgan's family (a family that previously had no conjugal unit and only a brother/sister kinship unit). The sister-in-law "criticized [Mrs Morgan's] œconomy, accusing her of indolence; representing how 'she [Mr Morgan's sister] used every morning to rouse the servants from their idleness, by giving each such a scold, as quickened their diligence for the whole day; *nor could a family be well managed by any one who omitted this necessary duty*'" (134; emphasis added). In this case, the contest is not about membership but about leadership of the co-resident family.

Examples of "family" in the sense of a co-resident household can also be found in *Sir George Ellison*. When Ellison thinks he might marry, he defers organizing and regulating his family: "While Mr. Ellison flattered himself with the hopes of marrying Miss Allin, he delayed settling his family in the order he intended, thinking it more advisable to regulate the whole at once; but when that prospect vanished, there no longer subsisted any reason for postponing it" (63–64). At this point, he plans to bring his son into his family, but up until this point, his family has no conjugal or blood elements. As he then develops his family, it includes his housekeeper, his servants, his son, the tutor, and others, and is a centre of moral training. Another example from *Sir George Ellison* reveals the routine use of the household family concept: Sir William, Ellison's uncle, "was a man of sense and integrity, but a humourist. He was now at fifty years old, a batchelor ... his only disturbance was the sight of womankind; his pique was so strong and so general, that the appearance of a pinner or a petticoat was sufficient to put him out of humour. Could he have *excluded all females from his family*, he would probably never have stirred out of his house, that he might not have been under a necessity of having his sight offended" (43, emphasis added). His family consists entirely of himself and his servants. Earlier, while still in Jamaica, Ellison incorporates slavery into the household family structure. He commits himself to "mitigating the sufferings of his slaves," building cottages and giving "to each family a comfortable habitation." However the slave families are defined, which is unclear, Ellison readily conceptualizes them as part of his own household: "'While you perform your duty,' continued he, 'I shall look upon you as free servants, or rather like my children, for whose well-being I am anxious and watchful'" (14).

Millenium Hall suggests the extreme fluidity of families: the stories include women who are brought up by non-parents, women who suffer from the change in households when the mother dies and the father remarries, and women who live as companions. The household family of Millenium Hall brings together women who, over their life course, have had quite unsatisfactory experiences in natal or conjugal families or both.[27] Part of the rapid change and extremity of the women's lives is borrowed from romance narrative, with heroines resilient enough to survive massive misfortunes. Yet part of that extremity undoubtedly points to Scott's sense of the instability of women's living arrangements. For her fictional women, Scott provides a solution that is a development of the co-residence element of the household family. Since that model was not constrained by the concepts of lineage or conjugality, it was available for development by any principle of association, including friendship.

The women's liberty of association is the principal feature brought into view when each joins the household. After a series of deaths (her guardian, who had been raising her only in preparation for sexual exploitation; Sir Edward, whose family could not allow her to join it because of her unequal birth; and her wealthy mother, discovered only by chance), Mrs Mancel, at twenty-four, joins Mrs Morgan, her dear and long-time school friend separated from her by a grim husband, who conveniently dies of a paralytic disorder. The two school friends now become inseparable. Reunited, they pool their wealth and decide to retire to the country together and set out plans for a rational life. They are joined by Lady Mary Jones, who, "charmed with ... their scheme," "begged to live with them for half a year, by which time they would be able to see whether they chose her continuance there, and she should have experienced how far their way of life was agreeable to her" (159). Mrs Selvyn, after the death of her mother (also accidentally discovered), "charmed with the account

27 The women's situations are frequently described to show the problem Scott was solving for women. See, for example, Johns, 93; Rizzo, *Companions without Vows*, 312; and Linda Dunne, "Mothers and Monsters in Sarah Robinson Scott's *Millenium Hall*," in *Utopian and Science Fiction by Women: Worlds of Difference*, ed. Jane L. Donawerth and Carol A. Kolmerten (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 60–61. For a discussion of "the vanity, invidiousness, and competition that characterize female relationships" in some of Scott's histories, leading not only to a conviction that examples of good women are hard to find in the world, but also to the secure control by women of female representation, see James Cruise, "A House Divided: Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 35:3 (1995), 555–74.

