

On An Unsociable Family

By Elizabeth Hands

O what a strange parcel of creatures are we,
Scarce ever to quarrel, or even agree;
We all are alone, though at home altogether,
Except to the fire constrained by the weather;
Then one says, "Tis cold', which we all of us know,
And with unanimity answer, "Tis so':
With shrugs and with shivers all look at the fire,
And shuffle ourselves and our chairs a bit nigher;
Then quickly, preceded by silence profound,
A yawn epidemical catches around:
Like social companions we never fall out,
Nor ever care what one another's about;
To comfort each other is never our plan,
For to please ourselves, truly, is more than we can.



Though little is known about the life of Romantic poet Elizabeth Hands, it is believed that she worked as a domestic servant near Coventry, England, and married a blacksmith in 1785. Together they had at least one child, a daughter. Publishing her poems under the pseudonym Daphne, Hands drew the attention of Thomas James, the headmaster at Rugby School. The school's press published her collection of poetry, *The Death of Amnon: A Poem with an Appendix: Containing Pastorals, and Other Poetical Pieces* (1789). The volume reached more than a thousand subscribers, including Anna Seward and Edmund Burke. Her poetry, often quietly satiric, also favors plain speech and themes of domesticity and literary tradition.

[See More By This Poet](#)