Lady Mary Jones had sent her of this society," decides to visit. After living as a visitor for two months, "she asked leave to join her fortune to the common stock, and to fix intirely with them" (218–19). Mrs Trentham, never married because of her betrothed cousin's foolish fall into romance with someone else and later marred, like Scott, with the scars of smallpox, also enters first as a visitor and then stays. Mrs Trentham then invites Mrs Maynard (on the death of the latter's husband) "to spend the first part of [her] widowhood with her and her friends" (242). That friendly visit, too, becomes a lasting stay. This liberty of association is precisely what does not characterize lineage and marital families, the latter referred to by the narrator as "an indissoluble society" (164).

In order to sustain her critique of the situation of gentlewomen placed by circumstances below the gentility divide, often unable to support themselves,[28] Scott has the Millenium Hall women set up a satellite household family for "indigent gentlewomen" (219),[29] carefully bound by rules that outline a contractual arrangement[30] stipulating both benefits and obligations and guaranteeing both economic stability and conformity of conduct, including:

> Secondly, Each person to have a bed-chamber to herself, but the eating-parlour and drawing-room in common.
>
> Thirdly, All things for rational amusement shall be provided for the society; musical instruments, of whatever sort they shall chuse, books, tents for work, and in short conveniences for every kind of employment.
>
> Fourthly, They must conform to very regular hours ... .
>
> Tenthly, If any one of the ladies behaves with imprudence she shall be dismissed, and her fortune returned; likewise if any should by turbulence or pettishness of temper, disturb the society, it shall be in the power of the rest of them to expel her ... . (116–17)

28 For the problem of gentlewomen seeking to support themselves as companions, see Rizzo's *Companions without Vows*. For Scott's treatment of female philanthropy and in particular for her approach to the problem of poor gentlewomen, see Dorice Williams Elliot, "Sarah Scott's 'Millenium Hall' and Female Philanthropy," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 35:3 (1995), 535–54.

29 They are enabled to pay for the new household arrangement by the accession of Mrs Selwyn's fortune when she joins the group. Scott always makes financial arrangements clear.

30 Johns argues that Scott remakes the social contract. Rejecting the view that the contract is inherently compromised (Carole Pateman), Johns adopts the argument of Martha Nussbaum that custom rather than contractual theory accounts for women's exclusion (92–93).

One rule clarifies their household organization: "Sixthly, Each person shall alternately, a week at a time, preside at the table, and give what family orders may be requisite" (116). Each woman, in other words, becomes head of household for a week. They have what we might call shared governance, with oversight from Millenium Hall. Despite the governance of conduct—"The whole society ... must assemble at morning and evening prayers, and at meals, if sickness does not prevent" (118)—the principle of liberty of association is carried out in two important ways. First, women may leave the group at any time: on deciding to leave, each will take with her the fortune (whatever it was) that she deposited, with only the interest earned from that fortune during her time in the community "appropriated to the use of the community" (116); and second, each woman may opt for privacy at any time: "As no one is obliged to stay a minute longer in company than she chuses, she naturally retires as soon as it grows displeasing to her, and does not return till she is prompted by inclination, and consequently well disposed to amuse and be amused" (119).[31] The women can, if they wish, leave to be married, and some did, according to Mrs Maynard. The women are part of a residence group governed as a household but with few or no constraints about departure, thus demonstrating Scott's use of what Tadmor calls the "permeable and flexible" nature of household membership.

When, in order to meet the pressing need, the women plan a second household, they locate it in a particularly interesting situation. They purchase an estate that is available because it was mismanaged by a lineage family whose problems are delineated in quasi-satiric terms (220–22). The lineage family—or family of inheritance and blood—moves from the deficiency of avarice to the excess of prodigality. In ordinary legal terms as well, the miser's family has an unsatisfactory inheritance pattern. The stingy owner has so hoarded that he has no children, that is, has created no parentela,[32] so the law

31 Rizzo suggests that Scott, like her sister, "presided ... over a community. But it developed in opposition to her sister's, which she heartily disliked, and can perhaps most fruitfully be viewed as an anti-salon." Rizzo, "Two Versions of Community," in *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, ed. Nicole Pohl and Betty Schellenberg (San Marino: Huntington Library, 2003), 195. Although Rizzo is discussing Scott's and Lady Barbara Montagu's gatherings with women in Bath, the liberty of association that holds for the communities of women in *Millenium Hall* also seems to suggest a form of sociality very different from Elizabeth Montagu's rigid semi-circles, calling into question a frequently quoted claim by Kelly that *Millineum Hall* is "the manifesto of bluestocking feminism" (43).

32 For an explanation of the parentelic inheritance pattern Scott delineates, see J.H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History,* 3rd ed. (London: Butterworths, 1990), 304–5.

must look up one generational level in order to seek an heir, a nephew wholly disregarded by the miser during his lifetime. This nephew, becoming a spendthrift, is forced to sell "a considerable portion of his estate" for the use of Millenium Hall's impecunious gentlewomen. Framing ethical values in a wholly traditional way, Scott has inheritance superseded by purchase and wise use. This second satellite household family, on the model of the first, displaces a lineage family. The benefit of women is secured in this case by a household family.

Household families were by no means inherently hospitable to women. They could even be oppressive. Tadmor quotes a Miss Weeton, who evaluated various families, of which she was a part, very differently. In one case, she "resented the fact that the mistress of this 'kind family' saw herself as 'answerable to her conduct,' and thus asked to inspect the content of her letters."[33] Mary Wollstonecraft's characterizations of the life of a governess are familiar to many readers, and the specific sort of dependency that Scott features as a reason for the construction of the household of women derives from a household family. These women "are reduced to become dependent, and to bear all the insolence of wealth, from such as will receive them into their families; these though in some measure voluntary slaves, yet suffer all the evils of the severest servitude, and are, I believe, the most unhappy part of the creation" (115). Although manifestly not suffering the "severest servitude" known to Scott, these women's situations can, evidently, only be rendered in the language of chattel slavery.

Nevertheless, despite the humiliating forms of dependency [34] suffered by women in some households, the model itself, because based on co-residence, could be reshaped for Scott's purposes. Nothing in the concept of the household family prevented Scott from developing it consistent with liberty of association, and, similarly, nothing about the model of the household family prevented Scott from imagining her practical Utopia in hierarchical terms as a small society, bound by deference and reciprocal obligations. As Nicole Pohl has argued, Millenium Hall is, in fact, a manor house,[35] which means that it was a

33 Tadmor, 43.

34 Scott's practical Utopianism is very far from the world depicted in Amanda Vickery's *The Gentleman's Daughter*, but one could imagine characters with stories like those of Ellen Stock and Elizabeth Shackleton appearing on the periphery of Millenium Hall.

35 Pohl, "'Sweet place, where virtue then did rest': The Appropriation of the Country-House Ethos in Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall*," *Utopian Studies* 7:1 (1996), 49–59. Pohl constructs

site for a particularly well-organized and complex household family, one that lent itself to Scott's nostalgia about social rank and her pastoralization of both people and landscape. Scott combines pastoralization with a quite remarkable emphasis on cleanliness and neatness, major virtues in Millenium Hall, allied with "rural simplicity" against "marks of poverty" as well as "boorish rusticity," both of which, reports the narrator, "would have spoilt the pastoral air of the scene around us" (57). Despite her own extensive charitable work with the poor, Scott seems to have had imaginative sympathy primarily for those of lower rank whom she could idealize or improve. In a letter to her sister, she wrote, "I should imagine fishermen not much more capable of reasoning than the fishes they live by."[36] Interestingly, fishermen are one of the groups excluded from the pastoral aesthetic (along with "herders of pigs or horses, hunters ... , laborers, and sailors"): "Pigs are dirty; horses are not essential to the economy; hunters are never still enough; fisherman may not talk; and laborers and sailors work too hard."[37] Figures resistant to improvement schemes and nostalgic aestheticizing gain little space in *Millenium Hall*, which is probably why nothing more is written about "my man" after he is assigned to guard the chaise while the postilion goes to the next town to arrange its repair. Such a servant would have been part of the narrator's household family, but would, I suspect, have had difficulty socializing with the shepherd[38] and other pastoral figures at Millenium Hall. He would certainly have challenged the idealized world created there.[39]

The model of the household family not only allowed but supported Scott's persistent engagement with instruction and discipline. With this function of the household in view, the Millenium Hall women's inspection (or "surveillance") of their outlying projects has nothing

a complex argument that *Millenium Hall*'s spatial and architectural representation of the country house ethos creates a new way to construct gender.

36 April 1754, MO 5340.

37 Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, *The Green Cabinet: Theocritus and the European Pastoral* (1969; reprint, Bristol Classics Paperback, 2004), 7. Rosenmeyer is using a Renaissance standard, but Scott carefully links the Millenium Hall scene and activities with Theocritus.

38 This shepherd plays on his flute, putting it down only "to guide home" a sheep called "the little wanderer" (56).

39 Sir George Ellison takes a dim view of footmen: "But footmen, beyond the number necessary to the business of your house, which never can require many, are maintained in idleness; their health and their morals suffer from want of employment; their education incapacitates them from making any mental use of leisure, and they are freed from corporeal labour by custom; time hangs so heavy on their hands, that vice generally finds them ready to embrace any method it points out to them for getting rid of what they know not how to employ" (81).

unusual in it.[40] The narrator goes exploring on the first morning of his stay and finds an enclosure and "a little door" that opens "on a row of the neatest cottages I ever saw ... . They were new and uniform ... . Seeing a very old woman spinning at one of the doors, I accosted her, by admiring the neatness of her habitation" (65). Appreciating her economic rescue, she voices praise for the women's oversight: "if we are not idle that is all they desire, except that we should be cleanly too. There never passes a day that one or other of the ladies does not come and look all over our houses, which they tell us, and certainly with truth, for it is a great deal of trouble to them, is all for our good, for that we cannot be healthy if we are not clean and neat" (67). The women function as an instructive cadre, ensuring neatness, industry, and proper socialization of the people in their care. They similarly instruct the group of people formerly displayed because of their deformities and now "enfranchised" and supported by the women. Instructed and cared for, "they now live in great harmony" and "are entirely mistresses of their house" (74). This disciplinary function is part of household management and is accompanied by the same liberty of association that the women of Millenium Hall have.

The household family then accommodated the portrayal of women of Scott's rank "as custodians," to use Kelly's term, "of lower-class welfare at a time when traditional and customary economic relations were being replaced by capitalist ones."[41] Johanna Smith has drawn a comparison between the philanthropic work of the women in

40 For a discussion of surveillance in *Millenium Hall*, see Nanette Morton, "'A Most Sensible Œconomy': From Spectacle to Surveillance in Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 11:2 (1999), 185–204. For the view that Millenium Hall exercises philanthropy by way of display, see Johanna M. Smith, "Philanthropic Community in *Millenium Hall* and the York Ladies Committee," *Eighteenth-Century: Theory and Interpretation* 36:3 (1995), 266–82. I use "inspection" rather than "surveillance" or "display" because I think it fits with the household's disciplinary function.

41 Kelly, 13. There is now no wide agreement about this process or when it happened. Scott's nostalgia for hierarchically ordered reciprocal relations is clear both in *Millenium Hall* and in *Sir George Ellison*, but the matter is complex. Scott tries to fuse a customary traditional economy of reciprocal obligations with a moralized contractual exchange. Ellison explains some of his wife's flawed attitudes in contrast to his own by comparing their educations. She has been raised in a system of slavery. "I, on the contrary, was born in a country, that with all its faults is conspicuously generous, frank, and merciful, because it is free; no subordination exists there, but what is for the benefit of the lower as well of the higher ranks; all live in a state of reciprocal services, the great and the poor are linked in compact; each side has its obligations to perform; and if I make use of another man's labour, it is on condition that I shall pay him such a price for it, as will enable him to purchase all the comforts of life; and whenever he finds it eligible to change his master, he is as free as I am" (16–17). See Johns's chapter on Scott for a sympathetic and nuanced discussion of Scott's views.

Millenium Hall and those of the later (and non-fictional) York Ladies Committee.[42] Both concern philanthropic "projects" by women from the aristocracy or gentry, but the Millenium Hall project, though feminist, is nevertheless defined by an economy of benevolence, while the second must adapt to working-class self-identification and recognize agency among the groups who formed friendly societies. The household family model made it possible to imagine flexible living groups, but at the same time it extended the naturalization not only of social hierarchy but also of the family as a centre of discipline.

Scott was solving problems through a social organization based on reciprocal obligations and client status at a time when this model was being contested by structures for dealing with the poor. Resistance to legal provision for the poor—as opposed to voluntary projects for their improvement—is voiced throughout the century. "The Pauper thanks not me," says Thomas Alcock, "for anything he receives. He has a right to it, he says, by Law, and if I won't give, he'll go to the Justices and compel me."[43] This pauper would not be welcome at Millenium Hall. Further, Scott's pastoralized idealization, though consistent with Utopian solutions, also coincides with the ways that painters were making the poor acceptable to gentry viewing.[44] Scott's own philanthropic activity, shared with Lady Barbara Montagu, demonstrates her commitment to voluntary practical good works, but as systematized in *Millenium Hall*, such good deeds furnish an example that replicates the social relations of which she approves.[45]

42 Smith, 266–82.

43 Thomas Alcock, *Observations on the Defects of the Poor Laws, and on the Causes and Consequences of the Great Increase and Burden of the Poor, with a Proposal for Redressing these Grievances,* in *A Letter to a Member of Parliament* (London: R. Baldwin, 1752), 13–14. For a discussion of the eighteenth-century practice of aestheticizing and fictionalizing philanthropic objects, see Van Sant, "Sympathetic Visibility" in *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Sir George Ellison, disturbed at the high poor tax and the insufficiency of the poor law to deal with the problems of the poor, contracts with the parish to handle the problem himself, thereby semi-privatizing a public function. His cottages and his workhouse fuse a benevolence-based solution with a public contract: he receives from the parishioners half the amount they previously paid for the poor's rate (65–67).

44 See John Barrell's *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting 1730–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). See also Kenneth MacLean's *The Agrarian Age, a Background for Wordsworth* (Archon Books, 1970) for a discussion of the cultural creation of the peasant during the agricultural revolution. See also Morton for an analysis of the significance of the pastoral landscape (189).

45 For a sympathetic and complex analysis of "replication" as central to Scott's Utopian vision, see Johns's chapter "Reconceiving the Contract: Sarah Scott's Self-Replicating Utopia," in *Women's Utopias*, 91–109.

"Every thing to me looses its charm," says Mrs Mancel, "when it is put out of that station wherein nature, or to speak more properly, the all-wise Creator has placed it" (71).[46] What I am arguing is that in her embodiment of the charitable activity required by her Christian principles, Scott uses the recognizable and naturalized "household family"—both a moral and an economic unit, instrumental but accommodating affective bonds—not only to criticize and reform contemporary practices but also to reinstate idealized gentry relations.

Scott secures liberty of association for women precisely by embedding it in a project of gentry restoration. Not only do the women of Millenium Hall reinstate a hierarchical world of reciprocal benefits, at least as nostalgic as it is pragmatic[47] (as Harriet Guest suggests, Scott's novel seems "to endorse a kind of nostalgic feudalism"),[48] but they also gain their freedom from marriage through a legal procedure belonging to the early feudal period. In explaining why the Millenium Hall women encourage matrimony in others, which they do not practise themselves, Mrs Melvyn falls back on a land-based metaphor of tenurial relations: "We consider matrimony as absolutely necessary to the good of society; it is a general duty; but as, according to all antient tenures, those obliged to perform knight's service, might, if they chose to enjoy their own fire-sides, be excused by sending deputies to supply their places; so we, using the same privilege substitute many others, and certainly much more promote wedlock, than we could do by entering into it ourselves" (163). That Mrs Melvyn relies on feudal obligations to explain their practices is in a sense both witty and bold. She allows women to make a claim to the traditional male position from which they were excluded. Such a metaphor, however, seems to point to a further substitutive arrangement: *Millenium Hall*'s vision of allowing women liberty from marriage and liberty to associate with each other is gained by re-linking the gentry with "antient tenures." Thus Military Tenures, abolished in

46 Mrs Mancel is actually speaking here of the wrong use of animals, but the term "station" is more usually applicable to social rank.

47 For analysis of the nostalgia inherent in the view of the past as a model from which there has been a recent degeneration, see E.P. Thompson, "Patricians and Plebs," in *Customs in Common* (New York: New Press, 1993), 22–24.

48 Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750–1810* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 44. In her assessment of family creation, Guest fails to recognize Scott's transformation of the pervasive household-family structure. Her observation that "the notion of family extends to embrace almost everyone with whom the protagonists have any contact, so that the family become a sort of alternative society of mutual interdependence" (44) points to the permeable boundaries of the co-residence family.

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1660, get figuratively restored one hundred years later as a means of securing women's liberty. The ways in which the societies at Millenium Hall were potentially the most countercultural were matched by and intricately connected with the ways in which they were most conservative—and the household family model gave place to both.

University of California, Irvine